THE COLOR OF WEALTH IN TULSA, OKLAHOMA: THE DESTRUCTION OF GREENWOOD AND THE LEGACY OF LAND LOSS

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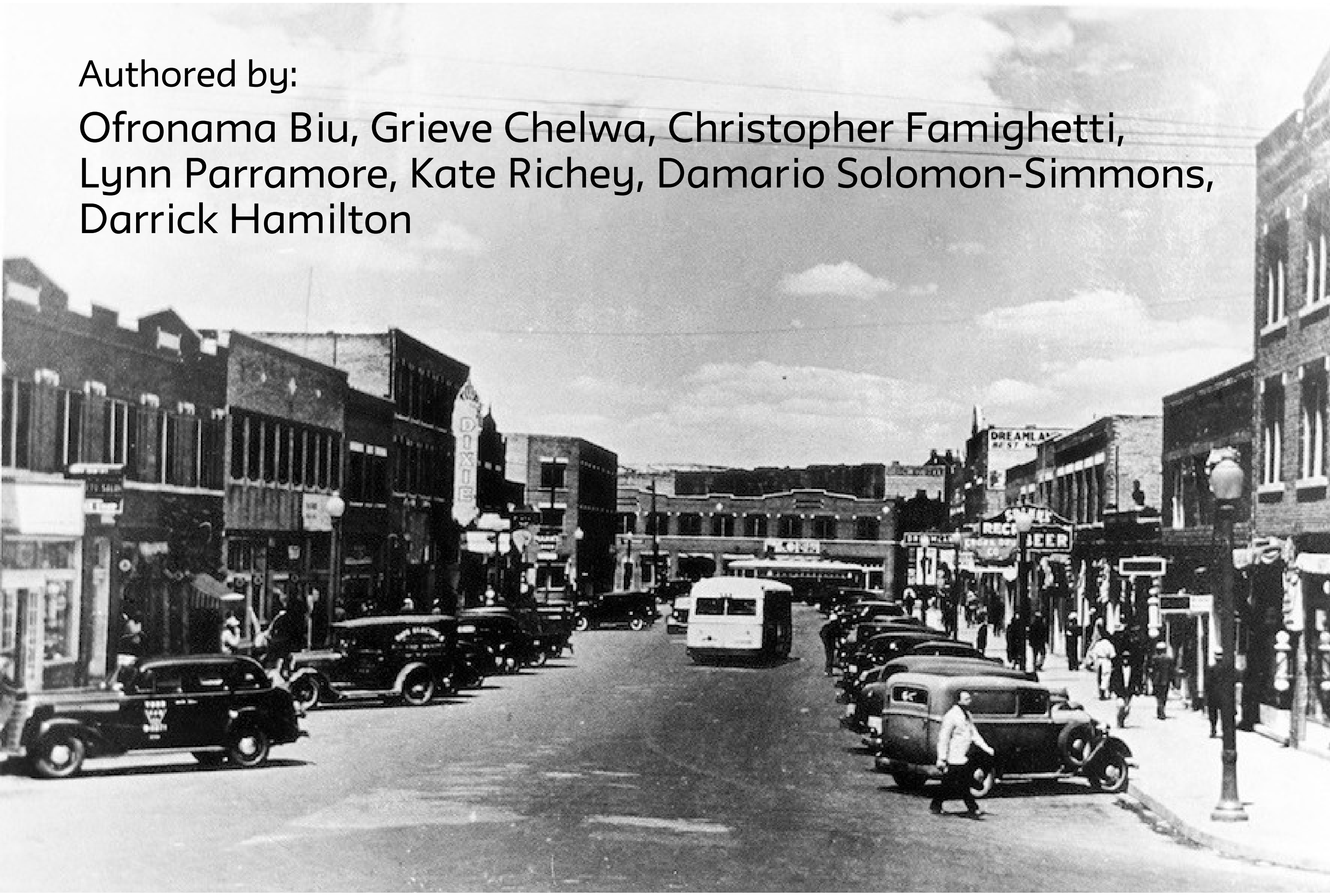

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JUSTICE FOR GREENWOOD

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ABSTRACT

Income and wealth inequality in the United States, especially across racial and ethnic groups, is dramatic and persistent. While income is often used by researchers, practitioners, advocates, and policymakers to describe local economic conditions and drive policy decisions, it is also increasingly recognized as an inadequate indicator of economic well-being, mobility, and security. Wealth is generally less volatile than income, and it provides a store of resources that gives families security during emergencies and allows them to secure advantages that foster the well-being of the next generation.

The findings in this report from the National Asset Scorecard for Communities of Color (NASCC) survey reveal major disparities in wealth accumulation across various racial, ethnic, and tribal groups in the Tulsa Metropolitan Statistical Area. The NASCC survey was developed to fill a void in existing national datasets that rarely collect data disaggregated by specific ethnic, national, and tribal origin in a localized context. The NASCC survey collects detailed data on assets and debts among subpopulations according to self-identified race, ethnicity, tribe, and country of origin. The NASCC instrument measures the range and extent of asset and debt holdings, not just by broadly defined groups (e.g., Black, Latinx, Asian, Native American, and White), but by racial and ethnic groups partitioned by more refined categories of ancestral and tribal origin (e.g., U.S.-descendant Black, Mexican, Cherokee, Muscogee, American Indians with Other Tribal Affiliation, American Indians with No Tribal Affiliation, and White). This type of disaggregation allows for a more specific examination of variations in asset holdings both across and within broadly defined racial and ethnic groups. This report explores factors that are related to wealth accumulation for particular racial and ethnic groups, including historical context and local asset market conditions.

KEY FINDINGS

- This report examines the wealth position of Black, Mexican, Native American, and White households disaggregated by tribal enrollment residing in the Tulsa, Oklahoma Metropolitan Statistical Area based on data collected primarily in 2014 and towards the end of 2013.

- The findings presented in this report show that there is a clear racial, ethnic, and tribal pattern to assets, debts and wealth holdings in Tulsa. White households have the highest asset holdings and often have some of the lowest burdens of debt. As a consequence, White households have the highest median net worth position in Tulsa. On the other hand, other racial and ethnic groups have much lower asset holdings than White households and tend to have relatively more debt. Because of this, their net worth positions are much lower than White households. This racialized nature of wealth in Tulsa is not surprising given the country's racist and violent past. Our report is published in 2021, 100 years after the Tulsa Race Massacre that resulted in the deaths of many Black people and the destruction of their capital. In addition, Oklahoma, once known as "Indian Territory," has been a site of much racism, violence, and extraction targeting Native Americans for hundreds of years.

- The report also shows that even though Native Americans have less wealth than White households, there are differences in wealth within the group. These differences may be driven by the availability of different tribal resources, development programs, and history.

- Black, Mexican, and Native American households in Tulsa had a fraction of the wealth of White households. White households reported a median wealth of $145,000 in comparison to, for example, Muscogee households with a median net worth of $42,500, followed by Black households, whose net worth was $8,000. Mexican and American Indian households with No Tribal Enrollment had wealth holdings of $7,000 and $4,000, respectively.

  In essence, for every dollar of wealth held by the typical White household in Tulsa, Cherokee, Muscogee, Black, Mexican, and American Indian with No Tribal Enrollment households had only $0.52, $0.29, $0.06 and $0.03, respectively.

- In terms of homeownership, one of the more common ways in which families in the United States hold their wealth, Whites had the highest ownership rates at 85 percent, followed by Cherokee (76 percent) and Muscogee households (65 percent). American Indian with No Tribal Enrollment and Mexican households had homeownership rates, respectively, of 57 percent and 50 percent. Black households had the lowest home ownership rates in Tulsa at 40 percent.

- Regardless of race, ethnicity, and tribal affiliation, the ownership rates of stocks and Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) were generally low. However, there was substantial variation across, race, ethnicity, and tribal enrollment. Thirty-seven (37) percent of White households held stocks, compared to only 5 and 3 percent for Black and Mexican households, respectively. IRA ownership rates followed a similar pattern: 40 percent of White households owned an IRA in comparison to only 16 and 13 percent, respectively, for Mexican and Black households.

- Liquid assets, which can readily be converted to cash, are particularly useful when dealing with an unexpected emergency or budgetary shortfall. The median Black household had no liquid assets, suggesting that financial existence was largely "check-to-check." Liquid asset values for Muscogee and Mexican households were not much higher at $80 and $19, respectively. In contrast, White households had a median liquid asset value of $12,000.

- Even though Black families had the lowest homeownership rates in Tulsa, 75 percent of those who owned a home had a mortgage. This mortgage rate was sequentially followed by Mexicans at 54 percent of homeowners with mortgage debt, American Indians with Other Tribal Enrollment at 46 percent, and Cherokees at 44 percent. Forty-three (43) percent of White homeowners had mortgage debt, followed by 38 percent of American Indians with No Tribal Enrollment and 30 percent of Muscogee households.

- Student loans are a type of unsecured loan whose repayment is often a burden on households. In the case of Tulsa, we found that Black households had the highest student loan ownership rate (30 percent). This was followed by Muscogee households at 19 percent, American Indian with Other Tribal Enrollment households at 14 percent and American Indians with No Tribal Enrollment at 13 percent. The lowest student loan ownership rates were to be found in White households, Mexican households, and Cherokee households at 11 percent, 11 percent, and 10 percent, respectively. Only the Black student loan rate was statistically different from White households.

- Payday loans are an egregious form of unsecured loans with very high interest rates and very short repayment periods. Users may intend to borrow and quickly return a small amount of money but instead find themselves in a cycle of debt. Compared to other Color of Wealth studies, lending rates were highest in Tulsa. We found that the usage rate for payday loans was highest among Muscogee households, with 33 percent having a payday loan. This was followed by Black households at 16 percent and Cherokee and American Indian with Other Tribal Enrollment households at 15 percent each. American Indians with No Tribal Enrollment, U.S.-born Mexican households, and White households had payday lending usage rates of 14 percent, 9 percent and 8 percent, respectively. The lowest usage rates were recorded for Mexican-immigrant households at 3 percent.

- The last aspect of debt that we considered was non-housing debt—that is, all debt excluding mortgage debt. Here we found that American Indians with No Tribal Enrollment had the highest non-housing debt holdings with a median value of $16,000. This was followed by Muscogee households at $15,000, Mexican households at $8,500, with Cherokee and Black households each owing a median of $7,000. White households held the least amount of non-housing debt at $5,400.

INTRODUCTION

Racial wealth disparities in America are significant, persistent, and steeped in the country's inception with profound effects (Conley 1999; Oliver and Shapiro 2006; Hamilton 2019). Numerous studies have shown that the transfer of resources and well-being across generations is a significant factor explaining racial and ethnic differences in wealth holdings (Blau and Graham 1990; Menchik and Jianakoplos 1997; Chiteji and Hamilton 2002; Gittleman and Wolff 2004; Hamilton and Darity 2014). Further, there has been a long history of slavery, brutality, extraction, and exploitation based on race, ethnicity, and tribal origin, particularly towards Black people and Native Americans, that continues to shape contemporary outcomes with respect to wealth accumulation and disparities (Lui et al. 2006; Akee et al. 2016).

Studies show that racial and ethnic wealth disparities grew in magnitude following the 2007 Great Recession (Kochhar, Fry, and Taylor 2011; Shapiro, Meschede, and Osoro 2014; McKernan et al. 2014; Tippett et al. 2014; Kochhar and Fry 2014). The biggest element of inequity from the Great Recession has been attributed to larger than average declines in the value of assets such as houses for Black and Latinx people. For example, Black and Latinx households lost almost half their wealth during the Great Recession (McKernan et al. 2014). There is an expectation that the current recession caused by the coronavirus pandemic will further widen the racial wealth gap given the disproportionate impacts of the virus and the economy on people of color (Hamilton et al. 2021).

This report builds on four previous publications: "The Color of Wealth in Miami" (Aja et al. 2019), "The Color of Wealth in Los Angeles" (De La Cruz-Viesca et al. 2016), "The Color of Wealth in the Nation's Capital" (Kijakazi et al. 2016), and "The Color of Wealth in Boston" (Muñoz et al., 2015). The focus of this study is the relative wealth positions of particular racial, ethnic, and tribal groups in the Tulsa, Oklahoma Metropolitan Statistical Area (hereafter referred to as Tulsa). This report is particularly timely and relevant as 2021 marks the 100-year anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre which began on May 31, 1921. Unlike its predecessors, this report offers a depiction of the asset and debt position of Native Americans disaggregated by tribal affiliation in a metropolitan context. This point is particularly important given that little is known about the asset holdings of different tribal groups within the broader Native American population (Akee et al. 2016).

Why focus on wealth? It is foundational. It allows the storage of resources that secures families during emergencies and provides advantages that foster the well-being of future generations. Wealth allows families to build up assets by making investments in homes, education, businesses, and overall well-being (Hamilton et al. 2015). Further, wealth provides insurance against financial losses associated with entrepreneurial risk taking. Assets such as savings accounts, stocks and bonds, property, and others discussed in this report enable families to pay for unexpected budgetary shocks rather than relying on friends, family, credit cards, or, in a worst-case scenario, payday loans that charge exorbitant interest rates (De La Cruz-Viesca et al. 2016 and Hamilton and Darity 2017). Wealth is iterative across generations: wealthier families have greater financial resources to make transfers to offspring and to purchase assets that produce more wealth.

