

# All-In Nation

*An America that Works for All*

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS AND POLICYLINK  
EDITED BY VANESSA CÁRDENAS AND SARAH TREUHAFT

Center for American Progress



Lifting Up What Works®

PolicyLink



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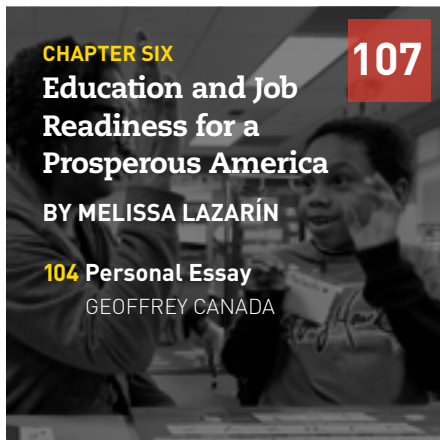
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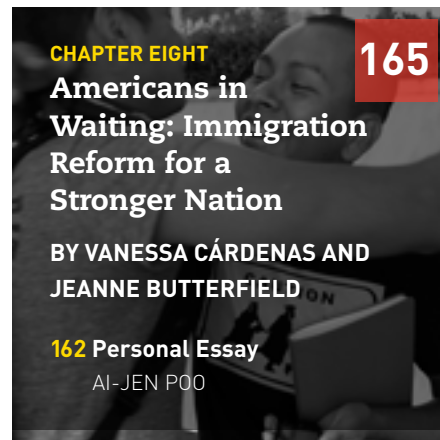
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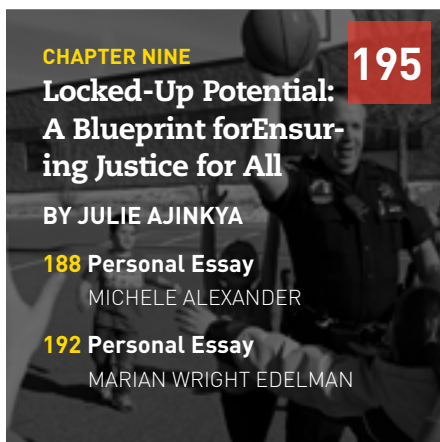
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# Preface

BY ANGELA GLOVER BLACKWELL, FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, POLICYLINK; AND NEERA TANDEN, PRESIDENT OF THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS



Most Americans do not realize how rapidly the racial and ethnic makeup of the country is changing or what this holds for the future. The 2012 election heralded a new political reality. But the far-reaching implications for the nation's economic growth and security have not been fully explored.

America's diversity turns out to be an extraordinary asset in an increasingly competitive global economy. As author Richard Florida has observed, "[t]he evidence is mounting that geographical openness and cultural diversity and tolerance are not by-products but key drivers of economic progress."<sup>1</sup> For instance, economic historians who study why some societies experienced rapid economic development over the past two centuries while others grew more slowly have discovered that greater cultural diversity has "beneficial effects ... on the advancement of ... knowledge-intensive industrial technology."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the more we learn about how innovation develops through the mix of different ideas, cultures, and attitudes, the clearer it

becomes that America's diversity will help ensure that the U.S. economy remains cutting edge in the 21st century. Simply put, our diversity is our strength.

Yet too many people of color are being left out and left behind. Longstanding inequities have resulted in significant gaps in education, employment, health, and wealth among the fastest-growing population groups—the very communities the nation depends on to provide the workforce, innovators, entrepreneurs, and business leaders of tomorrow. For instance, from 2007 to 2010 black family wealth fell 31 percent, while Hispanic family wealth fell 44 percent. By contrast, white families only lost 11 percent of their wealth over this period. These disproportionate drops exacerbated pre-existing disparities. Whereas before the recession, nonwhite families were a quarter as wealthy as white families, by 2010 they were only one-sixth as wealthy. Closing these gaps, improving the life chances for all to reach their full potential, is good for both those lagging behind and for the entire nation.

The equity agenda—just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can fully participate and prosper—is the best approach to secure a bright American future. It also has become a matter of urgency.

