



**“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”**

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## Ann Romney: Privileged Mother

When Democratic strategist Hilary Rosen said that Ann Romney had “never worked a day in her life,” Romney behaved as if she had just hit the lottery. She smugly made the media rounds talking about how hard it was for her to raise her five sons. And she’s right. Stay at home moms work extremely hard to cook, clean, run a shuttle for their children and their various activities, participate in school activities like “Room Mom” and “Cookie Mom.” How do I know, having never had chick or child? A very dear friend, a Harvard-educated lawyer, has been mostly home with her children, one of whom is my godson, for the past decade or so, and it shows.

I digress. Hilary Rosen mis-spoke when she said Ann Romney had never worked. What she could have said is that Ann Romney never needed to work in the paid labor market. Even when Mitt Romney was in graduate school, they survived by living on the returns from their investments, according to them. So it isn’t that Ann Romney never worked, it is simply that she was never forced to.

This entire conversation is a blast from the past, reminiscent of articles that I wrote in the 1980s. Even then this was a mostly White women’s conversation since few Black women have or are married to the kind of wealth that would allow them to stay home. Conservative stay home moms often say that people have to make sacrifices to stay at home, perhaps cutting out luxuries such as restaurant meals and extra clothing. But unless food is a luxury, there are



**BENNETT COLLEGE**

Julianne Malveaux

Black women who are in the labor market simply because they have no choice.

The official unemployment rate among African Americans is 14

American stay-at-home moms called Mocha Moms, and there is little data to suggest the size of the African American stay-at-home mom population, it is clear that historically, African American women had no choice but work. I am not invoking ancient history when I reference the women who, as maids, were paid to take better care of their employer’s children than they could possibly take of their own. And then they often paid, I part with used clothes and leftover food substituting for cash.

American women exceeded that of White women, which means that proportionately more of us were working. African American women’s earnings often make the difference between poverty and comfort for their families. Mommy wars? Give me a break. Let’s talk about survival wars.

Even those African American families who have been blessed with higher education and “good jobs” are well aware that African Americans are “last hired, first fired.” Too many so-called middle class families are a paycheck or two away from poverty. Last time I checked, African American households had only 2 percent of our nation’s wealth, hardly a cushion to fall back on, with few investment returns to live on when no one is working.

Tuesday was Equal Pay Day, which counts the extra days women have to work to earn as much as a man did last year. This hits women of all races, but it may hit African American women harder.

We can only laugh and shake our heads at Hilary Rosen’s faux pas and Ann Romney’s smugness. We working African American women, stay at home or in the paid labor force understand that “life for us ain’t been no crystal stair”. Educated or uneducated, middle class or working class, the labor market has never been a level playing field for us, and our salaries show it. Mommy wars? We fight survival wars in the workplace and in this economy.

*Julianne Malveaux is president of Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, N.C.*

### Ann Romney never needed to work in the paid labor market

percent. The actual rate is more like 26 percent, and in many inner cities the Black male unemployment rate is nearly 50 percent. This is a burden to African Ameri-

Patriarchal tradition kept White women home, while White men were paid a “family wage” that was, by definition, enough to support a whole family. Such patriar-

### Black women are in the labor market simply because they have no choice

can women who often don’t have the economic assistance they need to raise a family. As a result of this burden, nearly 40 percent of African American children live in poverty, too often supported by a single mom (more than 40 percent of African American households are headed by women).

While there is a group of African

ch tradition was not economically present in the African American community. Few African American men were paid a family wage, but instead something like a subsistence wage. Women needed to work to help keep the family together.

Until the late 1980s, the labor force participation of African

## Racially Profiling Black Businesses

The positive demonstrations of support for the family of Trayvon Martin following his tragic death, and the nationwide evidence of unified response (hoodies everywhere!) and the call for justice are inspiring signs of a renewed spirit among African Americans and others committed to correcting the obvious inequities exposed in the wake of this travesty.

Clearly, nothing we encounter in the world of business can be equated to the senseless slaying of this young man. And as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught us in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail, “... injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere...”

We are clear that there is no way the shock, hurt and grief Trayvon’s family endures because of the absolutely inhuman conduct of one misguided individual can be compared to the struggles of businessmen and women. We can’t help, however, but draw parallels to the inequity Black business owners must contend with each and every day.

The deck is stacked against you: When the courts rule against you... when financial institutions refuse to extend credit to you... when even governments you support through your tax dollars can’t bring themselves to provide equal opportunity... well, you get the

### BLACK CHAMBER

Ron Busby

picture. As a class, the businesses we work hard to represent face odds no other group faces in this country.

fractional percentage points of opportunity to Black-owned businesses.

You’ve seen the numbers in this space before. According to the Census Bureau, there are 1.9 million privately held Black-owned businesses across every industry sector in the United States. We

even this spending does not translate to reciprocity in the form of contracting/vendor relationships from the corporations that benefit from our dollars.

Tragically, the giant loopholes in regulations guiding federal, state and local utilization of ethnic minority suppliers allow for interpretations that boggle the mind – and devastate our businesses and their hope for a brighter future.

It is beyond unfortunate that it takes the senseless slaying of a future businessman, a future lawyer, a future elected official, a future husband and father to cause us to take stock of all the inequity around us. But it is the re-awakened sense of outrage that will fuel our commitment to correct the wrongs we see around us.

And though our commitment to improving opportunities for Black-owned businesses across this country is solid and sincere, the outpouring of support for justice in Florida fortifies us and strengthens our resolve to stay on the battlefield. There is no doubt that the same energy that awakened so many of us to Trayvon’s murder is the same energy that will drive our achieving economic parity in America’s marketplace.

*Ron Busby is president of the U.S. Black Chamber, Inc.*

### The businesses we work hard to represent face odds no other group faces in this country

And just as there are incredulous voices that somehow defend the series of bad decisions that result-

employ more than 921,000 people and generate \$137.5 billion in annual revenue. According to a

### There are those who believe there is nothing wrong with a marketplace that delivers fractional percentage points of opportunity to Black-owned businesses

ed in the senseless snuffing out of a young life, there are those who believe there is nothing wrong with a marketplace that delivers

report by the Nielsen Company, African Americans spend more than a trillion hard-earned dollars in the U.S. economy. Tragically,