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O'Rourke holds rally near Mexican border that Trump threatens to shut

Inside C2

Hikvision, a surveillance powerhouse, walks U.S.-China tightrope

BEIJING (Reuters) - For China's Hikvision, the world's largest purveyor of video surveillance systems and a vendor to Xinjiang police agencies, a moment of reckoning may be at hand.

FILE PHOTO: People visit a Hikvision booth at a security exhibition in Shanghai, China May 24, 2019. REUTERS/Aly Song/File Photo

Since Aug. 13, Hikvision has not been allowed to sell to U.S. federal government agencies, thanks to a law passed last year that blocked five Chinese firms as possible security threats because their products could allow access to sensitive systems.

That has forced the company - which pulls nearly 30% of its 50 billion yuan ($7.12 billion) in revenue from overseas - onto a tightrope: it must assuage security and human rights concerns in the West without angering the Chinese government, a major customer and an all-powerful regulator.

The company, known as Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Co Ltd, is publicly trying to distance itself from Xinjiang as it lobbies to ease U.S. restrictions.

Hikvision signed 1.9 billion yuan worth of public-private partnership contracts - worth an average of 370 million yuan each - with the police in Xinjiang between 2016 and 2017, the procurement documents show.

Although the Xinjiang deals have gotten smaller since the U.S. Congress passed the ban last year, previously unreported provincial government procurement documents reviewed by Reuters show that Hikvision surveillance equipment was named in more than 110 million yuan worth of contracts with Chinese police, military and courts there.

The United Nations says that there are credible estimates of roughly a million people, mostly from the Muslim Uighur minority, having been detained in Xinjiang without formal charges.

A Hikvision representative said the company "takes global human rights very seriously" and noted that its technology also was used in shops, traffic control and commercial buildings.

"We don't know where and how our products being sold or being used," the representative said of Xinjiang. "But all our business is required to align with the company's compliance policy."

Hikvision declined to say what its compliance policy was, but said it was in line with local laws.

China's Public Security Bureau and the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, where the tendered projects are located, did not respond to faxed requests for comment.

Foreign investors who once piled into the company, including UBS AG, have dumped at least 300 million shares of its stock in the last five months, shareholder data shows, with some citing concerns about its involvement in China's expanding surveillance state in the Xinjiang region.

"Hikvision needs to decide whether it wants to be a global company or ... just be a China-based business," said one former top investor in Hikvision who sold his stake over human rights concerns. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

XINJIANG CONTRACTS

The core of Hikvision's business is surveillance cameras, which have become ubiquitous in many parts of the world. It also sells much more elaborate integrated systems, often including facial recognition technology, as well as providing hardware to other security vendors.

The projects in 2016-17 include facial recognition and surveillance systems for mosques, the documents and Hikvision said. Human rights groups say such cutting-edge mass surveillance is at the heart of a campaign of repression.

Documents also listed such systems for a "training center" - the phrase used by Chinese authorities to describe what outside researchers say are internment camps. Hikvision confirmed its involvement in that project.

Since the U.S. procurement ban in August 2018, Hikvision technology was mentioned in at least 27 state-issued tenders in Xinjiang's Uighur Autonomous Region, including contracts to supply surveillance equipment to the police, the military and the courts. Collectively they were worth at least 110.5 million yuan, the procurement documents show.

Many of the tenders are heavily redacted to remove project specifics, total budgets and itemized costs. But a review of 6 million yuan worth of Hikvision technology in the tenders shows thousands of the company's surveillance cameras as well as technology to store and transmit data.

One project from the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Public Security Department dated Sept. 28, 2018 calls for 50 Hikvision camera units worth a total of 425,000 yuan. Another project, surveillance upgrades for a military Communist Party committee in Urumqi worth 510,000 yuan, listed Hikvision as the "main" equipment supplier in a procurement tender dated April 10, 2018.