Researchers, practitioners, advocates, and policymakers often use income as the bellwether for assessing local economic conditions and as a guide for policy setting. However, income is not a sufficient indicator of economic well-being, mobility, and security (Oliver and Shapiro 2006; also see Hamilton and Darity 2009). Income is a periodic flow of resources often paid to workers in exchange for their labor. On the other hand, wealth is a stock of the net value between household assets and household debt (Hamilton and Chiteji 2013). Therefore, wealth is generally less volatile than income and a better indicator of a family's economic well-being (see Shapiro and Kenty-Drane 2005 and Hamilton and Darity 2009). Families often rely on wealth rather than income when making costly outlays such as financing education, starting a new business, or placing a down payment on a home.

We rely primarily on data from the National Asset Scorecard for Communities of Color (NASCC), which, in addition to offering information on wealth, allows researchers to assess the financial experiences of various ethnic groups. We augment NASCC data with data from the U.S. Census. The NASCC project was developed to fill a void left with existing national asset and debt surveys in the United States such as the Survey of Consumer Finances, which typically have not been designed to examine wealth differences across ethnically plural communities at the local level. The NASCC instrument measures the range and extent of asset-accumulation not just by broadly defined groups (e.g., Asian, Black, Latinx, and White), but disaggregated by more refined categories of ancestral or tribal origin (e.g., Cherokee, U.S. Black, Mexican) (Muñoz et al. 2015). This type of disaggregated grouping allows for a more nuanced investigation of variations in asset and debt holdings both across and within broadly defined racial and ethnic groups. Furthermore, by examining a metropolitan context, the survey enables researchers to control for the spatially specific nature of asset and debt markets. Products, prices, and regulations all have local characteristics that are not implicitly captured in most datasets. The NASCC data includes information that is particularly relevant for understanding asset and debt positions of communities of color.

The Color of Wealth studies are influenced by a host of interrelated historical to present-day factors: racial and ethnic diversity, national origin, public policy, racism, history, business-cycles, and more. In the case of Tulsa, the Race Massacre of 1921 played a significant role in stripping the asset holdings of Black Americans. Tulsa also provides a case to examine Native American assets and debts. Often aggregated into the nebulous category of "other," or omitted altogether, is the asset and debt position of Native Americans, a group that has experienced a long and violent history of asset theft and disposition, especially in the forms of land and personhood (Lui et al. 2006). Tulsa provides a metropolitan context with one of the largest relative shares of Native Americans, allowing us to juxtapose their wealth position to that of other racial and ethnic groups. According to data from the U.S. Census, Native Americans make up six percent of Tulsa's population.

The first section of the report provides a brief history of the Tulsa Race Massacre, including the government collusion that facilitated the massacre, the devastating loss of Black lives and generational wealth, and the lasting impacts on Black households in Tulsa today. The second section presents Census data on the steep relative decline in the Black population in Tulsa before and after the Tulsa Massacre. The third section summarizes the political, economic, and violent extraction of Native assets and personhood. The fourth section describes the NASCC methodology applied throughout the rest of the report. The fifth section presents key demographic information in the region using Census data, including an examination of the socioeconomic position of various groups by self-reported race. The sixth section presents asset and debt ownership estimates for various communities in Tulsa using NASCC data. The last section includes a discussion of the findings and implications for researchers, local advocacy groups, and public policy. An appendix letter from Christy Finsel (Osage), Executive Director of the Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition, Inc. (ONAC), offers reflections on the NASCC data, key information on assets among Native American communities, and recommendations for future research on wealth among Native Americans.

The Tulsa Race Massacre

The Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921 began on May 31st of that year and lasted well into the following day. In short, members of the Tulsa Police Department, the Tulsa County Sheriff's Department, the National Guard, other city and county leaders, and members of the chamber of commerce formed a large, angry mob of White Tulsans that overwhelmed the approximately 40-square-block community with violence. One of the worst acts of domestic terrorism in U.S. history decimated Tulsa's thriving, all-Black community of Greenwood. However, much like other mass atrocities, what was set in motion during those hours in 1921 changed the face of a community irreversibly and birthed a structural inequity pernicious in its persistence.

Hundreds of Black residents were killed, thousands more were injured, and 1500 homes and businesses were looted and burned to the ground.[1] This brutal and inhumane attack was not an isolated event, as the same perpetrators spent the subsequent days, weeks, years and even decades ensuring the permanent erasure of Greenwood and the wholesale seizure of its former residents' assets. The economic ruin of Greenwood robbed Black Tulsans of their rightful inheritance and denied successive generations the wealth, financial security, and tangible and intellectual property that might otherwise have sustained, enabled, and enriched the quality of life of an entire community.

White Tulsans and local government officials began an obstructionist campaign against rebuilding Greenwood virtually immediately.[2] Many Greenwood residents lived in internment camps for over a year in squalid conditions while awaiting reconstruction and some used what was left of their meager resources to fight uphill battles against local officials, seeking legal recognition of their right to rebuild from state courts.[3]

Hundreds of thriving Black-owned businesses and organizations lined the streets of Tulsa's celebrated Greenwood district before that day in 1921. Among them were regionally celebrated destinations like the upscale Stratford Hotel and the state-of-the-art Williams Dreamland Theater. *The Tulsa Star* is widely acknowledged as the first American Black-owned newspaper with a weekly national circulation. At least one third of those businesses destroyed never reopened and today none of the businesses operating in Greenwood before the Massacre still exist.[4]

The interference with rebuilding and investment in Greenwood and North Tulsa that began after the Massacre has never relented and is ongoing. Before the Massacre, the percentage of Black and White residents of Tulsa that owned their own homes was nearly the same.[5] After an entire Black neighborhood of homes was destroyed

1 See "Tulsa Race Riot: A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921." (2001, Feb. 28), https://www.okhistory.org/research/forms/freport.pdf.

2 See "Plan to Move Negroes Into New District." *The Tulsa Tribune*, June 3, 1921.

3 The Oklahoma Supreme Court eventually struck down the racist zoning ordinances enacted by obstructionist White Tulsa officials immediately after the Massacre to prevent Greenwood from rebuilding.

4 At least 20 White-owned businesses that existed at the time of the Massacre are still in operation. See "Photo gallery: Find out which businesses have survived at least 100 years in Tulsa. *The Tulsa World*. " Dec. 21, 2018, https://tulsaworld.com/business/photo-gallery-find-out-which-businesses-have-survived-at-least-100-years-intulsa/collection_df4bc18f-31b0-5a05-86ee-d24caef926ce.html.

5 According to the U.S. Federal Reserve, homeownership is one of the key ways we build wealth in the U.S. The Federal Reserve reports that the average homeowner in 2016 had a household wealth of $231,400, compared to the average renter having a household wealth of just $5,200. See "Changes in U.S. Family Finances from 2013 to 2016: Evidence from the Survey of Consumer Finances." Federal Reserve Bulletin 103, no.3 (September 2017), https://doi.org/10.17016/bulletin.2017.103-3.

overnight, a deficit of adequate and code-compliant housing plagued life in the aftermath and a racial gap in homeownership began to balloon. Local government officials refused to enforce housing codes for Black residents and abdicated their municipal duties in myriad ways which made houses prone to rapid deterioration and led to substandard conditions and blight that threatened the health, comfort, and safety of the Greenwood neighborhood and community.[6]

There is still no viable public infrastructure in these communities. In every major category that undergirds individuals and households in their wealth-building endeavors over a lifetime (employment and educational opportunities, the availability of safe and affordable housing, a healthy environment, and access to primary healthcare, etc.), Black Tulsans face shocking disparities.[7] These disparities are fueled by racist underfunding of public structures and deliberate and ongoing structural violence enacted by government entities whose choices impoverish the chances of Greenwood's descendants into 2021. Meanwhile, White Tulsans enjoy these resources in abundance, provided by the very same public structures and government entities that have inflicted a shameful legacy of intentional deprivation onto Tulsa's Black citizenry. Justice for Greenwood (nd)., a network of volunteers, advocates, attorneys, academics, experts, Massacre Survivors, Descendants, and others are agitating for reparation and justice on behalf of Survivors and Descendants of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. Through innovative legal strategies, public education, and advocacy, Justice for Greenwood is working to mitigate the effects of the Massacre and its 100 years of continuing harm.

While the exact date and time of the beginning of the destruction of historic Greenwood is well-established, we have no timestamp for when the Massacre will end. Wealth once stolen is made permanently illusive by deliberate public policy choices that maintain an apartheid regime of dichotomous "development" in the city of Tulsa. A twin trajectory fueled by racialized logic divides Tulsa's past and its future indefinitely: 1) thriving White communities, growing ever-more insular and segregated, empowered economically and benefiting from the lion's share of public investment versus 2) the Massacre's legacy of unjust, violent, and inhumane treatment of Black residents at the hands of public leaders and institutions derelict in their duty to serve and protect Tulsa's Black residents and to recognize their human right to self-determination.

It is worth highlighting that the Tulsa Race Massacre was not a unique event in the United States at that time. Two years prior in the summer of 1919, race riots broke out in many parts of the country leading to the deaths of many Black people and to the destruction of their property (McWhirter 2011). James Weldon Johnson, the Black civil rights leader, termed that year's events as the "Red Summer" in recognition of the blood that was shed (McWhirter 2011). Reigns of terror such as the Tulsa Race Massacre, the "Red Summer," and many others that have typified Black life in the United States have hampered the ability of Black households to accumulate wealth.

6 See "A Concise Review of Housing Problems Affecting Negroes in Tulsa," Tulsa Urban League (1958), http://digitalcollections.tulsalibrary.org/digital/collection/p16063coll1/id/5360/.

7 The findings of the Tulsa Equality Indicators Annual Reports document the disparities created by the 1921 Race Massacre and how they continue to hinder and harm Black Tulsans and the Greenwood community. See Tulsa Equality Indicators. (2019), https://csctulsa.org/tulsaei/. In response to the City of Tulsa's 2018 Equality Indicators Annual Report, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and over fifty local community, elected, and religious leaders sent a letter (the "LDF Letter") to Tulsa Mayor Bynum and the Tulsa City Council demanding reforms be immediately implemented. The LDF Letter stated, "It is simply unacceptable to acknowledge racial inequities in the City report and do little to nothing to address them." To date, none of the reforms requested in the LDF Letter have been implemented.

A Falling Share of Black Residents Before and After the Tulsa Race Massacre

Table 1 is constructed from the 1920 Decennial Census that took place just before the Massacre and the 1930 Decennial Census that took place after.[8] Using the 1920 and 1930 censuses as contained in the IPUMS one percent samples, we present substantial differences between the relative demographic share of Black and White residents of Tulsa.

Table 1: Population Change in Tulsa Before and After Massacre

	1920	1930	Percent Change
All	69,781	132,648	+90%
Black	12,514	14,537	+16%
White	57,055	117,304	+106%
Black/White Ratio	22%	12%	–43%

Source: Based on analyses of the 1 percent sample from the 1920 U.S. Census and 1930 U.S. Census. Data: Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 10.0 [dataset]. (Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2020), https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V10.0.

Between 1920 and 1930, the Tulsa population increased from 69,781 to 132,684, a dramatic increase of about 90 percent. This rise is overwhelmingly due to the growth in the White population, which increased from 57,055 to 117,304—a 106 percent increase. The comparable estimate for the rise in the Black population was relatively marginal from 12,514 to 14,537, representing a 16 percent increase.[9] Further, the Black-White population ratio fell dramatically from 22% in 1920 to 12% in 1930, a difference of 43%. The marginal increase in the Black population relative to the White population and the falling Black-White population ratio is due, in part, to the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre described in the narrative above.[10]

8 Available at: https://ipums.org/.

9 We also reviewed Census data related to economic variables. It is difficult to disaggregate the economic effects of the Massacre from the economic calamity of the Great Depression, whose onset would be manifest in the 1930 Census. Census data reveal that for Tulsa's White population, the homeownership rate increase by 1 percent from 1920 (35.7 percent) and 1930 (36.2 percent). Among Tulsa's Black population, the homeownership rate increased by almost 17 percent, from 28.6 percent to 33.3 percent in 1930. In the state of Oklahoma, both Black and White home ownership rates decreased, with the Black population showing a steeper decline (22 percent) than for Whites (9 percent). Nationally, both groups saw home ownership increases, with the Black population showing a larger increase (5 percent) than Whites (2 percent).

10 The 1930 Census took place during the Great Depression which began in October 1929, an economic catastrophe that impacted most Americans. To ensure that we can ascribe population changes in Tulsa to the Massacre rather than the Great Depression, we also examine demographic changes in the state of Oklahoma and the U.S. in 1920 and 1930.

