

Roland Fryer

The Economist

2015.5.2

Tenure

- Asked by a friend where he would be at 30, he replied that he would probably be dead.
- In fact, at that age, in 2008, he became the youngest African-American to win tenure as an economics professor at Harvard.

Tenure

- On April 24th the American Economic Association announced that he had won this year's John Bates Clark medal
- He is its first black winner.
- Mr Fryer's work on improving "our understanding of the sources, magnitude, and persistence of US racial inequality".

Tenure

- Why black kids do worse than whites at school?
- He found that, after controlling for such things as income, there was no gap in kindergarten.
- But over time, black pupils lost ground in virtually every subject.

One explanation

- One explanation, long dismissed as an urban myth, was that black pupils do not study hard because those who do are accused by their peers of “acting white”
- Mr Fryer found a novel way to test this notion.
- He measured how popular pupils were by asking them to name their friends.

The myth was true

- he counted a friendship as real only if both children named each other.
- He found that the myth was true. Black high-school students with good grades had fewer friends than those with mediocre ones.
- For whites, the reverse was true.