The company's technology has also been used in at least 180 million yuan worth of smaller contracts since the beginning of 2018, including commercial, military and police projects.

The Hikvision representative said the company does not always know where its technology is sold through third parties.

China's Public Security Bureau and the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, did not respond to faxed requests for comment.

Kevin Manning, a Commerce Department spokesman, declined to comment on Hikvision and whether the agency would add it to the Entity List, citing a policy that the agency does not comment on potential additions to the list.

Reuters reported in May the administration was considering Huawei-like sanctions on Hikvision over China's treatment of the Uighurs.

And fears of China's high-tech surveillance programs have spurred protester backlash in Hong Kong, which uses equipment from Hikvision and other Chinese surveillance companies.

INVESTOR EXODUS

Despite the selloff by foreign investors, Hikvision has continued to grow. Revenues for the first half of 2019 were up 14.6% over the previous years to 23.9 billion yuan in the first-half. 29% of sales came from overseas markets, compared with 30% a year ago, and nearly half the revenue came from "front-end products" such as cameras.

Hikvision is 42% owned by Chinese state investors and its two key founders.

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

WORLD NEWS

China-U.S. trade talk teams keeping 'effective communication': China

FILE PHOTO: Containers are seen at the Yangshan Deep Water Port in Shanghai, China August 6, 2019. REUTERS/Aly Song

BEIJING (Reuters) - Chinese and U.S. trade negotiating teams are maintaining effective communication, China's Foreign Ministry said on Friday, less than 48 hours befor U.S. tariffs kick in on an additional $125 billion in Chine goods.

The tit-for-tat tariff war now involves hundreds of billion of dollars of each country's goods and threatens global economic growth. Uncertainty about when or how it cou end has roiled markets and complicated corporations' long-term investment plans.

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Trade war with U.S. won't affect China's pork supply: Chi nese ministry
The United States will begin collecting a 15% tariff on an estimated $125 billion of Chinese goods at 12:01 a.m. ED (0401 GMT) on Sunday, including smartwatches, flat par televisions and footwear. U.S. tariffs have been imposed o $250 billion of Chinese products so far since the trade wa began in 2018.

On Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump denied the tarif were affecting the U.S. economy. "We don't have a Tariff problem (we are reigning in bad and/or unfair players), w have a Fed problem. They don't have a clue!" he wrote in Twitter post.

Trump has criticized the U.S. Federal Reserve and its lea ership for not lowering interest rates further to stimulate the economy.

Trump said General Motors Co (GM.N) should begin moving its operations in China, where it started joint ventures in 1997, back to the United States.

"General Motors, which was once the Giant of Detroit, is now one of the smallest auto manufacturers there. They moved major plants to China, BEFORE I CAME INTO OFFICE," Trump tweeted. "This was done despite the sav- start moving back to America again?"
Bilateral trade talks could also be complicated by Beijing's response to widespread protests in Hong Kong. Trump tied the two together Aug. 14, saying he believed Chinese President Xi Jinping wanted a trade deal, but that Xi should "quickly and humanely solve the Hong Kong problem."

On Friday, Hong Kong police arrested several pro-democracy activists ahead of a mass demonstration planned for this weekend. Earlier this summer, Beijing rebuffed a Hong Kong government proposal to appease protesters.

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice

Horse Racing - Derby Festival - Epsom Downs Racecourse, Epsom, Britain - June 1, 2019 Anthony Van Dyck ridden by Seamie Heffernan in action before winning the 4.30 Investec Derby Stakes Action Images via Reuters/Matthew Childs TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

A man stands past the wreckage of government forces vehicles destroyed by UAE air strikes near Aden

Pro-democracy activists Joshua Wong and Agnes Chow arrive at the Eastern Court by police van after being arrested on suspicion for organising illegal protests, in Hong Kong

People attend the Inauguration ceremony of the new President of El Salvador Nayib Bukele at the Capitan General Gerardo Barrios square in San Salvador, El Salvador June 1, 2019. REUTERS/Jose Cabezas TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