The "Trail of Tears" and a Brief History of Political, Economic, and Violent Exploitation and Extraction of Native Assets and Personhood

Oklahoma, and Tulsa County in particular, have some of the highest concentrations of Native Americans in the country. Given the interactive and intergenerational manner in which capital accumulates and translates to wealth, whenever considering the contemporary asset and debt position of any group of peoples, it is critical to contextualize their history, especially with regards to political, economic, and structural systems of oppressions. There is a long history associated with how Oklahoma came to have such a relatively high percentage of Native Americans.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans in 1620, the territory now known as the United States of America was inhabited by more than 1,000 sovereign Indigenous nations (McKay 2020). By some estimates, the combined population of Native Americans at the time was 5 million (Lui et al. 2006), with some scholars placing the number as high as 100 million (Thornton 1987). According to Lui et al. (2006, 36), many of these Indigenous nations or tribes "controlled different regions of the continent, and depending on the tribe, were either agrarian populations farming numerous crops, or nomads living off hunting, fishing, and gathering in established territories." Over the next 200 years, the combined effects of treaty making, land theft, control of tribal resources, disease, starvation, and war conspired in such a way that by "1800, many of [the] tribes had been forced inland by European settlements, and by 1900 the Native population was less than one million and was residing on less than 4 percent of the original continental United States" (Lui et al. 2006, 36).

One of the most egregious, lethal, and consequential of the federal government's policies towards Native Americans, and any group of people, was the Indian Removal Act (IRA) of 1830. The Act, which formalized the grabbing of land from Native Americans, was the result of increased pressure on the federal government for more land as the population of White settlers increased. The settlers demanded more land for agriculture and, therefore, cast their eyes on the rich agricultural land that belonged to the Cherokee, Chicksaw, Choctaw, Creek, and many other Native Nations (Lui et al. 2006).[11] Furthermore, land pressures were also the result of increased interest by profiteers in natural resources on Native lands. According to Lui et al. (2006), "the IRA was drafted to remove eastern tribes to lands west of the Mississippi, thereby opening up former [Native] lands in the East for White colonization" (2006, 42). The Act required that the removal of Native Americans would be accompanied by fair land exchanges and that force would not be used. In practice, "force was often used and the land exchanges were terribly inadequate" (Lui et al. 2006, 42).

The Cherokee, then primarily living in the southeastern parts of the United States, opposed the IRA by bringing it before the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court ruled in favor of the Cherokee, but President Andrew Jackson refused to enforce the ruling (Lui et al. 2006). As a result, many tribes, including Cherokee, Chicksaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole, were forcibly relocated to what was referred to as "Indian Territory," an area that later came to be known as Oklahoma (McKay 2020). This forcible removal has been referred to as the "Trail of Tears" because of the death, destruction, and terror that it wrought. The state-sanctioned act of terror resulted in the death of half

11 In May 2021, The Muscogee Nation released a new design for their tribe, with a preference for the use of The Muscogee Nation and Muscogee rather than Muscogee (Creek) Nation or Creek people. To learn more, see https://vimeo.com/muscogeenation. Given this branding update, the authors will refer to the "Muscogee," rather than "Creek" citizens in this paper for current references to the tribe. When citing sources that used the term "Creek" and were authored prior to this rebranding, the authors will cite the way in which the author referenced the tribe at the time the work was published.

of the Cherokee and Creek populations as they were marched off to Indian Territory during the perilous journey (McKay 2020).

Indian Territory covered almost 44 million acres of fertile land and legally this land was to belong to Native Americans in perpetuity (Lui et al. 2006; McKay 2020).[12] However, and as happened before, White settlers continued their westward expansion, aided by the federal government. According to McKay, "by 1890 only about 25 million acres of Indian Territory remained…in 1889, almost 2 million acres in western Oklahoma [Indian Territory] were redesignated as "Unassigned Lands" and opened to White settlement" (2020, 1). The final straw came with Oklahoma's attainment of statehood in 1907, whereupon the state supposedly "assumed jurisdiction over all its territory" (McKay 2020). This happened even though a 2020 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court (McGirt v. Oklahoma) ruled that close to half of Oklahoma was still Native territory: for example, the reservation lands of the Muscogee Nation were never disestablished by Congress (Healy and Liptak 2020). Subsequent rulings about tribal lands have opened up questions about taxation, criminal jurisdiction, management of lands, etc. for other tribes such as the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, and Seminole Nations.

Native Americans have been referred to as "Land Rich, Dirt Poor" (Adamson 2003). Even though Native Americans have lost much of their land over the last 400 hundred years, today they are collectively the biggest private landholders (Lui et al. 2006). If all the land owned by Native Americans was combined into one whole, it would be the fourth largest state by land mass behind Alaska, Texas, and California (Lui et al. 2006). Much of this land is fertile and rich in natural resources like oil, gas, coal, and uranium.

In spite of all this mass of land, Native Americans continue to have some of the lowest socioeconomic indicators in the country. According to the 2014 American Community Survey, 29 percent of Native Americans were living in poverty versus 16 percent for the entire population. This was the highest poverty rate recorded for any racial group that year. In Oklahoma, the poverty rate among Native Americans stood at 19 percent versus a state average of 12 percent.

The "Land Rich, Dirt Poor" phenomenon is explained by the fact that much of Native American land is held under trusteeship by the federal government, "meaning that the federal government controls when and how the land is leased, how much money the oil and gas and other resources sell for, and how the money earned is distributed" (Lui et al. 2006, 30). And in this role the federal government has largely "mismanaged [these resources], depriving [Native Americans] of untold amounts of revenue" (Lui et al. 2006, 30). The summarized history described above presents snippets of how Native Americans and Native American lands have not been afforded the same political protections as those of White Americans, and what is worse, their lands and personhood have been subject to seizure, theft, and fraudulent confiscation often enforced by unjust, destructive, and lethal U.S. state sanctioned violence.

12 Other tribes were already in Indian Territory prior to additional tribes being pushed into the area. This land was ancestral homeland to the Osage, Caddo, and Wichita tribes, as well as the Apache, Quapaw, Pawnee, Kiowa, Comanche, Arapaho, and others (see https://www.okhistory.org/research/airemoval).

METHODOLOGY FOR NASCC DATA

The vast majority of efforts to examine household wealth in the United States has defined ethnic groups broadly, reporting collective data on Black, White, and, to a lesser extent, Latinx households. In these aggregations, Asians and especially Native Americans are often omitted or combined into the nebulous “other” category. In contrast, the NASCC survey collects asset and debt information on key subgroups within broader categories. For example, within the broad category of Native Americans, NASCC collects data on the Cherokee, Muscogee, American Indians with Other Tribal Affiliation, and American Indians with No Tribal Affiliation.[13] Prior to the NASCC study, little had been known about the asset positions of these Native subgroups, especially in a localized context.

The first wave of the NASCC survey was administered in the Boston, MA; Los Angeles, CA; Miami, FL; Tulsa, OK; and Washington, DC metropolitan areas.[14] Criteria for choosing metropolitan areas included ethnic plurality of the region, geographical representation, area size, and access to certain ethnic groups that are historically underrepresented in surveys, such as Native Americans.

The methodology described here builds on that described in the four previous Color of Wealth reports: “The Color of Wealth in Miami” (Aja et al. 2019), “The Color of Wealth in Los Angeles” (De La Cruz-Viesca et al. 2016), “The Color of Wealth in the Nation’s Capital” (Kijakazi et al. 2016), and “The Color of Wealth in Boston” (Muñoz et al., 2015).

The survey instrument was designed primarily to gather information about a respondent’s wealth and specific assets, liabilities, and financial resources at the household level. Additional areas of inquiry included remittance behavior, that is, sending assets or other resources abroad, and financial support for relatives in the United States. The survey also solicited information relevant to the financial experiences of low wealth individuals who are vulnerable to predatory lending, such as the use of payday loans. Core demographic characteristics (e.g., age, sex, educational attainment, household composition, nativity, income, and family background) were collected in the survey.

The asset and debt module of the questionnaire originally mimicked questions used in the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), the longest running national longitudinal household survey that collected data on employment, income, wealth, expenditures, health, marriage, education, and numerous other topics in the U.S. For the non-asset and debt-based questions, the NASCC questionnaire replicated many questions found in the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality (MCSUI) survey.[15]

13 The NASCC project and data collection began under the leadership of the co-principal investigators, William Darity, Jr. and Darrick Hamilton, with generous financial support from the Ford Foundation as part of their Building Economic Security over a Lifetime initiative, initially directed by Kilolo Kijakazi.

14 The first iteration of the NASCC data collection, overall, involved a comprehensive set of outreach efforts to yield complete surveys. About 70,000 personalized letters were sent to people’s homes, 87,000 telephone numbers were dialed 448,000 times, and over 12,000 interviewer hours were spent across three workplace shops to conduct 2,746 completed surveys. The data was collected by Center for Survey Research (CSR) at the University of Virginia, directed by Thomas Guterbock.

15 In the early 1990s, the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality (MCSUI) survey was a cross-sectional four-city survey primarily aimed at gathering and comparing socioeconomic data across ethnic and racial groups.

The NASCC Tulsa sample was collected primarily in 2014 and towards the end of 2013. The NASCC research team used a variety of techniques to generate the sample, including obtaining directory-listed landline and cell phone random digit samples in census tracts and ZIP codes where target ethnic groups were known to reside in the Tulsa metropolitan statistical area.[16]

The NASCC study was primarily designed to compare specific ethnic and racial groups within the same metropolitan area. An advantage of this approach is the implicit control with regard to asset and debt pricing and products, especially house prices, associated with particular geographic areas.[17] In this report, we focus our analysis on the following disaggregated local groups: self-identified Black people exclusive of Latin American and Spanish heritage[18]; people reporting Mexican ancestry, both domestic and foreign-born; Cherokee households; Muscogee households; an aggregate category of American Indians with Other (Self-identified) Tribal Enrollment, an aggregate category of American Indians with No (Self-identified) Tribal Enrollment, and White people.[19] In Tulsa, 396 surveys were completed (inclusive of categories that are not formally examined in this report due to sample size). The number of completed surveys by each racial and ethnic group are reported in Table 2 (on the following page). Throughout the report, we focus on the categories labeled Black; Mexican; Cherokee; Muscogee; American Indian, American Indian with Other Tribal Enrollment (American Indians with self-reported tribal affiliation who are not enrolled as Cherokee or Muscogee); American Indian with No Tribal Enrollment (American Indians with no self-identified tribal affiliation), and White (see Table 2).[20, 21] All racial, ethnic and tribal classifications were based on self-identification of the respondents who reported they were best qualified to discuss family financial matters.[22]

16 Other techniques included the use of surname-based lists targeting specific national origin groups. See, for example, De La Cruz-Viesca et al. (2016) "The Color of Wealth in Los Angeles."

17 By way of reference, we compare all groups to White households when investigating differences in asset and debt holdings, acknowledging their top position in the economic hierarchy (Lewis 1985). There are some limitations with the NASCC data. When comparing all groups to White households (see footnote 22), some sample sizes are too small to detect statistically significant differences. Second, there are missing responses on some attributes and we opted not to impute these values. Further, NASCC is a cross-sectional survey which does not readily allow us to examine household changes over time. In addition, the survey is not nationally representative because of its focus on comparisons within each metropolitan area.

18 Identity can take on many forms and meanings based on who is doing the identification. In this case we relied on self-identification.

19 The term "American Indian" is used to indicate those who self-identify in U.S. Census racial categories as American Indian or Alaskan Native; however, we primarily examine only American Indian populations. The tribal groups studied are collectively referred to as "Native American" and in the tables showing NASCC data as "Native by Tribal Enrollment." Muscogee and Cherokee households were those that reported enrollment with the tribes. American Indians with other tribal enrollment indicated the following: Cheyenne, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Comanche, Cree, Iroquois, Kiowa, Navajo, Osage, Paiute, Potawatomi, and Sioux.

20 Black households were descendants of U.S. slavery. The Latinx, Other group included those who identified as Central American, South American, and Puerto Rican. Those classified as All Other included multiracial/ethnic households. Tribal affiliation was queried for all respondents who identified Native heritage; due to small sample sizes, we only report specific tribal enrollment for Cherokee and Muscogee respondents. There may be various reasons why respondents may have identified No Tribal Enrollment. We note that slightly over 50 percent of the non-tribally enrolled individuals also identified as White (Akee et al. 2016). For greater understanding of tribal enrollment, see National Congress of American Indians, Tribal Nations & the United States: An Introduction. https://www.ncai.org/about-tribes.

21 The racial, ethnic and tribal proportions in Table 1 are not representative of the group proportional shares in the Tulsa metropolitan area. The goal of the data collection was not necessarily intended to generate racial and ethnic population shares in Tulsa, but rather to identify asset and debt characteristics within each of the targeted racial, ethnic, and tribal groups. For instance, the proportional representation of Whites of 22 percent in our sample is much less than their nearly 2/3 actual representation in Tulsa, and this undercount was intended to allow for over-counts of other groups so as to generate enough observations of those other groups to measure their asset and debt positions.

22 The statistics generated in this report use weights based on family characteristics in the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Overall, the results computed from the unweighted NASCC sample are similar to those using the weighted NASCC sample. Survey respondents were asked if they owned various assets and debts to estimate their value. We assess whether there is a statistical difference in the ownership patterns by race, ethnicity, and tribal affiliation, comparing all groups to White respondents given their top position in economic hierarchy (Lewis 1985). Small sample sizes limit the statistical power to detect statistical differences even when there is good reason to suspect that group-based differences in assets levels and debts exist.