Today, most babies born in the United States are children of color. Within three decades, America will have no clear racial or ethnic majority and more than half the population will be people of color. We are on our way to becoming what has been called a “world nation.” But if the racial disparities plaguing the country today hold constant as the United States becomes majority people of color, it will mean lower growth for our nation, lower wages for our people, as well as a lower standard of living. In short, we simply cannot maintain the American way of life we all believe in and cherish while at the same time leaving half the country behind. That is why we all have a stake in an economy that works better for everyone.

This remarkable demographic shift here at home is converging with a new global economic order. Information, ideas, products, and capital are dispersing across the world, creating vast entrepreneurial opportunities.

Globalization also challenges the United States as never before to build an economy that works for everyone, not just the wealthy few. Growing diversity offers us boundless potential to meet the challenge if we adopt a growth model grounded in the American ideals of fairness, equity, and opportunity for all.

Meeting the challenge means creating jobs and businesses that build the capabilities of all people to participate and benefit, while bolstering long-term competitiveness. It also means removing the barriers to success for low-income people and people of color, especially those that keep so many children from realizing their dreams and potential. Equity-driven growth requires that we expand the opportunities that have always defined the American Dream: opportunities to start businesses, to live in healthy communities, to attend good schools from pre-kindergarten to college. While the private sector must take the lead in producing inclusive growth, government must establish the right framework of policies, investments, and strategies to guide that growth. In short, we need a strategy that ensures that we grow together, not apart.

In crafting this strategy, it is critical that we draw from the vast knowledge and experience of local communities and civic leaders. We find inspiration from stories of community renewal such as the rebuilding of the South Bronx in New York City in the 1980s led by the Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program; the revitalization of Boston’s Roxbury/North Dorchester neighborhood spearheaded by the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in the 1990s; and the sustainability planning for the Lakota Sioux Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota led by the Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation in this decade. Underlying this work is the energy, creativity, sweat, and often tears of the local residents, leaders, and staff of community-based organizations, businesses,





Kately Vo, right, plays handball with her friends after a weekly worship service at Cao Dai Temple of California in Garden Grove, Calif., Sunday, Jan. 31, 2010.

AP PHOTO/JAE C. HONG

foundations, and institutions. Looking forward, as our nation seeks to leverage the demographic transformation to realize a deeper democracy and a more vibrant economy, our approach must be directly informed and closely tied to the innovation and wisdom of local leadership.

As two women of color, we cannot help but marvel as we reflect on this moment. From the scars of history, America has emerged with the very resources it needs to thrive and prosper: a workforce that can be unrivaled in breadth and depth of talent; youth hungry for opportunity and very much at home in an interconnected world; and engaged communities that can renew and strengthen our democracy in a landscape of racial difference and political complexity. Indeed, the United States, with all of its diversity and resilience, is poised to ensure that America remains the world's preeminent economic power.

This is not to minimize what it will take. On every measure of well-being or distress—economic security, academic achievement, access to health care and fresh food, incarceration—communities of color suffer disproportionately. In this book, Michelle Alexander points to the almost unfathomable fact that more African Americans are under correctional control today than were enslaved in 1850.

*All-In Nation* squarely addresses the challenges, but the essays and policy solutions presented here move the national conversation beyond a focus on what's wrong to illuminate what works. Leading thinkers and trailblazing activists explore how to capitalize

on our demographic destiny and why it is in our collective best interest to do so.

Ai-Jen Poo, who spearheaded the National Domestic Workers Alliance, reminds us that Americans are interdependent not only economically but also through our caring relationships—and that comprehensive immigration reform is needed to fortify these connections across the lines of race, class, and generation. Former Pennsylvania Gov. Edward Rendell reflects on how the Interstate Highway System fueled the growth of the middle class in the 1950s, and he calls for big thinking and bold investments again to ensure prosperity for generations to come. Lawrence Summers argues that rectifying racial disparities and providing opportunity for all Americans is critical for the country's future economic prosperity. Equally crucial is the recognition that every child can learn—a lesson 30 years of work in Harlem have taught Geoffrey Canada—and that education policy can improve the odds for poor children at the scale needed for the nation to succeed.