A journalist takes a selfie as firefighters extinguish burning tires, set alight at the entrance of the U.S. embassy by demonstrators during a protest against President Juan Orlando Hernandez government's plans to privatise healthcare and education, in Tegucigalpa,

People chant slogans as they set on fire the representation of India, Israel and U.S. flags in a rally, marking al-Quds Day, (Jerusalem Day), during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in Peshawar, Pakistan May 31, 2019. REUTERS/Fayaz Aziz TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

Horse Racing - Derby Festival - Epsom Downs Racecourse, Epsom, Britain - May 31, 2019 General view of a racegoer asleep on the grass REUTERS/Peter Nicholls TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

Bicycle riders place their bikes in a heap after a mass ride in Almaty, Kazakhstan August 30, 2019. REUTERS/Pavel Mikheyev TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

SPECIAL REPORT

Our Plastic Planet

Assembled plastic objects found on the UK coast, 1994-2019. (Photo/AP)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

We have sipped, packaged and played our way into a global plastics crisis.

Why it matters: Activist consumer groups are pushing for less use, and to some extent, less production, while industry aims for increased recycling.

The big picture: Plastics demand is projected to only increase — and the footprint of plastic pollution with it.

•Plastics made from oil and natural gas are an integral part of our daily lives, from cell phones to shipping materials to lifesaving medical devices.

•**But we use many plastics only once** — and promptly discard them.

•And there's a growing "zero waste" movement on social media.

"A lot of people are eating seafood all the time, and fish are eating plastic all the time, so I think that's a problem," says a marine toxicologist.

Microplastics — bits of plastic less than 5 millimeters in length — have been found lurking in the deep waters off California, on otherwise pristine mountain peaks in the Alps and in the gastrointestinal tracts of sea creatures large and small.

•It's quite possible that, as a legacy of our consumer habits, each of us is consuming microplastics on a regular basis as well.

•What's not yet known is whether it's taking a toll on our health.

What's happening: There are calls to ban single-use plastics and force companies to rely less on petrochemicals. That industry is taking notice, trying to stay ahead of consumer backlash by focusing on recycling.

Details: Roland Geyer, the lead author of a comprehensive 2017 study on plastic production and end use, estimates that about 9,200 million metric tons of virgin plastics have been produced since 1950.

•Geyer's study projected that by 2050 about 12,000 million metric tons of plastic waste could be in landfills or the natural environment.

•Globally, less than 20% of plastics were recycled in 2015. In the U.S., it's worse. Just 9% of plastics were recycled that year, according to the most recent data from the Environmental Protection Agency.

•In 2018, China banned most plastics headed for its recycling processors, shutting down the U.S.'s largest recycling export market and compounding our waste problem.

Since most plastics come from fossil fuels, our plastics dependency is also exacerbating climate change.

•A recent report from an environmental group found that by 2030, plastics-related emissions could reach 1.34 gigatons per year — equivalent to the emissions released by more than 295 new 500-megawatt coal-fired power plants.

Unlike with other global environmental problems, consumers have more control over how this story plays out in the future.

•Efforts to replace plastic straws and switch from single-use plastic water bottles to reusable containers can make a difference when it comes to marine pollution, says Kyle Van Houtan, chief scientist at the Monterey Bay Aquarium. (Courtesy axios.com)

Related

Solving the plastic problem

A sorting center in France. Photo: Loic Venance/AFP/Getty Images

Plastics are intertwined with our lives today — driving researchers to create plant-based versions and more efficient ways to recycle.

