## <sup>The</sup> Portland Observer

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Building Back Better for Black America

Can Biden succeed where Obama fell

## short? BY DEDRICK ASANTE-MUHAMMAD

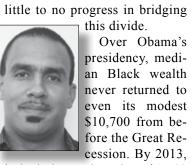
AND TYLER BOND Twelve years ago, the inaugu- it had dropped to just \$1,700

ration of America's first Black president had many Americans believing that a future free of racial discrimination and inequality was finally within reach.

This year, as Obama's former vice president Joe Biden takes office amid a surge in far-right violence, it's clear we have a long way to go — not just to build a safer country for all of By 2016, that had fallen to 58 us, but to close the vast racial wealth divide.

five as he crosses half court and

is immediately met by his de-



virtually nothing — even as white wealth rebounded.

In fact, the racial wealth divide in the latter half of the Obama presidency was the largest it's been in the last 30 years. Income inequality remained vir-60 percent as much as whites. percent.

In the aftermath of the Great Despite Obama's historic vic- Recession, homeownership tory, his administration made the key source of wealth for most ously assess all significant eco-

creased for most Americans. But how they affect racial inequalinew Black homeowners were ty. This office should also issue hit hardest, driving the Black homeownership rate down from 49 to just 44 percent, nearly 30 even its modest percentage points lower than the rate for white Americans.

Of course, the failure to bridge racial economic inequality is not unique to the Obama presidency. Whether under Trump, Clinton, or either Bush, there has been little to no progress in bridging the economic divide for African Americans in wealth, homeownership, and income.

This lack of progress should tually unchanged, too. In 2007, be a wake-up call: Bold action Black Americans earned about is necessary. That's why we're calling on President Biden to announce a White House Office of Racial Economic Equity.

This office should develop a government-wide audit to rigor-

little to no progress in bridging middle-class families — de- nomic policies and programs for a public report with actionable reforms and legislative proposals for Congress.

> Biden's inauguration, just two days after Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, was almost 60 years from the date when Dr. King delivered his famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," that bemoaned that moderation was the "Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom."

> He was right. In the 21st century, we have seen Black progress go from a "stride toward freedom" to being stuck in economic apartheid. Moderate reforms by Democrats — along with often open hostility from Republicans - have corresponded with decades of failure in addressing racial economic inequality.

Biden is the the 45th white man to take the presidency. Unlike Obama, or his own vice president Kamala Harris, his inauguration did not make racial history. Still, Biden has the opportunity to do what the Obama administration and every other administration has failed to do over the last 40 years.

Opening a White House Office of Racial Economic Equity can stee the country toward greater opportunity and financial security for African Americans. It is way past due to finally "Build Back Better" for Black America.

Dedrick Asante-Muhammad is the chief of race, wealth and community at the National Community Reinvestment Coalition and an associate fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies. Tyler Bond is an intern at NCRC.

Retter to the Editor

## The clock counts down from message of positivity.

Hip hop today is dominated by ego driven, toxic masculinity and females twerking for camera time. Positive messages are rarely heard, but we've all heard of Damian Lillard. With his status he could easily make braggado-

cios music, but instead he creates something uplifting. Messages of unity and humility abound as evidenced in "Loyal to the Soil", a popular track, where he raps "do a lot for others, not for credit or to soak in, but to have an impact Dame's intention was to make a on the direction that they go in".

Lillard's Positivity

the divide in humanity was made be expressed more. We all need obvious and society was left on shaky ground, it's important and lend a compassionate hand we all work towards taking a to our brothers and sisters. We positive step forward. Whether positive impact or that's just his

After a tumultuous year where style, it's an outlook that needs to to stay motivated, stay humbled, should all listen to some Dame D.O.L.L.A.

Dylan Koller, Portland



fender. Four, he crosses over and peels around the screen set by his teammate. Three, as the defensive help rushes at him, he stops, elevates, and lets the shot fly. Two, the ball rotates through the air as he watches with confi-

dence. One, the ball tears through the bottom of the net. Zero, the fans erupt in their seats, his teammates sprint towards him to celebrate, three points are added to the scoreboard. Damian Lillard turns knowingly as he taps his wrist, Dame Time.

It's a familiar scene for Lillard fans, but less familiar is his place within the music industry as a rapper under the moniker Dame D.O.L.L.A. Though many players in the league rap, Lillard is unanimously regarded as the best, with a smooth flow constructed with impressive rhyme schemes, Dame raps like Jay Z with a Bay Area sensibility. Raised in Oakland, Calif., his roots are evident in his music. The name of his debut album, The Letter O, is a clever homage to his life: his upbringing in Oakland, his college years in Ogden, UT, and his professional career in Oregon. With that much thought placed into the title of an album, it's not surprising his lyrics are just as rousing, but more importantly, they're inspiring, commonly promoting a