The contributors to these pages work across the spectrum of issues and settings—from the streets to the halls of government and philanthropy to the ivory tower. Together they tap a full range of wisdom, experience, and perspective that can lead to a stronger America.

And we hope they will be both a cause for optimism and a stir to action to ensure our country lives up to its most basic principle: opportunity for all. ■

## Endnotes

- 1 Richard Florida, "How Diversity Leads to Economic Growth," *The Atlantic Cities*, December 12, 2011, available at <http://www.theatlanticcities.com/jobs-and-economy/2011/12/diversity-leads-to-economic-growth/687/>.
- 2 Quamrul Ashraf and Oded Galor, "Cultural Diversity, Geographical Isolation, and the Origin of the Wealth of Nations." Working Paper 17640 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2011), available at <http://www.aeaweb.org/aea/2013conference/program/retrieve.php?pdfid=34>.



# Executive Summary

BY VANESSA CÁRDENAS AND JULIE AJINKYA



merica is at a juncture. We are a nation confronting issues that go to the core of our values: What do we do about the growing inequality in the United

States today? How do we maintain and grow a sustainable middle class while creating pathways to the middle class for those living in poverty? How do we ensure that we take care of our elders with dignity and respect? And how do we provide a clear and timely pathway to citizenship for immigrants that is both fair and just?

The backdrop to these policy concerns is the inexorable demographic shift that is taking place in the United States. Today the majority of our children under the age of 1 are of color, and before we reach the end of this decade, more than half of all youth will be of color. Yet communities of color continue to face longstanding barriers on the economic, educational, and social fronts. Consider this statistic: By 2018, 45 percent of all jobs will require an associate's degree or higher. Yet today, only 27 percent of African Americans, 26 percent of U.S.-born Latinos, and 14 percent of Latino immigrants have that level of education.

The challenge in front of us is clear: How do we maintain our standing as a country of opportunity and upward mobility, ensuring that today's and future generations of Americans have the tools and skills to succeed?

Yet with every challenge, there is also an opportunity. Our growing diverse population offers us

advantages that other nations don't have—specifically human capital, which is the greatest asset of any economy. And unlike other countries such as Russia, Germany, and Japan, our population is growing thanks almost entirely to communities of color. Diversity drives innovation, encourages entrepreneurship, and creates new markets. What's more, our growing diverse communities can provide us an unparalleled advantage in an increasingly global economy. Thus, underlying the story of racial inequity, there is a greater story that has as its protagonist a young and vibrant population—youth of color—that is ready to maximize opportunities, provided they have the tools to succeed.

*All-In Nation* highlights the economic benefits of ensuring the success of communities of color. Groundbreaking analysis presented here estimates gains on a set of five economic indicators if Americans were able to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities that perpetuate inequality in our nation today. If racial and ethnic differences were eliminated, the average total personal income in 2011 would have been 8.1 percent higher; our gross domestic product would have been at least \$1.2 trillion higher; 13 million people would have been lifted out of poverty; federal, state, and local tax revenue would have increased by \$192 billion; and the long-run deficit in Social Security would be reduced by more than 10 percent.

This is what compels the Center for American Progress and PolicyLink to present *All-In Nation: An America that Works for All*—the need to implement

an equity policy agenda that reduces inequality and manifests the potential of our diverse population.

The need is urgent: If we do not change course and invest in strengthening communities of color and other communities that have been left behind, our middle class will continue to erode and our nation will be unprepared to successfully compete in the global economy. We must intentionally create an All-In Nation—ensuring opportunity for everyone and securing America’s economic future.

This book lays the groundwork for federal policies that would create a more equitable economy and a more equitable nation. The chapters herein all make the fundamental argument that such policies are an economic imperative for our nation. Spanning multiple policy arenas, from education and workforce development to democratic participation, the policy recommendations are all made with the goal of ensuring that all Americans, regardless of their racial or ethnic background and circumstance, class standing, or neighborhood of residence, can have a fair and unfettered chance to succeed and contribute to the well-being of our economy and our democracy.