Table 2: Tulsa Respondents

	Respondents	Percent of Sample
White	89	22%
Black	66	17%
Mexican	55	14%
American Indian, No Tribal Enrollment	47	12%
Cherokee	44	11%
American Indian, Other Tribal Enrollment	36	9%
Muscogee	29	7%
Latinx, Other	22	6%
All Other Groups	8	2%
TOTAL	**396**	**100%**

Racial, Ethnic, and Tribal Demographic and Economic Variation Based on Census and NASCC Data

Population by Race, Ethnicity, and Tribal Affiliation

The subsection provides some demographic context based on our analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) and NASCC data.[23] Based on the 2013 ACS, we analyze the following racial, ethnic, tribal, and ancestral origins for Tulsa County, listed in order of proportion: White (65 percent), Black (10 percent), Mexican (9 percent), and Native American (5 percent).[24] Native Americans are further disaggregated into Cherokee (2 percent), American Indians with self-identified tribal heritage other than Cherokee or Muscogee (2 percent), and Muscogee (1 percent). These population shares are largely different to those reported in Table 2 for the NASCC because the NASCC deliberately oversampled some subgroups.

In Table 3, we present demographic data for Tulsa County using the ACS. Most groups, with the exception of Mexicans at 57 percent, had very high shares of U.S.-born respondents. White residents had the highest median age at 41, and Mexicans had the lowest at 22. The latter might be related to the previous statistic showing a

23 We chose 2013 Census data to more closely match the time period that NASCC data was collected. Tulsa County most closely reflects the metropolitan geography that was surveyed in the NASCC data. Note that the NASCC data included a question that asked respondents if they were currently *enrolled* with a tribe, whereas the ACS does not ask about enrollment but if respondents self-identify with a particular tribe. Therefore, the disaggregated Native American categories presented based on ACS data are not strictly comparable to those derived from the NASCC.

24 The ACS population estimates for those identified as Black, White, and Native Americans excludes individuals who identified as "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin."

smaller share of U.S.-born Mexicans than other groups. In other words, there is likely to be a high number of recent arrivals from Mexico who are relatively younger. The highest marriage rates were recorded for White and Mexican residents (55 percent and 54 percent, respectively), with the lowest recorded for Black respondents (at 32 percent). The highest rate of degree attainment was registered for White respondents at 33 percent, with Mexicans having the lowest attainment rate at 8 percent. White respondents had the highest median family income ($53,650) while Blacks had the lowest income ($27,965). Home ownership also varied by race and ethnicity. About two-thirds of White and Cherokee residents in Tulsa County owned homes. On the other hand, Black and Mexican households, at 42 percent and 46 percent respectively, had the lowest home ownership rates in the county.

Table 3: Demographic and Socioeconomic Status Characteristics by Ethnicity in Tulsa County, Oklahoma, Census Data

	U.S. Born	Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Married	Median Age	Median Family Income	Home Ownership
Black	97%	19%	32%	30	$27,965	42%
Mexican	57%	8%	54%	22	$35,871	46%
Native American	99.9%	21%	46%	30	$45,000	60%
Cherokee	99.9%	22%	51%	30	$46,607	67%
Muscogee	99.9%	16%	40%	28	$29,005	54%
American Indian, Other Tribe	99.9%	22%	43%	33	$46,427	54%
White	98%	33%	55%	41	$53,650	67%

Based on analysis of the 2013 3-Year American Community Survey. Data: Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 10.0 [dataset]. (Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2020), https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V10.0.

In Table 4, we present descriptive results for the Tulsa NASCC sample. Data on wealth and assets are presented in the next section. Most NASCC respondents were born in the U.S. with the exception of Mexicans, where 59 percent were born outside of the U.S. A majority of White and Native American respondents indicated that they were born in a rural area or small town—this is especially true for the Native American samples.

Some patterns in socioeconomic statistics in the NASCC sample are quite similar to those in the Tulsa County ACS presented earlier in Table 3. For instance, White respondents were older, more likely to have a bachelor's degree, and had a higher median family income than other respondents. Black respondents, at $25,000, had the lowest family income in Tulsa. However, there are some differences within groups in the NASCC as compared to the ACS data. For example, every group in the NASCC sample had a higher median age than their counterpart in the ACS. This is also the case with degree attainment where the NASCC registered higher rates for every group with the exception of American Indians with Other Tribal Enrollment. This was especially the case for Mexicans, where the rate of degree attainment in the NASCC was twice that in the ACS. In terms of marriage rates between the two datasets, White NASCC respondents had a marriage rate that was 11 percentage points higher than those in the ACS (66 percent in the NASCC versus 55 percent in the ACS) whereas for Black respondents it was almost identical (33 percent in the NASCC versus 32 percent in the ACS). In terms of median family income, there were some notable variations between the two datasets. In the NASCC, at $65,000, White households had a median family income that was 21 percent greater than that reported in the ACS. On the other hand, Black and Mexican households had lower median family incomes in the NASCC than in the ACS. For Muscogee and Cherokee households, median family incomes were higher in NASCC than the ACS. Finally, homeownership rates for every group were higher in the NASCC sample than in the Tulsa County ACS.

Table 4: Demographic and Socioeconomic Status Characteristics by Ethnicity, NASCC Sample Characteristics

	U.S. Born	Rural Born	Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Married	Median Age	Median Household Income	Home Ownership
Black	100%	48%	21%	33%	53	$25,000	44%
Native by Tribal Enrollment							
Cherokee	100%	88%	26%	53%	54	$60,000	76%
Muscogee	100%	78%	14%	52%	57	$40,000	65%
Other Tribe	100%	57%	21%	45%	56	$42,000	62%
Not Enrolled	100%	81%	27%	32%	63	$35,000	57%
Mexican	41%	45%	14%	50%	34	$32,000	50%
White	97%	58%	34%	66%	58	$65,000	85%

Source: NASCC survey, authors' calculations.

Note: "Rural Born" refers to those who indicated they resided in a rural area or small town before the age of 16.

In Table 5, we examine additional socioeconomic indicators for Tulsa, for rural Oklahoma, the entire state of Oklahoma, and the U.S. We use the same ACS dataset as above and show indicators for Black, Mexican, aggregated Native American tribal groups, and White respondents in Table 6. In terms of home ownership, Black and Mexican respondents were the least likely to be homeowners in general. Homeownership was more common for Black, Mexican, and White households in rural Oklahoma than in other geographies, including Tulsa County. In contrast, Native Americans were more likely to be homeowners in rural Oklahoma (65 percent) than in Tulsa County (60 percent), the state of Oklahoma (64 percent), and across the U.S. (57 percent).

In terms of median household income, Black people had higher income in rural Oklahoma ($29,722) than Tulsa County ($27,965). However, for the country as a whole Black median household income was $34,200. Mexican respondents had higher income in the U.S. ($40,000), followed by rural Oklahoma ($37,000), Tulsa County ($35,871), and finally at the state level ($34,600). Patterns for Native Americans' income differed with the other groups, with higher median values in Tulsa County ($45,000) than in rural Oklahoma ($35,008), followed by the state of Oklahoma ($36,753), and the U.S. ($35,871).

The group with the lowest poverty rates was White respondents. White respondents had higher poverty rates in rural Oklahoma (18 percent) than in Tulsa County (12 percent), the state of Oklahoma (16 percent), and the U.S. (13 percent). For Black people, poverty rates were highest in rural Oklahoma (38 percent), outpacing Tulsa County (36 percent), the state of Oklahoma (36 percent), and the U.S. (31 percent). Mexicans also had higher poverty rates rurally (31 percent) than in other locations (29 percent in Oklahoma, 28 percent in the U.S., and 26 percent in Tulsa County). Native Americans had the lowest poverty levels in Tulsa County (22 percent) and much higher rates elsewhere (24 percent in the state of Oklahoma, 26 percent in rural Oklahoma, and 32 percent nationally).

We also looked at unemployment rates in Table 5. White respondents had the lowest unemployment rates in all geographies, while Black people and Native Americans had among the highest rates. The unemployment rate for White people was slightly higher nationally at 6 percent, relative to Oklahoma state (4 percent), rural Oklahoma (4 percent), and Tulsa County (5 percent). Among Black people, the national unemployment rate at 13 percent was higher relative to Tulsa County at 10 percent, the state of Oklahoma at 9 percent, and rural Oklahoma at 6 percent. For Native Americans, unemployment rates were highest for the U.S. (14 percent), followed by Tulsa County (10 percent), rural Oklahoma (9 percent), and the state of Oklahoma (8 percent).

Finally, we looked at public sector employment. Public sector employment often includes higher wages, benefits, and potentially more stability. The public sector "is the single most important source of employment for African Americans," employing a higher share of Black workers than non-Black workers (Pitts 2011). Some researchers attribute economic growth among the Black population in recent decades to the rise in government employment (Brown and Erie 1981, as cited in Zipp 1994). Among White workers, a greater portion were employed in the public sector in Oklahoma state (19 percent) and rural Oklahoma (22 percent) than nationwide (16 percent), whereas the percentage of White workers employed in the public sector in Tulsa County at 11 percent was the lowest of the four geographies. For Black workers, a higher percentage was employed in the public sector in rural Oklahoma (28 percent), relative to the U.S. overall (20 percent), the state of Oklahoma (22 percent), and Tulsa County (17 percent). Patterns of public employment among Mexican workers across all geographies were generally lower than that of other groups. Native American workers were employed in the public sector at notably higher rates than the aforementioned groups. Nationally, 30 percent of Native American workers were employed in the public sector, whereas in Oklahoma state it was 26 percent and 30 percent in rural Oklahoma; Tulsa County was the exception at 12 percent.

Table 5: Socioeconomic Variables by Region

	Home Ownership	Median Income	Poverty	Unemployment	Public Sector Employment
Black					
U.S.	43%	$34,200	31%	13%	20%
Oklahoma	42%	$29,517	36%	9%	22%
Rural Oklahoma	46%	$29,722	38%	6%	28%
Tulsa County	42%	$27,965	36%	10%	17%
Mexican					
U.S.	48%	$40,000	28%	9%	11%
Oklahoma	52%	$34,600	29%	6%	8%
Rural Oklahoma	57%	$37,000	31%	7%	11%
Tulsa County	46%	$35,871	26%	4%	4%
Native American					
U.S.	57%	$35,871	32%	14%	30%
Oklahoma	64%	$36,753	24%	8%	26%
Rural Oklahoma	65%	$35,008	26%	9%	30%
Tulsa County	60%	$45,000	22%	10%	12%
White					
U.S.	72%	$56,965	13%	6%	16%
Oklahoma	71%	$48,600	16%	4%	19%
Rural Oklahoma	73%	$43,500	18%	4%	22%
Tulsa County	67%	$53,650	12%	5%	11%

Based on analysis of the 2013 3-Year American Community Survey. Data: Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 10.0 [dataset]. (Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2020), https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V10.0.

We also disaggregated the above socioeconomic variables for Native American tribal groups. The results are presented in Table 6. Cherokee households had a higher homeownership rate than the aggregate rate for Native Americans presented in Table 5. Nationally, the rate for Cherokee households was 64 percent; across the state of Oklahoma, it was 68 percent, and in rural Oklahoma and in Tulsa County, 70 percent and 67 percent, respectively. Among those with a Muscogee tribal affiliation, the homeownership rate was substantially higher for respondents residing in rural Oklahoma (80 percent) than nationally (64 percent), in the state of Oklahoma (62 percent), and in Tulsa County (54 percent). Among American Indians with Other Tribal Enrollment, the homeownership rate was smaller in the U.S. (55 percent) and Tulsa County (54 percent) than in rural Oklahoma (61 percent) and the state (62 percent).

Cherokee people living in Tulsa County had a higher household income (about $47,000) than those living in rural Oklahoma (about $30,000). In contrast, the Muscogee people living in rural Oklahoma had a substantially higher household income (about $86,000) relative to Muscogee people living in Tulsa County (about $29,000).[25] Among American Indians with Other Tribal Enrollment, the pattern was similar to that of the Cherokee—household income was the highest in Tulsa County (about $46,000) compared to about $38,000 in rural Oklahoma, about $37,000 in Oklahoma, and about $35,000 in the U.S.

Among the Cherokee people, the national poverty rate (25 percent) was similar to that of the state of Oklahoma (23 percent), rural Oklahoma (27 percent), but higher than Tulsa County (19 percent). For the Muscogee people, the poverty rate was 31 percent in Tulsa County, which was higher than the national rate (24 percent), the rate across Oklahoma (27 percent), and the rate in rural Oklahoma (25 percent). Notably, among American Indians with Other Tribal Enrollment, the national poverty rate (33 percent) was higher relative to the rate in Oklahoma, rural Oklahoma, and Tulsa County.

Patterns for public sector workers were similar in that the percentage of public sector employment among the Cherokee people, the Muscogee people, and American Indians with Other Tribal Enrollment were lower in Tulsa County than in the other three geographies.

25 In rural Oklahoma, findings for the Muscogee median household income were based on a small sample size of 23 households.