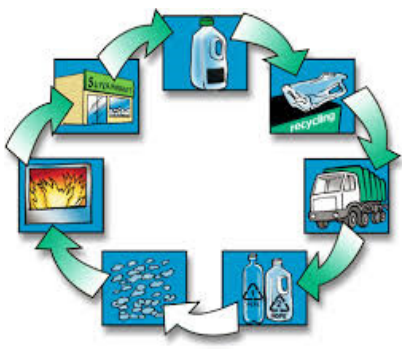
The big picture: From a science perspective, the biggest challenge is consumers and companies want materials that won't degrade quickly while being used but will degrade quickly once disposed, says Andrew Dove, a professor of chemistry at the University of Birmingham in the U.K. "The world wants it both ways."

"It's an incredible material," says Marc Hillmyer, who directs the Center for Sustainable Polymers at the University of Minnesota, and points to plastics use in transporting food and water, and protecting solar cells and windmill blades that anchor the renewable energy economy.

"We need them, but not for everything," he says.

How it works: Plastics are recycled or burned as a source of energy, but by one estimate, 79% of plastic waste has ended up in landfills or the environment.

Plastics can be mixed with pigments, other materials and other plastics, which complicate recycling and limit how the chemical components of plastic can be reused.



The push for "green plastics" made from sustainable materials gave us, for example, cups made from corn-based plastic (polylactic acid) and compostable chip bags that degrade under certain circumstances.

•Researchers are trying to develop new materials that could replace common plastics — from that foam in flower arrangements to straws.

•The challenge is finding a sweet spot between making a plastic easier to break down and the need for durability and other desired characteristics.

Replacing petroleum-based plastics is still important in the long term, says Dove, but as it accumulates in landfills, researchers are increasingly focusing on new ways to make and recycle today's materials.

•Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory researchers recently reported a new way to create a plastic commonly found in epoxies and polyurethane.

•They were then able to break it down to its chemical building blocks, even when the plastics were colored or with other materials, and turn them back into plastic.

•**Yes, but:** The process requires large amounts of water and hasn't been demonstrated to work on an industrial scale.

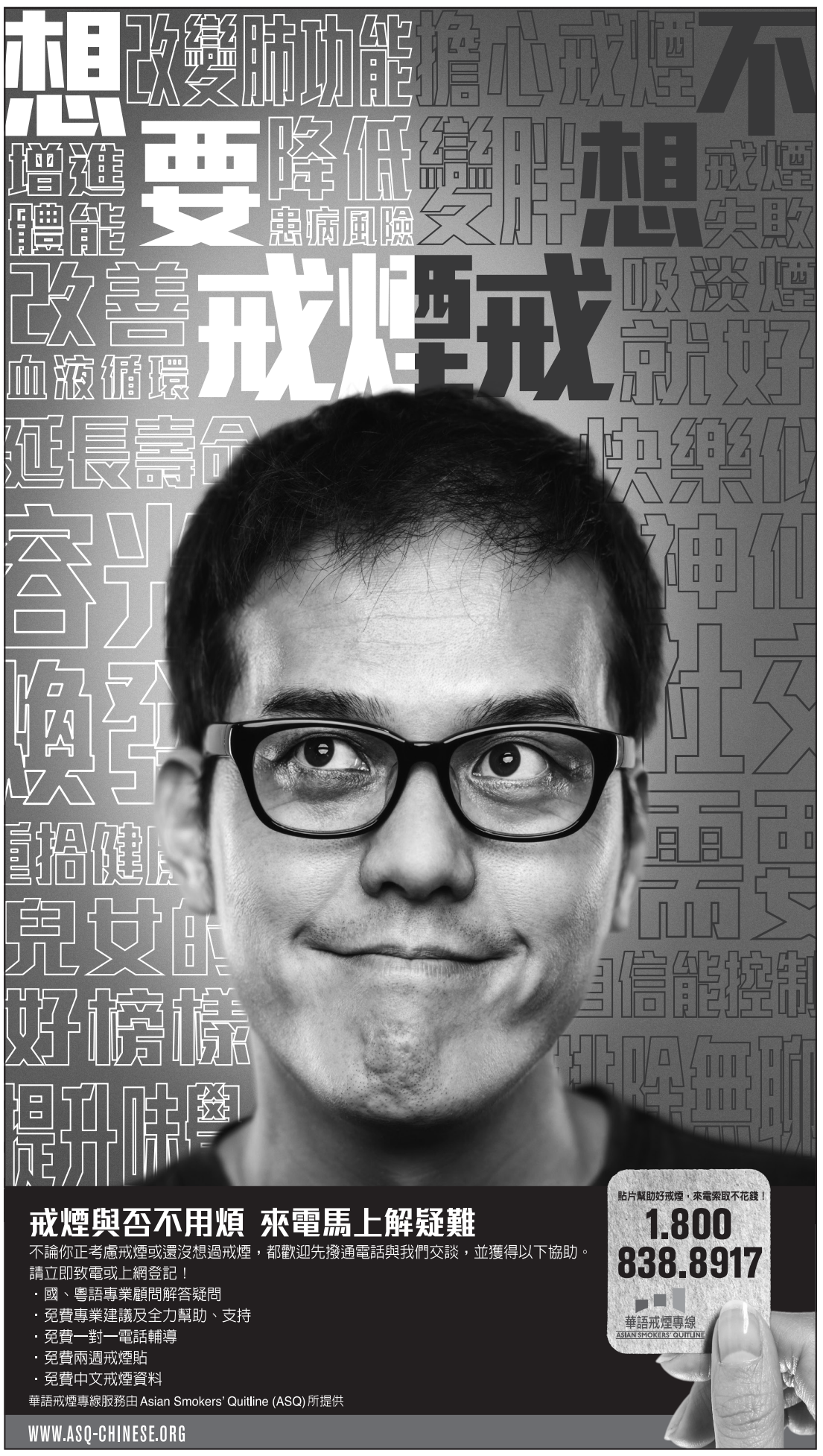
Proper plastic disposal is everyone's job.

