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Black People's Responses To Trump's Notion Of 'Black Jobs'

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Black workers are most heavily concentrated in service roles. GETTY

In his recent debate against President Joe Biden, Republican presidential candidate [Donald Trump](#) insisted twice that migrants crossing the southern border are taking 'Black jobs.' For some viewers it raised the question, "what is a Black job?" But many others knew exactly what the former president meant. He was

referring to low-paid, low-security, and often physically demanding service roles. 'The View' co-hosts Sunny Hostin (who's Black) and Ana Navarro (who's Latina) had [sharp critiques of Trump's statement](#) the day after the debate. Cable news commentators have also had lots to say about it. But the most significant engagement with the notion has been among Black Americans on social media.

“Black people’s relegation to underemployment hurts the U.S. economy by weakening local communities,” notes Rashawn Ray, a senior fellow at The Brookings Institution. “Due to systemic oppression including a lack of educational opportunities and hiring and wage discrimination, Black men, in particular, are over-concentrated in the top 10 jobs expected to be obsolete in 20 years and underrepresented in the fastest growing professions.” Economic Policy Institute [analyses of federal employment data](#) corroborate these predictions.

Ray, who is also a University of Maryland sociology professor, deems Trump’s statement racist and says it should offend all Americans, not just Black people. Using #BlackJob and #BlackJobs on social media, many physicians, judges, attorneys, accountants, pilots, engineers, and others are making clear that there is Black representation across role types and industries; several are posting photos of themselves in their workplace settings. The problem, though, is that implicit and explicit biases, structural and systemic racism, ineffective workplace diversification activities, and weak accountability methods cyclically reproduce the underrepresentation of people like them generation after generation.

Black workers remain underrepresented in numerous occupations. GETTY

For Americans who care to notice, it's janitorial, factory, food service, call center, transit, hotel housekeeping, security, and airport baggage handling roles (to name a few) that typically have substantially higher numbers of Black workers relative to their representation in other occupations. Trump offensively acknowledged this reality by categorically declaring these 'Black jobs.' He didn't explain, however, why or how Black Americans end up being so heavily concentrated in positions at the lowest levels in workplaces across just about every industry.

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Inequitable access to high-quality education plays a role in systematically routing young Black Americans into a narrow set of jobs. "Although our schools should be preparing all students for well-paid satisfying work, far too many of our Black and Brown

students are relegated to poorly resourced schools,” says Gloria Ladson-Billings, the Kellner Family Distinguished Professor Emerita of Urban Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

It's worth noting that education is among the fields in which whites are overrepresented among K-12 school teachers (80%) and principals (77%), according to recent [U.S. Department of Education data](#). Notwithstanding, there are approximately 228,000 Black teachers and over 9,000 Black principals who could proudly proclaim that theirs is indeed a 'Black job.' In addition to making exponentially greater investments into the K-12 schools that Black students attend, higher education institutions can also help reduce racial stratification in our nation's workforce.

“Colleges and universities can play a crucial role in expanding occupational options beyond so-called 'Black jobs' by increasing scholarships to bolster access and partnering with Black communities to raise awareness about postsecondary opportunities,” notes Eboni Zamani-Gallaher, the Renée and Richard Goldman Dean of the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. “Higher education needs to accommodate worker-learners to achieve greater educational and economic mobility, as well as expose Black students to high-skill, high-wage fields.” Zamani-Gallaher believes that strengthening job placement services that connect Black graduates with employers in high-demand and emerging industries where they're underrepresented could also make a big difference.

Investing in Historically Black Colleges and Universities is another proven way to expand Black representation across professions and levels. Last month, [The White House announced](#) that the Biden-Harris Administration's \$16 billion in support for HBCUs is

the largest in our nation's history. "HBCUs play an outsized role to support the economic mobility of African Americans, producing 40 percent of all Black engineers, 50 percent of all Black teachers, 70 percent of all Black doctors and dentists, 80 percent of all Black judges, and the first woman and Black Vice President of the United States," the statement indicates.

On cable news and social media, many Black Americans are noting how insulted they were by Trump's notion of 'Black jobs.' Some others, though, are making comedic light of the statement by posting hundreds of funny gifs, memes, lists, videos, and jokes about 'Black jobs.' High numbers of likes and shares, along with hilarious comments in response to those posts, showcase Black people's unique ability to simultaneously critique and offer culturally resonant comedic commentary on deeply offensive statements and experiences.

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