Table 6: Socioeconomic Variables by Tribal Affiliation and Region

	Home Ownership	Income	Poverty	Unemployment	Public Sector Employment
Cherokee					
U.S.	64%	$38,000	25%	9%	23%
Oklahoma	68%	$36,896	23%	6%	24%
Rural Oklahoma	70%	$30,400	27%	7%	31%
Tulsa County	67%	$46,607	19%	10%	13%
Muscogee					
U.S.	64%	$41,429	24%	10%	27%
Oklahoma	62%	$33,170	27%	9%	24%
Rural Oklahoma	80%	$85,965	25%	0%	27%
Tulsa County	54%	$29,005	31%	9%	14%
Other Tribal Enrollment					
U.S.	55%	$35,215	33%	15%	31%
Oklahoma	62%	$37,493	24%	9%	27%
Rural Oklahoma	61%	$37,700	26%	10%	30%
Tulsa County	54%	$46,427	19%	11%	11%

Based on analysis of the 2013 3-Year American Community Survey. Data: Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 10.0 [dataset]. (Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2020), https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V10.0.

Incarceration in Tulsa

The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. According to the Prison Policy Initiative (2021), about one percent of adult Americans are behind bars at any given time in the country, which translates into 2 million people or 698 people per 100,000. The total monetary cost of keeping this many people behind bars has been estimated at $182 billion (Prison Policy Initiative 2017).

The costs to society and on families of incarceration are racially disparate and dramatic; indeed, Michelle Alexander (2012) explains that imprisonment has become America's de facto system of segregation. According to Pettit and Western (2004) "among men born between 1965 and 1969, 3 percent of Whites and 20 percent of blacks had served time in prison by their early thirties."

Wealth is related to the likelihood of incarceration. Also, if confronted with the criminal justice system, low family wealth limits resources and access to networks to navigate the system, and in turn increases likelihood of incarceration.[26] Such exposure to law enforcement and imprisonment is associated with depressed wealth accumulation over one's life course by way of many factors, including loss of income and increased legal and other forms of debt (Harris, Evans, and Beckett 2010). Incarceration is also related to destabilized households and reduced asset building capacity for non-incarcerated household members as well (Zaw, Hamilton, and Darity 2016).[27]

It is noteworthy that Oklahoma has one of the highest incarceration rates in the United States and possibly in the world (Pauly 2019). The state's incarceration rate stands at 1,079 for every 100,000 people (Prison Policy Initiative 2018). The state's incarceration rate is almost double that of the country; however, like other parts of the country, the distribution of this incarceration is not equally shared across, race, ethnicity, and tribal affiliation. Table 7 presents information from the NASCC as responses to the question: "Have you or an immediate family member spent time in prison, jail, or reform school?" From the table we see that Native Americans have the highest rates of incarceration in Tulsa with rates ranging from 34 percent of households for American Indians with No Tribal Affiliation to 27 percent for Cherokee households. For Black households the incarceration rate is 20 percent, followed by Mexican households with a rate of 12 percent. White households have the lowest incarceration rate at 10 percent, which is still very high. The rates of incarceration for Native American subgroups are all statistically different to those of White households.

26 Chris Jenkins in his film "Trapped: Cash Bail in America" shows how race and class are related to constraints on posting bond and the likelihood of taking a plea deal.

27 Using longitudinal data that, for over four decades, tracks a cohort of youths and young adults well into their middle-age, Zaw, Hamilton and Darity (2016) find that growing up in a family with low wealth is associated with a greater likelihood of incarceration; that incarceration, in turn, is associated with a reduced trajectory of wealth accumulation; and that Black youths and young adults are far more likely to grow up in low wealth households, become incarcerated, and have a reduced trajectory of asset accumulation. Moreover, the study found independent effects of race on incarceration as well as wealth accumulation; in other words, even when a Black youth or young adult grew up in a family with higher wealth than their White counterpart, they were still more likely to be incarcerated, and Black formerly incarcerated people more often than not still had lower levels of wealth than their White counterparts.

Table 7: Incarceration in Tulsa, Oklahoma (Percent of Households)

	Percent
Black	20.0%
Mexican	12.0%
Native by Tribal Enrollment	
Cherokee	27.0%**
Muscogee	28.0%**
Other Tribe	30.0%**
Not Enrolled	34.0%***
White	10.0%

Source: NASCC survey, authors' calculations.

Note: The difference in the percentage of noted groups as compared with the percentage of White households is statistically significant at the ***99%, **95%, *90% level.

Several reasons have been advanced to explain why Oklahoma, and Tulsa in particular, have such high rates of incarceration. For example, the state has a tough "three-strikes law," passed in 1987, that can result in life-sentences if individuals are convicted of three drug trafficking felonies (Pauly 2019). Second, as of 1999, many people who are incarcerated must serve 85 percent of their sentences before parole can be considered, irrespective of good behavior (Pauly 2019). Lastly, Oklahoma's courts tend to mete out much longer prison sentences for drug and non-violent crimes, even to those convicted for the first time (Pauly 2019).

The Color of Wealth in Tulsa

This section presents findings describing "The Color of Wealth in Tulsa." We begin by presenting the results by race, ethnicity, and tribal ancestry on household assets and thereafter present the results on debt. In the final section, we present the results on the overall net wealth position of households disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and tribal enrollment.

Financial Assets

The Tulsa survey results reveal that White households are far more likely to hold various forms of assets than every other racial and ethnic group. However, the degree of difference between White households and other groups varied a great deal.

Liquid Assets

Liquid assets, which are assets that can readily be converted to cash, are particularly crucial in times of need, such as a job loss, an emergency, or some unexpected negative shock to household finances. Liquid assets include checking and savings accounts, as well as money market accounts or certificates of deposit (CDs), savings bonds, and treasury bills.

As shown in Table 8, most White households in Tulsa—92 percent—owned liquid assets. Rates were lower for Cherokee households (76 percent), American Indian with No Tribal Enrollment households (76 percent), Muscogee households (74 percent), American Indian with Other Tribal Enrollment households (69 percent), and Mexican households (62 percent). Liquid assets were the lowest among Black households (49 percent).

Having a bank account is crucial for everyday safe financial transactions and savings. Less than half of Black households (45 percent) and 60 percent of Mexican households had checking accounts, compared to 91 percent of White households. Other households were also statistically less likely to hold checking accounts than White households, but not by as wide a margin. Savings accounts were less common among all groups; households that were Black (38 percent), Other Tribal Enrolled (40 percent), Muscogee (43 percent), Mexican (46 percent), Cherokee (54 percent), and American Indian with No Tribal Enrollment (57 percent), were all statistically less likely to hold savings accounts compared to White households (73 percent).

Other Financial Assets

Unlike bank accounts, the majority of households in our sample lacked other financial assets such as stocks and Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) or private annuities (see Table 9 on page 27).[28] However, these asset types were still most common among White households. These findings highlight the lack of long-term investment options among many Black, Mexican, and Native American households in Tulsa.

28 Stocks are generally defined by personal/household investment of shares of a company or industry. An IRA is a retirement account held at a financial institution which allows individuals to save for retirement through tax-free growth or on a tax-deferred basis.

Table 8: Percentage of Households Owning Any Type of Liquid Asset, Checking Account, or Savings Account

	Liquid Assets		Checking Account		Savings Account	
	Percent	Percentage Point Difference from White Households	Percent	Percentage Point Difference from White Households	Percent	Percentage Point Difference from White Households
Black	49.0%	-42.7***	44.7%	-46.1***	37.7%	-35.4***
Mexican	61.8%	-29.8***	59.8%	-31.1***	45.6%	-27.5***
Native by Tribal Enrollment						
Cherokee	75.5%	-16.2***	75.5%	-15.4**	54.0%	-19.0***
Muscogee	73.8%	-17.8***	68.5%	-15.4***	42.7%	-30.3**
Other Tribe	69.1%	-22.6***	67.6%	-22.4***	40.1%	-33.0***
Not Enrolled	75.8%	-15.9**	66.8%	-23.3***	57.1%	-16.0*
White	91.7%	-	90.9%	-	73%	-

Source: NASCC survey, authors' calculations.
Note: The difference in the percentage of noted groups as compared with the percentage of White households is statistically significant at the ***99%, **95%, *90% level.

Stocks, Mutual Funds, and Investment Trusts

Table 9 shows the percentage of households with stocks. Stock ownership was low among all groups, but White households (37 percent) were the most likely to own stocks. In comparison, very few Mexican (3 percent) and Black (5 percent) households held stocks and the difference compared to White households was statistically significant, while about a fifth of households identified as American Indian with No Tribal Enrollment held stocks.

Retirement Funds

Although they have higher rates of ownership than stocks, most households do not have Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA) or private annuities to supplement Social Security (see Table 8). White households (40 percent) were the most likely to have one of these accounts in Tulsa, while retirement investments were significantly less common among Black (13 percent) and Mexican respondents (16%).

Black, Mexican, and American Indian with No Tribal Enrollment households' retirement account ownership rates were statistically different from that of White households.

Table 9: Percentage of Households Owning Stocks, IRA, or Private Annuity

	Stocks	IRA or Private Annuity
Black	4.9%***	12.7%***
Mexican	2.8%***	15.8%*
Native by Tribal Enrollment		
Cherokee	22.8%	24.1%
Muscogee	25.9%	24.8%
Other Tribe	25.9%	29.4%
Not Enrolled	21.0%*	27.0%
White	37.0%	39.6%

Source: NASCC survey, authors' calculations.
Note: The difference in the percentage of noted groups as compared with the percentage of White households is statistically significant at the ***99%, **95%, *90% level.

To summarize, there are large racial, ethnic, and tribal variations in asset ownership, as shown in Table 8 and 9. Over half of Muscogee households lacked savings accounts. Most Black and Mexican households—over 90 percent—do not own stocks, and the same can be said of approximately three quarters of Cherokee, Muscogee, and American Indians with Other Tribal Enrollment, as well as American Indians with No Tribal Enrollment. If not for the federal Social Security program, many households in Tulsa would be unsupported during retirement.[29]

Unsecured Debts

Unsecured debts are financial liabilities not supported by assets. In this section we describe unsecured debt from credit cards, student loans, and medical bills, and a combination of all sources.

29 Still, social security is not enough; the Social Security and Medicare Boards of Trustees (2020) estimated, before the COVID-19 pandemic, that on time payments would continue through 2034.

Credit Cards

Credit card debt is often taken out for consumption rather than investment purposes, and thus is generally considered less "healthy" than other forms of debt attached to an asset. Still, increasing volatility in work hours, financial crises, and other economic conditions render the availability to credit crucial.

While we are unable to report credit card debt values, Table 10 shows that between one-fifth to nearly one-half of Tulsa households had credit card debt. Those least likely to have credit card debt were Mexican households (22 percent), along with Muscogee households and American Indian with No Tribal Enrollment households, of which 28 percent had credit card debt. In contrast, close to half (47 percent) of White households had credit card debt.

Student Loans

Although considered a more "healthy" form of debt than credit card debt, given that more education is associated with higher earnings within racial and ethnic groups, student loans can place a substantial burden on young people's ability to build wealth, and the preponderance and implications of this debt vary considerably across race, ethnicity, and tribal affiliation. Black millennials across the U.S. have 67 percent more student loan debt than their White counterparts (Whistle 2019). Black and Latinx individuals are much more likely to have fallen behind in student loan payments and less likely to have paid off their student loans than their White counterparts (Federal Reserve 2017). And, due to labor market discrimination, Black college graduates attain lower wages than their White college graduate counterparts (Hamilton et al. 2021)

Among Tulsa households, Black households were the most likely to have student loans, at 30 percent, with a rate that was statistically different than White respondents, at 11 percent (see Table 10). Another group with a relatively high rate of student loans were Muscogee respondents at 19 percent.

Medical Debt

Black (15 percent), Mexican (14 percent), and Cherokee (11 percent) households had similar and/or were somewhat less likely to have medical debt than White households, at 17 percent (see Table 10). The opposite was true for the other Native American groups, with at least a fifth reporting medical debt. Rates were highest for Muscogee households (28 percent) and American Indians with No Tribal Enrollment (27 percent), followed by American Indians with Other Tribal Enrollment (23 percent).[30]

30 The high rate of medical debt among Native Americans may directly relate to policy. Indian Health Service (IHS), an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides health insurance coverage to 2.56 million of the approximately 5.2 million American Indians and Alaska Natives (Indian Health Service nd.). Reports analyzing IHS data have shown that the agency's unwillingness to fully cover medical bills has left over 500,000 patients with a crippling $2 billion of medical debt (Walker 2019).

Table 10: Percentage of Households Having Various Types of Debt

	Credit Card		Student Loan		Medical Debt	
	Percent	Percentage Point Difference from White Households	Percent	Percentage Point Difference from White Households	Percent	Percentage Point Difference from White Households
Black	32.0%	-15.0	30.0%**	+19.0	15.4%	-2.0
Mexican	22.0%**	-25.0	11.0%	0.0	14.5%	-2.9
Native by Tribal Enrollment						
Cherokee	36.5%	-10.5	10.3%	-.68	10.8%	-6.6
Muscogee	28.3%	-18.7	19.4%	+8.4	28.1%	+10.7
Other Tribe	34.2%	-12.9	14.4%	+3.4	22.9%	+5.5
Not Enrolled	27.9%	-19.1	12.5%	+1.5	27.3%	+9.9
White	47.0%	-	11.0%	-	17.4%	-

Source: NASCC survey, authors' calculations.
Note: The difference in the percentage of noted groups as compared with the percentage of White households is statistically significant at the ***99%, **95%, *90% level.