Scientists are also experimenting with degrading plastics using:

•Chemical recycling: Different acids and bases can be used to break down plastics. Researchers hope to develop chemicals that can selectively degrade a single type of plastic in a stream of mixed plastic waste.

•Enzymes: They have the advantage of being specific to a type of plastic but the disadvantage of working slowly compared to chemical recycling.

The bottom line: It's going to take a combination of new materials and improved recycling methods to minimize the impacts of our plastics dependency. "There's not going to be a panacea," says Hillmyer. (Courtesy axios.com)



Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

Job Prospects For Blacks Are On The Rebound

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Job prospects are finally rising for people of color in the U.S, a development with big implications for 2020 political races.

African-Americans, Hispanics, Latinx and others left behind are finally starting to reap rewards from the economic boom. And in a major shift, the Federal Reserve is listening to people who say the central bank should use its policies to help sustain the record-long expansionthat's still in the early stages for low-income communities of color.

June's hiring surge calmed fears that the labor market is rapidly slowing down. But falling jobless rates haven't caused the usual upswell in wages, and thus, inflation. Low unemployment alongside inflation near the Fed's target is typically a trigger for the central bank to raise interest rates, but this dynamic hasn't occurred.

In an unprecedented series of events called "Fed Listens," Chairman Jerome Powell and colleagues are hearing from community leaders who say their residents were hit hardest by the recession.

They're being told that economic growth needs to continue so that people in impoverished neighborhoods can see the same benefits as wealthy whites.

Poor people and people of color tend to be "the first ones into the recession and the last ones out," Rachel Flum, executive director of the Economic Progress Institute, tells Axios.

One of the people who talked to the Fed in Chicago about the on-the-ground experience was Maurice Jones, CEO of Local Initiatives Support Corporation. "For folks in the neighborhood that are disinvested or underinvested, the prolonged low unemployment is what gives them a chance to get jobs," Jones tells Axios. "What we're getting now is businesses that are coming to us" because companies need employees.

The labor force participation rate for African-Americans — which counts both people with jobs and those who are actively looking for work — has been catching up to the labor force participation rate for whites at a rapid pace, reflecting optimism about prospects for employment.