The opening chapter, “**Creating an All-In Nation**,” introduces the foundational premise of this book by explaining how our nation has historically worked toward including those who were previously marginalized, and why increasing diversity should be understood as an economic opportunity to be fully embraced. While inequity poses economic risks to our future prosperity, diversity produces innovation,

creates new businesses that perform better, and generates new markets and consumer bases. This chapter presents a guiding vision, a new narrative, and a framework for directing the development of an All-In Nation.

The discussion turns next to the economic imperative of reducing racial and ethnic gaps. The “**America’s Future Workforce**” chapter argues that better preparing our diverse population with education and training opportunities is critical for our nation’s economic competitiveness. Without all hands on deck, our nation will not be able to count on future economic prosperity.

The ensuing chapters lay out a progressive policy agenda in key areas: infrastructure; jobs and the economy; health care and healthy communities; education and workforce development; immigration; criminal justice; and democratic participation.

Each policy chapter is introduced with a personal essay written by a public figure, explaining how he or she came to understand the urgency of taking bold action—from renowned educator **Geoffrey Canada**’s moving account of why every child deserves to succeed, to jurist and activist **Michelle Alexander**’s description of how her own treatment of a young black man changed the way she thought about criminal justice and race, to actress and community organizer **America Ferrera** explaining the importance of voting, and many others. Each essayist shares deeply personal convictions about why they believe our nation needs to change course.

**“Infrastructure: Supporting Communities So All Can Thrive”** explains the importance of modernizing our public infrastructure system so that communities of color are not left lacking the basics that so many Americans take for granted and can take advantage of the jobs and economic opportunities associated with infrastructure maintenance and development. Infrastructure deficiencies in urban and rural communities of color often stem from years of inequitable and discriminatory land-use planning, yet sound investments have been shown to transform neglected and struggling communities into healthy, thriving neighborhoods by linking them more firmly to their regional economies.

**“Jobs, Income and Assets: Economic Security for All,”** argues that national economic growth relies on individual economic security—having enough money to cover a family’s basic needs and sufficient savings or assets to invest in its future. Yet economic security has become increasingly elusive for far too many Americans and for people of color in particular. In order to increase economic security, our national economic policies must focus on creating good, family-supporting jobs; building a strong workforce and a growing base of entrepreneurs; and strengthening the nation’s capacity to innovate and produce.

**“Building Healthy Communities for a Healthy Nation”** relays the tremendous influence a seemingly inconsequential ZIP code has in determining whether an individual will be healthy or sick, or even how long he or she will live. Due to historic patterns

of racism and disinvestment, the neighborhoods where people of color live tend to have fewer of the resources and opportunities that promote good health—including grocery stores, farmers’ markets, quality health care, and safe streets and parks—although these neighborhoods have more fast food outlets, liquor stores, and pollution sources, which lead to preventable health problems. The nation’s future depends on putting everyone on a path to good health by ensuring high-quality health care for all and by expanding “healthy communities” strategies that make neighborhoods healthier places to live, work, learn, play, and prevent people from getting sick in the first place.

**“Education and Job Readiness for a Prosperous America”** warns that the United States is losing its competitive edge globally because our education system is failing a sizable group of students, namely those of color. To have the world-class workforce we will need for future prosperity, we must arm schools with a steady pipeline of effective teachers, sufficient funding and learning time, and college-ready standards. We must also make sure that we expand workforce opportunities available to students while they are in school as well as hard-to-reach adult populations in order to ensure they are well positioned for gainful employment.

**“Americans in Waiting: An Immigration System that Works”** describes the central role that immigrants play in our economy. For those who are currently undocumented, the social and economic benefits that come with a road map to full citizenship





Jissela Centeno and her son Matthew Pineda of Arlington, Va., whose family is from Honduras, participates in a rally for immigration reform at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, Wednesday, April 10, 2013.

AP PHOTO/CHARLES DHARAPAK

are shown to go a long way toward fixing our nation's deeply flawed immigration system. And for those who are authorized to be here, it is still important to implement policies that lead to full integration and encourage participation—on the job, in schools, and at the voting booth. Immigrant incorporation and integration constantly test and ultimately strengthen our nation's commitment to its core values of equality, freedom, and opportunity.