Tangible Assets and Secured Debt

Tangible assets include houses, vehicles, and other property. Secured debts are those that are collateralized up by the borrower with a promise to repay the debt.

Homeownership

For most Americans, homes are the main asset in which they store their net worth. Expectedly, homeownership rates in Tulsa varied by race and ethnicity. White households (85 percent) were the most likely to be homeowners (see Table 11). More than three quarters of Cherokee households (76 percent) and about two thirds of Muscogee households (65 percent) owned homes. Black respondents (44 percent) had the lowest rates of homeownership in Tulsa, followed by Mexicans (50 percent) and American Indians with No Tribal Enrollment (57 percent).

We also examined home equity, the difference between a home's value and loans, among those who owned a home. The median Black household had $31,000 in home equity, which is 39 percent of the value of median White home equity ($80,000). Mexican households' home equity value was only 50 percent of White households ($40,000). Muscogee households' home equity values were 88 percent of that of White households ($70,000). Cherokee households, American Indian with Other Tribal Enrollment households, and American Indian with No Tribal Enrollment households had home equity values equal to or greater than that of White households.

Table 11: Percentage of Households That Have Tangible Assets by Type of Asset

	Home				Vehicle	
	Percent Owning a Home	Difference from White Households	Home Equity Value	Percent of White Households	Percent Owning a Vehicle	Difference from White Households
Black	44.0%	–40.6***	$31,000***	39%	75%	–22.9***
Mexican	50.0%	–34.6***	$40,000***	50%	88%	–9.9***
Native by Tribal Enrollment						
Cherokee	76.4%	-8.2	$80,000	100%	90%	–7.9**
Muscogee	65.0%	–19.6*	$70,000	88%	82%	–15.9***
Other Tribe	62.0%	–22.6**	$135,000**	169%	67%	–30.9***
Not Enrolled	57.0%	–27.6***	$81,000	101%	96%	–1.9
White	84.6%	-	$80,000	-	97.9%	-

Source: NASCC survey, authors' calculations.

Note: The difference in the percentage of noted groups as compared with the percentage of White households is statistically significant at the ***99%, **95%, *90% level.

Mortgages

Mortgage debt was most common among Black homeowning households (75 percent), which is a large and statistically significant difference from mortgage rates among White homeowners (43 percent) (Table 12). The mortgage rates among Mexican homeowners was 54 percent, American Indians with Other Tribal Enrollment was 46 percent, and for Cherokee homeowners the rate was 44 percent. Less than a third of Muscogee homeowners had mortgage debt (30 percent).

Table 12: Percentage of Homeowners With Mortgage Debt

	Percent	Percentage Point Difference from White Households
Black	75.0%	+32.0***
Mexican	54.0%	+11.0
Native by Tribal Enrollment		
Cherokee	44.4%	+1.4
Muscogee	29.9%	–13.1
Other Tribe	45.8%	+2.8
Not Enrolled	37.9%	–5.1
White	43.0%	-

Source: NASCC survey, authors' calculations.

Note: The difference in the percentage of noted groups as compared with the percentage of White households is statistically significant at the ***99%, **95%, *90% level.

Vehicles

Although vehicles are assets that typically have high depreciation rates, they may serve as a resource that facilitates employment options. Those who have access to a vehicle can reach jobs in other geographies and can work longer hours if needed. A 2011 Brookings Institute report ranked Tulsa 61 out of 100 metropolitan areas in terms of overall transit accessibility and 71 out of 100 in job accessibility (Tomer et al. 2011). Not having a vehicle can impede employment for Tulsa residents.

Table 11 on the previous page shows that vehicle ownership rates in Tulsa were relatively high. However, households that were American Indian with Other Tribal Enrollment (67 percent), Black (75 percent), Mexican (88 percent), and Cherokee (90 percent) had vehicle ownership rates that were significantly less than that of White households (98 percent).

Vehicle Debt

Although households that were American Indian with Other Tribal Enrollment reported the lowest vehicle ownership rate, these vehicle owning households were the most likely to have vehicle debt (54 percent), though not significantly more so than White households at 43 percent (Table 13). Muscogee car owning households were the least likely to have vehicle debt (16 percent).

Table 13: Percentage of Car Owner Households With Vehicle Debt

	Percent	Percentage Point Difference from White Households
Black	47.8%	+4.6
Mexican	37.2%	-6.0
Native by Tribal Enrollment		
Cherokee	45.2%	+2.0
Muscogee	16.2%	-27.0**
Other Tribe	54.1%	+10.9
Not Enrolled	29.0%	-14.2
White	43.2%	-

Source: NASCC survey, authors' calculations.

Note: The difference in the percentage of noted groups as compared with the percentage of White households is statistically significant at the ***99%, **95%, *90% level.

Payday Lending

Payday loans are small, unsecured loans with high interest rates that individuals seek as last-resort emergency financing after other sources of credit have been exhausted. The industry has grown substantially since its inception in the 1990s. In 1996 there were around 2,000 payday lending institutions (Prager 2009). Almost two decades later, that number had grown to 20,000 lenders (Pew Charitable Trusts 2021). The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) estimated that payday lenders usually charge "$15 to $20 per $100 advanced for a two week period, resulting in an annual percentage rate (APR) of nearly 400%" (FDIC, 2015). Users may intend to borrow and quickly return a small amount of money but instead find themselves in a cycle of debt: they "often struggle for months to repay obligations marketed as lasting only weeks" (FDIC, 2015). Twelve million American adults use payday loans and most take out the loans to meet ordinary living expenses and not unexpected emergencies (Pew Charitable Trusts 2014). The odds of taking out a payday loan are higher for Black people, those without a four-year degree, home renters, and those earning less than $40,000 (FDIC, 2015).

The Color of Wealth surveys asked participants the following question: "In the last five years have you (or a family member) taken a loan or cash advance from a payday lender?" Compared to other Color of Wealth studies, lending rates were highest in Tulsa, Oklahoma, followed by Miami, Florida. Looking closely at payday loan usage in Tulsa, Muscogee households were most likely to use payday lending at 33 percent (Table 14). This was over twice that of respondents who were Cherokee (15 percent); American Indian with Other Tribal Enrollment (15 percent); American Indian with No Tribal Enrollment (14 percent); and Black (16 percent). Here, we disaggregated Mexican households by birthplace and U.S. born Mexicans were three times as likely to use payday loans than their immigrant counterparts. A larger percentage of White respondents used payday loans in Tulsa (8 percent) than in any of the other metropolitan areas where Color of Wealth studies have been conducted.

Table 14: Payday Loan Usage Among Households in Tulsa, Oklahoma

	Percent
Black, U.S. Descendant	16%
Mexican	5%
Immigrant	3%
U.S.	9%
Native by Tribal Enrollment	
Cherokee	15%
Muscogee	33%**
Other Tribe	15%
Not Enrolled	14%
White, U.S.	8%

Source: NASCC survey, authors' calculations.

Note: The difference in the percentage of noted groups as compared with the percentage of White households is statistically significant at the ***99%, **95%, *90% level.

The Pew Charitable Trusts estimated 13 percent of adults in the state of Oklahoma used payday loans in 2012, more than twice the national average (Pew Charitable Trusts 2012). Tulsa's and Oklahoma's high rate of payday loan usage is related to policy. The Pew Charitable Trusts (2012) categorized state payday lending policies as permissive, hybrid, or restrictive, with the most permissive states having the fewest regulations. Permissive states tend to have the highest number of lenders per capita and charge the highest APRs. Oklahoma is classified as a permissive state and APRs in the state around the time of the survey were—and still are—among the highest in the country. The State of Oklahoma Department of Consumer Credit (2015) indicated that there were 320 payday lenders in the state with the majority concentrated in Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

Lenders in the state tend to target economically vulnerable populations and especially those serving in the military (Blatt 2017). Placing caps on interest rates and limiting borrowers to only one outstanding loan at a time are some of the policy initiatives that could address the state's payday loan crisis (Cullison 2019).

Asset, Debt, and Net Worth Values

Asset Values

Table 15 presents the estimated value of household liquid and total assets. As expected, White households have higher liquid and total asset values than any other racial and ethnic group.

Liquid assets can quickly be converted into cash. Such assets include money in savings and checking accounts, stocks, money market funds, and government bonds. White households had a median value of $12,000. The median liquid asset value for other communities was much lower. Black households had *$0 in median liquid assets*. Liquid assets for Muscogee households ($19), Mexicans ($80), and American Indians with No Tribal Enrollment ($99) were also low, and these groups held less than or equal to one percent of the value of White households. Median liquid assets were, however, higher among Cherokee households ($10,000).

Total assets include liquid and tangible assets such as homes and vehicles. White respondents had the highest median total asset values in Tulsa ($155,000). The median asset value was lowest among American Indians with No Tribal Enrollment ($4,700) who held only 3 percent of the asset value of White households. Median total assets were also low among households that were Mexican ($9,500 or 6 percent of White households), Black ($12,000 or 8 percent of White households), and American Indians with Other Tribal Enrollment ($13,500 or 9 percent of White households). Cherokee households had more assets but still less than half those of White households ($75,200 or 49 percent of White households).

Table 15: Value of Assets Held by Households by Race and Ethnicity

	Liquid Assets		Total Assets	
	Median (U.S. Dollars)	Percent of White Households	Median (U.S. Dollars)	Percent of White Households
Black	$0	0.0%	$12,000***	8.0%
Mexican	$80	1.0%	$9,000***	6.0%
Native by Tribal Enrollment				
Cherokee	$10,000	83.0%	$75,200	49.0%
Muscogee	$19	0.2%	$42,500**	27.0%
Other Tribe	$4,500	38.0%	$13,500	9.0%
Not Enrolled	$99	1.0%	$4,700***	3.0%
White	$12,000	-	$155,000	-

Source: NASCC survey, authors' calculations.
Note: The difference in the percentage of noted groups as compared with the percentage of White households is statistically significant at the ***99%, **95%, *90% level.

Debt Values

Amounts of non-housing and non-vehicle debt in Tulsa also differ by race and ethnicity (see Table 16). Debt values were highest among American Indians with No Tribal Enrollment ($16,000) and Muscogee households ($15,000), who had about three times the debt of White households. Muscogee households had debt values that were statistically different from White households. White households had a median non-housing debt value of $5,400, which was statistically similar to the median values for households that were American Indian with Other Tribal Enrollment ($4,000), Cherokee ($7,000) and Black ($7,000). The magnitude of asset differences across racial, ethnic, and tribal groups is much larger than differences in debt. For instance, the median White household is estimated to have $112,400 more in assets than Muscogee households ($155,000 for White households versus $42,500 for Muscogee households) but only $8,000 less debt ($5,400 for White households versus $15,000 for Muscogee households).

Table 16: Median Total Non-Housing and Non-Vehicle Debt Held by Households

	Median (U.S. Dollars)
Black	$7,000
Mexican	$8,500
Native by Tribal Enrollment	
Cherokee	$7,000
Muscogee	$15,000*
Other Tribe	$4,000
Not Enrolled	$16,000
White	$5,400

Source: NASCC survey, authors' calculations.
Note: The difference in the percentage of noted groups as compared with the percentage of White households is statistically significant at the ***99%, **95%, *90% level.

Income and Net Worth

Table 17 examines both median household income and net worth across race, ethnicity, and tribal affiliation. White households ($65,000) had the highest household income and the differences when compared to all other ethnic groups were statistically significant. Black households ($25,000) and Mexican households ($30,000) had the lowest household income. Compared to other regions around the nation, Tulsa's income disparities are large—and disparities in wealth are even worse.

Net worth (or wealth) is the difference between the value of total assets and the value of total debts. It provides the best assessment of a household's financial and overall economic well-being. There are remarkable ethnic, racial, and tribal differences in total household wealth (see Table 17). Households of color in Tulsa had a fraction of the wealth of White households. In complete contrast to the median wealth of $145,000 for White households, American Indians with No Tribal Enrollment only had $4,000 in net worth. Other groups with lower wealth values were Mexican ($7,000), American Indian with Other Tribal Enrollment ($7,000), and Black households ($8,000). All groups, with the exception of American Indian with Other Tribal Enrollment households and Cherokee households, had median wealth values that were statistically different from White households. There was variation in wealth amongst Native American households based on tribal affiliation. For instance, Cherokee households were relatively better off with a median wealth value of $75,200 or 52 percent of the wealth of White households, followed by Muscogee households at $42,500 or 29 percent the wealth of White households.

