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“Economic What Ifs: Premature Deaths of Actual and a Failure to Materialize Hypothetical Black Personalities”

Introduction

For a couple of months now, the subject topic has been on our mind. The initial thought was to only deal with the first half of the topic: Premature deaths of important Black personalities in our history. However, we must never forget that if we focus on the past, then we risk living there, as opposed to moving forever forward into the future. We consider these personalities because they portended great promise and would likely have catapulted Black America to a significantly higher level of economic achievement today. Therefore, we reconsidered our initial thought and now include in this analytical essay recommendations concerning important requirements (decisions, concepts, frameworks, and personalities) for ensuring that, despite the premature departure of our great historical personalities, Black America can still forge a favorable future reflecting an elevated level of economic achievement.

Our coverage of Black American historical personalities is based mainly on common knowledge, but can be substantiated by cursory research on the Internet. Our discussion of future decisions, concepts, frameworks, and personalities formed from a connecting-of-the-dots process guided by well-known expectations about the future.

Brief statements about Black American historical personalities, who experienced premature demises, but who had significant economic impacts on Black American growth and development appear below.

1. David Walker.—A nineteenth century Black American entrepreneur in Boston who penned one of the most important early works that provided systematic guidance for improving Black American wellbeing with a focus on freedom that would enable economic progress: “David Walkers Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the United States” (1829). He died mysteriously after being challenged by White Supremacist concerning his powerful appeal.
2. Marcus Garvey.—A very well-known Black American founder and leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), who did not experience an actual premature demise, but whose work came to an abrupt halt when he was incarcerated and then deported from the US. Garvey’s UNIA claimed more members and probably the most well-organized effort aimed at improving Black American wellbeing. Economics was a central tenet of the UNIA program. The UNIA helped form many highly successful Black

Americans enterprises, including the Black Star Lines (a shipping company) and the *Negro World* newspaper that was circulated internationally.

3. Sam Cooke—A very popular recording artist of the 1960s, who was a prolific seller of records. He was an early crossover artist from the Black Church to popular music. At the point when he made efforts to capture full control of his musical entertainment enterprise from dishonest managers, he was shot dead under questionable circumstances. Without an untimely halt to Sam Cooke's career, he would have likely produced an entirely different outcome for all subsequent Black American musical entertainers and their ownership of their artistic property—a concern that has improved over the years, but remains a problem. The circumstances under which Sam Cooke was fatally shot were inconsistent with his character and the related explanations of the incident remain unsatisfactory to this day.
4. Otis Redding.—One of the most unforgettable Black American recording artists of the 1960s who made huge waves in the Rhythm and Blues *genre* of Pop Music. He was a rising star with rising income when his plane crashed in Lake Monona in Madison, WI in 1967 at the age of 26.
5. Ron Brown.—A Black American Attorney who was called the most powerful Black man in America toward the end of his shortened life. He rose to serve as the first Black American Chairman of the Democratic Party and ushered President Bill Clinton into the presidency. In the Clinton Administration, Brown took on the Secretary of the Department of Commerce position, and played pivotal roles in helping spur a surge in US economic activity, including helping develop the nation's burgeoning information technology sector. Also, he played a pivotal role in expanding the US foreign economic sector, especially US trade with Afrikan nations. Unfortunately, Ron Brown died in an airplane crash in 1996 in Croatia, while on a mission for the nation.
6. Reginald Lewis.—A Black American lawyer who entered the investment banking industry on Wall Street and later became a business tycoon and organized the largest leverage buyout of the Beatrice International Food Company to the tune of nearly one billion dollars. He undoubtedly opened the door to a now steady stream of Black American business leaders, who own and/or manage important corporations. His early demise was caused by brain cancer. Yet his legacy remains strong through his contributions to Black American educational, political, and economic development—especially in his native city of Baltimore, Maryland.
7. Bill Spriggs.—A Black American economist who rose to head Howard University's Economics Department and served in multiple capacities as a US Government official. He became the first Black American Chief Economist of the American Federation of Labor – Congress of Industrial Organization and advised important Black American legacy organizations on economic affairs and helped shape labor policy broadly for the nation. He died at the onset of the height of his career when economists often make their most important contributions to the field.
8. Junior Bridgeman.—A Black American professional basketball player turned entrepreneur. His business career took several twists and turns, but he continued to build his enterprises and reached the status of “billionaire” shortly before his sudden death this year.

We presented the foregoing brief statements to display the range of excellence that Black America has produced in commercial and economic achievement. These personalities represent great minds that rose to high heights that helped raise Black America's wellbeing, but who would have under

other circumstances likely broken our ceiling on economic developments and pushed us forward to accomplishments that would have placed us much further along the path to more equal income and wealth attainment and socioeconomic power.

Hypothetical Personalities and Frameworks that Can Produce Significant Economic Impacts

As Black America anticipates its future, the following decisions, concepts, frameworks, and personalities are essential for success.

- A fundamental decision to either accept or reject the current trajectory of human history dominated by a “Western World” mentality and all the related implications and ramifications.
- A related decision concerning agreement on the integration – resegregation divide.
- While operational unity is a basic principle of Afrikan tradition and culture, being born from a non-Afrikan environment means that unity may be difficult to achieve.ⁱ Baring operational unity at the outset of our future, Black America should not delay embarking on its self-directed development path. Rather, we should forge an agreement to plan, initiate, implement, and monitor two-or-more development paths with prospects for unifying at a later point.ⁱⁱ
- Given our core nature as an Afrikan People and our accompanying epigenetics, we require a People Self Concept that is a synthesization of ancient-to-contemporary African culture that spans nine areas of human endeavor, which is then projected far into the future.ⁱⁱⁱ
- The just-mentioned self-concept should then be sectorized into various fields of study in a complete set of curricula comprising an educational framework that is then promulgated within our population.
- Personalities must be shaped to rise to achieve these requirements.

Conclusion

This Analytical Essay informs us about eight great Black American historical personalities whose achievements continue to reverberate and produce significant economic impacts on our lives. It goes without saying that all of Black Americans’ efforts are valuable and appreciated; although they now occur largely in a fragmented and uncoordinated environment. However, because life is mainly about tomorrow, Black Americans should produce appropriate decisions, concepts, and frameworks that are discussed herein through the labor of personalities that we shape to perform the work. Undertaking this route to a successful rise seems plausible; otherwise, we concede to stagnation at the unfavorable *status quo*.

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Endnote

ⁱ In his 2010 book, *The Splintering of Black America*, *Washington Post* columnist, Eugene Robinson, explains that there are at least four Black Americas: (1) The superrich; (2) the middle-class; (3) the poor; and (4) Black residents who are immigrants and not fully integrated into the Black American milieu.

ⁱⁱ The “developmental tracks” could be unique or variations on one-or-more plans.

ⁱⁱⁱ The nine areas of human endeavor outlined in the *Long-Term Strategic Plan for Black America* are: (1) General Public Service; (2) Defense, Public Order, and Safety; (3) Economic Affairs; (4) Environment Protection; (5) Housing and Community Amenities; (6) Health and Wellness; (7) Recreation, Religions, and Culture; (8) Education; and (9) Social Protection.