Minority women in particular, as the New York Times notes, have started to notch gains in the labor market as the expansion continues.

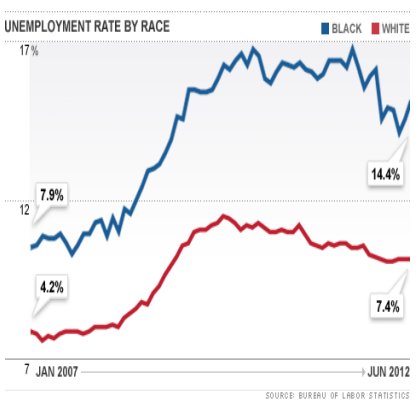
But pay hasn't picked up much. Wage growth, which has accelerated in recent months, pales in comparison to previous economic expansions. And that doesn't bode well for inflation, which has undershot the Fed's 2% target, supporting the argument that the Fed should let the economy run a bit hotter for longer.

And the unemployment rate for white people is still far lower than the rates for African-Americans, Hispanics and Latinx, though the gap has been shrinking.

The Fed's next listening session will be July 16 in Atlanta, weeks before the FOMC convenes on July 30 for a highly-anticipated meeting that may result in the first interest rate cut since 2008. (Courtesy axios.com)

Related

Black People Are Returning Faster Now Into The Workforce



Jobless black people are taking full-time work at a higher rate than unemployed whites, amid a more favorable economy for a population whose prospects have historically been dimmer than for other races.

The data, reflected in the chart above, suggest a greater willingness by jobless black people to accept relatively low wages, while many whites continue to sit out the sizzling economy.

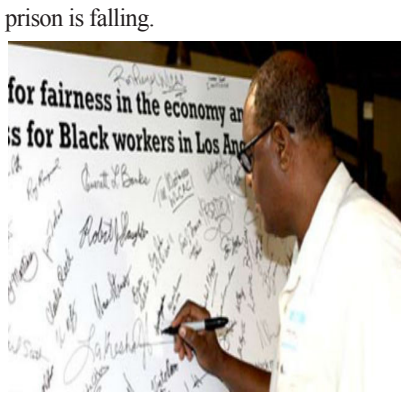
The 3.7% U.S. unemployment rate is at a whopping 49-year low, according to the September jobs report released today by the government. It was the 96th straight month of job gains, a new record.

Among black people, the unemployment rate ticked down to 6% from 6.3% the previous month. And here's another, less-talked about statistic:

The share of the employed black population is converging closer to whites than it's been since the government began tracking the metric in 1972.

Historically, joblessness disappears faster for whites, so the length of the economic recovery — the second-longest in history — is also key.

The population we're talking about is non-institutionalized, but if it did include people in prison, the percentages might be even closer, since the rate of black people in prison is falling.



This dynamic — the convergence of the white and black employment-to-population ratios — is occurring despite wages not growing as much as they could be, said William Spriggs, chief economist at the AFL-CIO. Last month, average hourly earnings grew 2.8% from the same month last year.

But pay for black Americans is still significantly less than other races.

One example: Median weekly earnings for white, full-time workers is $907, while black Americans made $683, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"We are responding to low wages, but white people aren't," Spriggs told Axios.

"There is some truth to the fact that if it's difficult to get a job or secure a job in a good or bad economy, you're not going to be extremely overly picky about it," said Valerie Wilson, director of the Economic Policy Institute's Program on Race, Ethnicity, and the Economy.

Onique Morris, who is also black, accepted a teaching position at New York-based P.S. 79 without shopping around for a better salary. "I would have taken it no matter what the pay was," said Morris, who is studying for a master's degree in education.

Black American unemployment is close to historic lows, but remains almost double that of white unemployment, which is at 3.3%. Still, black people are locking down more jobs or at least feeling confident enough to try. (Courtesy axios.com)