Table 17: Household Income and Median Net Worth

	Median Family Income	Percent of White Households	Median (U.S. Dollars)	Percent of White Households
Black	$25,000***	38.0%	$8,000***	6.0%
Mexican	$32,000***	49.0%	$7,000***	5.0%
Native by Tribal Enrollment				
Cherokee	$60,000***	92.0%	$75,200	52.0%
Muscogee	$40,000***	62.0%	$42,500*	29.0%
Other Tribe	$42,000***	65.0%	$7,000	5.0%
Not Enrolled	$35,000***	54.0%	$4,000**	3.0%
White	$65,000	-	$145,000	-

Source: NASCC survey, authors' calculations.
Note: The difference in the percentage of noted groups as compared with the percentage of White households is statistically significant at the ***99%, **95%, *90% level.

Racial and ethnic differences in net worth show the tenuous financial circumstances faced by some households of color. Table 17 also shows that there is substantial heterogeneity in wealth within Native Americans in Tulsa. The differences may be driven by the availability of different tribal resources, programs, and history. For example, "reports from the Cherokee and [Muscogee] Nations indicate substantial differences in revenues managed by tribal governments" (Akee et al. 2016, 1952). This, in turn, is a result of the fact that "each tribe in the United States has had [over the course of history] a different experience related to treaty making, land theft, and control of tribal resources" (Lui et al. 2006, 36). That is, different tribes have different degrees of political and fiscal sovereignty, vis-à-vis the federal government. This data shows that Cherokee households had a comparatively higher value of median wealth. A 2016 study identified the Cherokee as the only tribe in Tulsa "with a well-established and broad-based Individual Development Account (IDA) program" (Akee et al. 2016, 1952). Every dollar that a Cherokee citizen deposits in their IDA is matched up to five times by the Cherokee Nation and can be used towards the purchase of tangible assets.

Assets and Net Worth Across Education

Table 18 stratifies our sample into education cohorts and examines the percentage of households that are banked, homeowners, vehicle owners, and that have cumulative wealth. Unfortunately, limited sample size does not permit us to present data broken down by education for all the groups defined by ancestral origin, so we combined Latinx (including Mexican and other Latinx groups) and Native American households into homogenous categories irrespective of ancestral and tribal origins. Similarly, we used associate degree and higher (as opposed to a bachelor's degree) due to sample size.

Black households with at least an associate degree were statistically less likely than White households to be banked and own a home and a vehicle. Latinx and Native American households with an associate degree or greater had similar home ownership and vehicle ownership rates as compared to similarly educated White household but were statistically less likely to be banked. In terms of net worth, we were unable to detect statistical significance for any of the groups relative to White households. However, it is worth noting that more educated Black households (median wealth of $17,050) and Latinx households (median wealth of $31,008) had much less wealth than similar White households (median net wealth of $145,000).

Table 18: Banked Households, Home and Vehicle Ownership Rates Among Households With an Associate Degree or Higher

	Black	Latinx	Native American	White
Banked Rate	64.0%***	90.0%**	89.0%**	100.0%
Homeownership Rate	42.5%***	80.7%	84.1%	89.5%
Vehicle Ownership Rate	77.3%***	83.8%	96.3%	100.0%
Net Worth	$17,050	$31,008	$180,018	$145,000

Source: NASCC survey, authors' calculations.

Note: The difference in the percentage of noted groups as compared with the percentage of White households is statistically significant at the ***99%, **95%, *90% level.

Remittances and Domestic Transfers

Black middle-class families in the United States are more likely than White families to have siblings or parents who are poor (Chiteji and Hamilton 2002), and as a result of altruistic family financial obligations, may accumulate less wealth over time (Toney and Hamilton 2021; O'Brien 2012; Chiteji and Hamilton 2002; Heflin and Pattillo 2002). Toney and Hamilton (2021) found that family economic insecurity is in fact one of the largest contributors to the Black-White wealth gap among middle income earners in the third generation. Similarly, for many immigrants, remittances (international financial transfers) via altruistic kin obligations may be a drain on their resources to accumulate wealth and ultimately contribute to the racial wealth gap.

In the context of Tulsa, the NASCC survey asked respondents if they regularly give money to family members in the U.S. or abroad. The survey found that Native American households reported large levels of domestic giving: American Indians with No Tribal Affiliation were most likely to give to relatives (27 percent), followed by those identified as Muscogee (25 percent) and those identified as Cherokee (18 percent) (Table 18). For Black households, more than a fifth (22 percent) reported making transfers to relatives within the U.S., with one percent sending remittances abroad. We found that 10 percent of Mexican households gave money to families in the U.S. and

20 percent sent money abroad. We disaggregated the Mexican respondents by immigration status and found Mexican immigrants were the least likely to report domestic transfers (3 percent). However, 26 percent of Mexican immigrants sent money abroad. In contrast, 20 percent of U.S.-born Mexicans report making financial transfers to other relatives residing in the U.S. and 10 percent report sending money abroad. For White households, 19 percent provided assistance to relatives within the U.S. and 3 percent sent assistance abroad. Interestingly, the only shares that are statistically significantly different from White households in both domestic and international giving are Mexican immigrant households.

Table 19: Transfers and Remittances to Relatives in Tulsa, Oklahoma (Percent of Households)

	U.S. Transfers	Remittances
Black	22%	1.0%
Mexican	10%	20%
Immigrant	3%**	26%***
U.S.	20%	10.0%
Native by Tribal Enrollment		
Cherokee	18%	4.0%
Muscogee	25%	0.1%
Other Tribe	23%	2.0%
Not Enrolled	27%	0.1%
White	19%	3.0%

Source: NASCC survey, authors' calculations.
Note: The difference in the percentage of noted groups as compared with the percentage of White households is statistically significant at the ***99%, **95%, *90% level.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The most important measure of the degree of financial security and well-being for families is wealth. Wealth allows households to better cope with unexpected shocks such as sickness, unemployment, and the negative consequences of a pandemic. Wealth is also iterative; it enables families to make investments that lead to even more wealth. Wealthier families are better able to invest in businesses, own homes, invest in their children's education, and purchase better healthcare. Wealth is the ultimate precondition that undergirds future well-being.

The data presented in this report show a vast disparity in wealth across racial, ethnic, and tribal groups in Tulsa. Specifically, we find that for every dollar of wealth held by the typical White household in Tulsa, Cherokee households had 52 cents, Muscogee households had 29 cents, and Black households had 6 cents. Mexican households and American Indians with Other Tribal Enrollment households each had 5 cents. American Indians with No Tribal Enrollment had the lowest wealth holdings with 3 cents for every dollar of White median wealth. We also find that wealth differences are much larger than differences in income between and within groups. Further, the results on median wealth show that there is a degree of heterogeneity among people of color in Tulsa. This is especially the case for Native Americans—the median wealth of Cherokee households is almost 20 times greater than that of American Indians with No Tribal Enrollment, who have the lowest wealth holding both in Tulsa and within the broader Native American group.

While a cross-section like NASCC makes it difficult to identify explicit mechanisms of cause and effect, the project offers a framework to identify potential factors influencing different patterns of wealth accumulation across racial, ethnic, and tribal groups. For example, our discussion of Tulsa's and Oklahoma's racist history shows how that history continues to shape contemporary outcomes with regards to wealth. This report is published in 2021, 100 years after the Tulsa Race Massacre that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Black people and the destruction of their property. Likewise, Oklahoma, once known as "Indian Territory," has been a site of much racism, violence, and extraction targeting Native Americans for hundreds of years. It is impossible to tell a story of inequality in Tulsa (and Oklahoma for that matter) without acknowledging this unjust history.

Furthermore, the findings in this report point to the importance of other factors that impede households' ability to accumulate wealth. For instance, the relatively high rate of payday lending use among most groups in Tulsa traps many households in debt. This is also true of incarceration rates where Tulsa and Oklahoma have the highest rates in the country.

The report points to the inadequacy of education as a panacea for racial and ethnic inequities; there are vast differences in asset ownership and wealth by race, ethnicity, and educational status in Tulsa. These findings add to the literature showing that education alone is not a sufficient predictor of economic mobility across racial and ethnic groups (Hamilton et al. 2015; Hamilton and Darity 2017; Jones and Schmitt 2014). In other words, the primary reason why communities of color have less wealth is because they have less wealth to start with.

The large disparities identified in this report demonstrate that wealth differences are persistent. Countering such iniquities will require bold policy solutions that ultimately cede large amounts of capital to groups that have historically been deprived such access and have had their capital destroyed through state-sanctioned violence.

SUPPLEMENT FROM ONAC

Christy Finsel (Osage), ONAC Executive Director, April 1, 2021

This study includes data on American Indians residing in Tulsa, Oklahoma. In 2014, the principal investigators of the study chose to focus on Tulsa, as it has the highest concentration of tribal citizens residing in a city in the United States. The study was conducted to provide a snapshot in time of wealth among various races in a certain geographic area. This study examined a population of 156 self-identified American Indians (no verification of Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB), tribal IDs, or membership cards) who lived in Tulsa, with 44 of 156 respondents self-identifying as Cherokee and 29 of 156 respondents self-identifying as Muscogee. Among other respondents, 36 of the 156 respondents self-identified as enrolled in tribes besides Cherokee and Muscogee (including Kiowa, Comanche, Paiute, Sioux, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cheyenne, Cree, Iroquois, Navajo, Osage, and Potawatomi),[31] and 47 of the 156 respondents self-identified as non-enrolled American Indians (with over 50 percent of these respondents also identifying as White).[32] In the study, the White household respondents self-reported a median net worth amount of $145,000 (see Table 17: Household Median Net Worth). In comparison, those responding as enrolled Cherokee Nation citizens reported a household median net worth that was 52 percent of the White household median net worth; Muscogee households reported 29 percent of White household median net worth; American Indian households from tribes other than Cherokee or Muscogee reported 5 percent of White household median net worth; and American Indian households with No Tribal Enrollment reported 3 percent of White household median net worth among those surveyed. The results of the study may be construed as showing there is an inflated sense of Native wealth among tribal citizens that identified as Cherokee and Muscogee when compared to White households in Tulsa.

In March 2021, Professor Darrick Hamilton, of The New School, asked the Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition, Inc. (ONAC), a Native-led asset building coalition, to offer additional context to these study results for a new paper to be released in December 2021. ONAC was not involved in this initial study, but offers the following response that includes: data noting the racial wealth gap realities, including severe underfunding of Native asset building initiatives; information about what many Native families may understand as assets (which influences Native asset building program delivery and how Native communities may understand wealth building); descriptions of ONAC's asset building efforts in Native communities throughout the country; acknowledgment of the Native asset building efforts of tribes and Native-led nonprofits in Oklahoma that may contribute to wealth building of tribal citizens residing in Tulsa; and suggestions for future research related to the racial wealth gap impacting Native communities.

While there are tribal citizens who are upper and middle class residing in Tulsa and throughout the U.S., and those helping Native families cheer the successes of Native families building wealth and having access to asset building tools that help them have the means to grow their asset base to care for their families and communities, it is important to note the inequitable distribution of wealth that still exists for many Native families. This inequitable

31 See Footnote 19 and Table 2.

32 See Footnote 20.

distribution is directly related to the asset stripping[33] that has occurred with earlier removal of tribes from their lands[34] and huge related losses in tribal populations, as well as the historical preying upon tribal citizens when they have rarely accumulated wealth, such as with the example of the Osage murders in Oklahoma[35] that were committed in the 1900s to access mineral lease royalties. Unfortunately, asset stripping in Native communities has not ceased. As examples:

- An estimated 25 percent of non-Osages still own Native headrights today and benefit from the Osage Mineral Estate;[36]
- In 2017, civil lawsuits were filed as tribal citizens had unauthorized bank accounts established in their names[37] by a financial institution and accrued unwarranted fees;
- There have been breaches of personal tribal citizen financial data held by multiple federal departments, such as by the Indian Health Service,[38] as well as breaches of tribal government data;[39]
- Individual Indian Money (IIM) accounts have suffered from financial accounting mismanagement at the federal level;[40]
- There is reliance on higher cost lending[41] due to a lack of lower-cost options; and
- Tribes have to use earnings from their tribal enterprises to pay for basic social services such as education and health care expenses of their tribal citizens, as the federal government has broken its federal trust relationship[42] by not adequately funding what it promised for such services.

33 First Nations Development Institute. (2009). Native American Asset Watch: Rethinking Asset-Building in Indian Country. Longmont, CO: First Nations Development Institute. https://www.firstnations.org/wp-content/uploads/publication-attachments/2009_NAAW_Rethinking_Asset_Building.pdf.

34 Guedel, W.G. and Colbert, J.D.(2016). Capital, Inequality, and Self-Determination: Creating a Sovereign Financial System for Native American Nations. *American Indian Law Review* 41(1). https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1048&context=ailr.

35 Osage Nation. Did you know? Osage Murders. Accessed on April 1, 2021 at https://www.osagenation-nsn.gov/news-events/news/did-you-know-osage-murders.

36 Osage Nation. Frequently Asked Questions. Accessed on April 1, 2021 at https://www.osagenation-nsn.gov/who-we-are/minerals-council/frequently-asked-questions.

37 New America. The Racialized Costs of Banking. Accessed April 8, 2021, at https://www.newamerica.org/family-centered-social-policy/reports/racialized-costs-banking/the-racialized-costs-of-banking/.

38 Indian Health Service. (October 17, 2014). IHS Addresses Data Breach by Contract Physician at Three Facilities. Accessed April 8, 2021, at https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/pressreleases/2014pressreleases/ihspressreleaseoct172014/.

39 National Congress of American Indians (April 18, 2020). NCAI Statement on the Release of Sensitive Tribal Data. Accessed April 8, 2021, at https://www.ncai.org/news/articles/2020/04/18/ncai-statement-on-the-release-of-sensitive-tribal-data.

40 Echohawk, J. Individual Indian Money ((M) Accounts – Cobell V. Salazar. Native American Rights Fund. Accessed April 8, 2021, at https://www.narf.org/cases/cobell/.

41 Martinchek, K. and Carther, A. (February 25, 2021). Native Communities Face Sustained Challenges to Building Financial Resilience. Urban Institute. Accessed April 8, 2021, at https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/native-communities-face-sustained-challenges-building-financial-resilience?cm_ven=ExactTarget&cm_cat=OandO+-+3.24.2021&cm_pla=All+Subscribers&cm_ite=https%3a%2f%2fwww.urban.org%2furban-wire%2fnative-communities-face-sustained-challenges-building-financial-resilience&cm_ainfo=&&utm_source=%20urban_newsletters&&utm_medium=news-OandO&&utm_term=CCI&&.

42 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (December 2018). Broken Promises: Continuing Federal Funding Shortfall for Native Americans. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

The inequitable distribution of wealth is also evident in that American Indians and Alaska Natives still experience the highest rates of poverty in the U.S.[43] The nation must grapple with the related realities that Native families experience the highest rates of un- and under-banked rates (50.5 percent nationally)[44] and may travel four times as long to access an ATM.[45] Native Americans have the lowest rates among all population groups in the U.S. of savings for college for their children, for retirement, and for an emergency.[46] According to a report published in 2017 and funded by the U.S. Department of Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund in terms of access to capital, "it will take another 40 years for the per capita incomes of Native peoples living on reservations to catch up to the per capita incomes of all Americans."[47]

Tribal communities and Native-led nonprofits are resilient and do what they can to address these inequalities. They are also severely under-resourced to address these racial wealth gaps and continued asset stripping. "Of all philanthropic funding by large U.S. foundations, only 0.4 percent on average is directed to Native communities,"[48] and of that, only a sliver goes to the Native-led nonprofits that actually administer asset building programs in Native communities. There has never been adequate funding to truly help Native entities scale their integrated asset building efforts to reach all tribal citizens. All this to say that there is much to be done to level the asset building playing field for tribal citizens.

As part of adding more context to this study, it is important to note that there is diversity among the 574 federally recognized tribal nations in the United States,[49] plus state recognized tribes and Native Hawaiian communities. While there is diversity, there are also commonalities, as many Native peoples understand Native assets to include not only money and FICO scores but also tribal sovereignty, kinship, natural resources such as water, commonly held assets such as land, food security, Native arts and languages, etc. When Native asset building programs acknowledge Native worldviews/understandings of assets and offer culturally relevant programs, there is more community program participation.

As of 2021, the Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition, Inc. (ONAC) celebrates its 20th year as a Native-led asset building coalition. ONAC initially focused its efforts in Oklahoma. While keeping its name, the coalition now serves in a national capacity. As funding has been available, ONAC and our tribal partners provide options for integrated asset building programming so that Native families may receive Native-specific financial education[50] that aligns with their understandings of assets. The integrated asset building programs incorporate a framework for Native

43 United States Census Bureau. (2019). Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months. American Community Survey, Table ID: S1701. Accessed April 8, 2021, at https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=S1701&t=Income%20and%20Poverty&tid=ACSST1Y2019.S1701&hidePreview=true.

44 FDIC. (2017). FDIC Survey of Household Use of Banking and Financial Services. Custom Data Table Tool. Accessed on April 8, 2021, at https://www.economicinclusion.gov/custom-data/.

45 Jorgensen. M. and Akee, R. (2017). Access to Capital and Credit in Native Communities: A Data Review, digital version. Tucson, AZ: Native Nations Institute.

46 Dewees, S. and Mottola, G. (2017). Race and Financial Capability in America: Understanding the Native American Experience. Accessed on April 8, 2021, at https://www.usfinancialcapability.org/downloads/Native-American-Experience-Fin-Cap.pdf.

47 Jorgensen. M. and Akee, R. (2017). Access to Capital and Credit in Native Communities: A Data Review, digital version. Tucson, AZ: Native Nations Institute.

48 Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy. (2021). Investing in Native Communities. 2021. Accessed on April 8, 2021, at https://joinbankon.org/accounts/.

49 National Conference of State Legislatures. Federal and State Recognized Tribes. Accessed on April 1, 2021, at https://www.ncsl.org/legislators-staff/legislators/quad-caucus/list-of-federal-and-state-recognized-tribes.aspx.

50 Finsel, C. (2015). ONAC Children's Savings Account Activity Booklet. Saint Louis, MO: Christina Finsel Consulting LLC.

understandings of assets and include access to free tax preparation through Native-administered Voluntary Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites funded by ONAC;[51] integration of Native languages, arts, and food security as part of, for example, a Children's Savings Account program[52] to help Native youth build multiple assets that matter to them while having a 529 college savings account and a seed deposit to start saving for college; help to open a safe and affordable bank account[53] for those who are not banked, along with providing a seed deposit for an emergency savings account[54] to help families build a nest egg of savings for irregular expenses; and financial coaching[55] with a racial equity lens,[56] coupled with either down payment assistance for those pursuing home ownership[57] or emergency cash assistance during the pandemic[58] for those in financial need. When possible, ONAC offers account opening events to multiple generations in Native families to try to provide a variety of tools and support for low- and moderate-income (LMI) Native families as they build their assets and community wealth.

The 2014 research provides a snapshot of wealth among Tulsans of various races. As with any study, there were limitations to the research. The researchers who collected the data for this study in 2014 did not gather information about the asset building programs that those surveyed may have benefitted from through their participation in either ONAC's services or through other services and resources provided by their tribes or other Native-led nonprofits. Thus, we do not know if, for example, enrolled tribal citizens surveyed, who lived in Tulsa, had received down payment assistance from their tribe to help them purchase their first home or if they had their taxes prepared for free by a tribally-administered VITA program, helping them to not pay a tax preparer and to claim all tax credits they were eligible to claim. Future research could explore such possible linkages. Additionally, if there is continued interest in research that compares White and non-White household median net worth, other studies could explore the impacts of greater geographic distance to banking services; discrepancies in access to asset building programs administered by tribes, given wide variations in the development of tribal enterprises that help tribes offer various resources (such as educational scholarships) to their citizens; and access to job training, entrepreneurship support, higher paying jobs, education opportunities, capital and credit, financial education, health care, broadband to participate in the mainstream financial world, and affordable housing. Other research could compare the impacts on the wages of tribal citizens employed by successful tribally-owned enterprises in Tulsa, as compared to the wages of tribal citizens living between 35 to over 70 miles away from Tulsa, near their

51 Schramm, P. (2020). Native Voluntary Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program Experiences of Providing Remote and/or Socially Distanced Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition, Inc. Accessed April 8, 2021, at https://oknativeassets.org/resources/Documents/Native%20VITA%20Site%20Experiences%20with%20Providing%20Remote%20and%20Socially%20Distanced%20VITA%20Services.pdf.

52 Finsel, C. (2020). Native Children's Savings Initiatives in the United States. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition, Inc. Accessed April 8, 2021, at https://oknativeassets.org/resources/Documents/ONAC_Savings_Initiatives_Report_FINAL.pdf.

53 Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition, Inc. What is Native Bank On ONAC? Accessed on April 8, 2021, at https://oknativeassets.org/our_work/Native-Bank-On-ONAC.

54 Edwards, K. and Finsel, C. (March 11, 2021). Interim Data Report on Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition, Inc. (ONAC) Emergency Savings Account Initiatives: 2015-2021. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition, Inc. Accessed April 8, 2021, at https://oknativeassets.org/resources/Documents/ONAC%20ESA%20Data%20Report%20October%202020.pdf.

55 Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition, Inc. (2021). Register for Free ONAC-Provided Financial Coaching. Accessed on April 8, 2021, at https://oknativeassets.org/page-8689/9259717.

56 Hudson Banks, K., Ratinoff, E., and Baker, C. Investing in Financial Coaching with a Racial Equity Lens. Asset Funders Network. Accessed on April 1, 2021, at https://assetfunders.org/resource/financial-coaching-with-a-racial-equity-lens/.

57 FHLBank of Topeka. FHLBank of Topeka 2020 Affordable Housing Program Awards. Accessed on April 1, 2021, at https://marketing.fhlbtopeka.com/acton/attachment/3202/f-e1cfe1c6-3aa7-4cf4-aa34-c96935a8481f/1/-/-/-/-/2020_AHP_awards_list.pdf.

58 Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition, Inc. (2020). Oklahoma Native Assets Coalition, Inc (ONAC) Launches First Native-Led National Initiative to Distribute COVID-19 Relief Efforts to American Indian and Alaska Native Families. Accessed on April 8, 2021, at https://oknativeassets.org/page-8689/9069712.

seats of tribal governments (such as in the case of Cherokee and Muscogee tribal citizens). Also, importantly, individuals self-identified as Native for the 2014 study and there was no verification of tribal enrollment. Therefore, without verification of CDIB, tribal IDs, or membership cards, it is not known if those who reported they were Native were enrolled tribal citizens. We mention this as in the 2010 Census, 819,105 Americans identified themselves as Cherokee,[59] even though the Cherokee Nation only reported a tribal enrollment of 288,749 in August 2010.[60] For those who self-identified as American Indian, No Tribal Enrollment, there was no information collected about the respondents' connections to Native communities. When an individual is a tribal citizen, they have a political relationship with their tribal government and with the U.S. government and related rights and responsibilities; this is different from an ethnic or racial classification.

ONAC's work in Oklahoma has only been possible with support from various funders, through the leadership of Native asset building practitioners, and with the crucial assistance of our tribal and Native-led nonprofit partners to help us with the outreach for various asset building programs. There is a strong history of tribes and Native nonprofits offering various asset building assistance, such as free tax preparation and home buyer education. Without the partnerships of those working to help tribal citizens build their assets, Native families would be even further behind in terms of access to capital and credit and to other asset building tools. Tribes such as the Cherokee Nation and The Muscogee Nation, that have larger numbers of their tribal citizens residing in Tulsa, have administered asset building programs for thirty-plus years (such as with the example of the Cherokee Nation VITA program). The tribal efforts may have impacted the financial well-being of the tribal populations included in the study.

Going forward, with this example of racial equity research that provided a snapshot of wealth comparison across population groups, further research could be conducted on the impacts of various Native-led asset building initiatives on the wealth accumulation of residents of different geographic areas; access to such asset building programs, such as down payment assistance; and more cross-comparisons of Native families residing in urban and rural areas and those moving between the two for jobs, education, cultural participation, and social service access. Additionally, it is recommended that sample sizes be increased; more recent data be collected; impacts of intermarriage between various races on household median net worth be studied; tribal enrollment be verified for those identifying as Native in a study; and qualitative data be collected from those self-identifying as American Indian, No Tribal Enrollment, about why they selected that option to help tell more of the story about related complexities with blood quantum, ancestors not being included on tribal rolls, oral histories of ancestors being from particular tribes, etc. With additional data collection, researchers could more reliably draw conclusions about wealth accumulation among Native respondents in Tulsa.

As a placeholder for future conversations, as funders consider making reparation payments or choosing Native stewards to manage related funds distributed through asset building programs that are designed to help close the racial wealth gap in Native communities, ONAC recommends that Native asset building practitioners (those who directly administer asset building programs) be included in discussions and selected as stewards of the funds. Some Native asset building practitioners have experience distributing cash payments and others

59 Smithers, G. October 1, 2015. Why Do So Many Americans Think They Have Cherokee Blood? Slate. Accessed on April 1, 2021 at https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2015/10/cherokee-blood-why-do-so-many-americans-believe-they-have-cherokee-ancestry.html.

60 Donovan. B. Census. July 7, 2011. Navajo Enrollment Tops 300,000. Navajo Times. Accessed on April 1, 2021, at https://www.navajotimes.com/news/2011/0711/070711census.php.

of them understand the practical implications of managing asset building programs such as Children's Savings Accounts, emergency savings accounts, matched savings accounts, down payment assistance, small dollar loan programs, financial coaching, Native banking access, Voluntary Income Tax Assistance, and other related asset building programs. There are serious program design considerations to address when determining how to distribute reparations or stewarded funds, including: data collection and informed consent of participants; impact of payments on family asset limits for other sources of financial support; the financial aid implications related to various options for offering scholarships or funding Children's Savings Accounts; the need for discretion in distributing funds to families to lessen predatory behavior by others; how to manage community expectations when there are limited funds to distribute; and how to offer Native families the applications for assistance when working with those that have no bank account, stable mailing address, email address, or an updated device to complete an online application. As there are more conversations about distribution of funds, there is need for those with practical expertise about Native asset building programs to be involved so that there are not unintended harms that occur in the process. With thoughtfully designed payment distribution processes and expansion of support for Native asset building programs, funders and practitioners can work together to address the inequitable distribution of wealth that has been impacting Native communities.

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