**“Locked-Up Potential”** reminds the reader of the nation's badly broken criminal justice system. Despite the fact that violent crime rates are at historic lows, mass incarceration has spiraled out of control, leading to a system of racial disenfranchisement that perpetuates inequality as well as an unsustainable level of corrections spending that diverts money from important institutions such as hospitals, universities, and key national priorities. The federal government should learn from state innovations that have reduced corrections spending and establish a policy framework that encourages our criminal-justice system to promote rehabilitation instead of punishment, productivity instead of decline, and equity instead of the racial- and income-based disparities that now run rampant.

**“Democratic Participation and Leadership in a Diverse Nation”** describes the need to reinvigorate our democracy by encouraging the formation of institutions that are more inclusive of our increasingly diverse population's needs and interests. Communities of color continue to face barriers to democratic participation such as voter repression,

limited access to leadership positions, and naturalization obstacles for immigrants that have historically prevented them from helping to shape our institutions of governance and civic engagement. These communities are key to support an equitable policy agenda focused on investments that would strengthen the middle class, including a fair tax plan, affordable health coverage, and improved public education.

Each policy chapter concludes with specific policy recommendations that the federal government can take action on today to help reduce barriers that prevent all Americans from contributing fruitfully to our economy and democracy. Often inspired by innovations already occurring at the state and local level, these recommendations create a policy framework for Congress and the administration to build a fairer and more vital economy and nation.

The analysis and policy recommendations in this book create a framework for manifesting an All-In Nation. CAP and PolicyLink hope that this book compels immediate action by Congress and the administration and that it will jumpstart a local and national conversation about a new pathway to a strong and equitable future.

At this crossroads moment *All-In Nation* points the way to a future where individual freedom is enhanced, shared prosperity is ensured, and, in the words of famed American writer and historian James Truslow Adams, “a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone.” ■

**CHAPTER ONE**

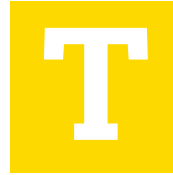
# **Creating an All-In Nation**

**BY RUY TEIXEIRA AND JOHN HALPIN**



Change is the law  
of life. And those  
who look only to  
the past or present  
are certain to miss  
the future.

**PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY**



The America that our grandparents and parents knew is no more. The America that we know is rapidly changing and will be a very different place for our children. People may look at that change as either a good or bad thing, but one thing is for certain: It is inevitable.

In the 1960s, America was a much different nation, and many would argue a much scarier place. Internationally we endured the constant saber rattling of the Cold War and its threat of nuclear annihilation. Domestically we faced implosion from deep racial wounds allowed to fester and putrefy for too long. Yet the nation mustered the resolve to overcome fear and embrace the promise of full political equality and economic opportunity for African Americans, Latinos, and women while seeking to eradicate the most extreme poverty in America's cities and rural areas. These were big and lofty goals; and though we fell short, the mere act of setting these goals enhanced the nation's standing in the world and created a sense of "can do" internally.

Today we live in an America that is more racially and ethnically diverse than ever. In November 2012 we were reminded of this when President Barack Obama was re-elected by the most diverse electorate in U.S. history, winning with communities of color by a margin of roughly 80 percent to 18 percent. This new electorate also added a number of new faces to the 113th Congress, including members from every race and ethnic group, a record number of women, and the country's first openly gay elected

senator. It is an undeniable fact that the United States is becoming increasingly diverse, bolting toward the day when there will no longer be any clear racial or ethnic majority in the U.S. population.<sup>1</sup> Already more than half of newborns today are of color, and demographers predict that more than half of all youth will be of color before the end of this decade.<sup>2</sup> As youth drive this demographic change, each generation is becoming more and more racially and ethnically mixed than the one before.

America's rising demographic tide presents tremendous opportunities to build a robust, sustainable, and competitive economy, but seizing these opportunities will require a major change in course. America's global leadership depends on gaining a competitive edge in an ever-expanding world economy and demonstrating that democracy can work in a decidedly multiracial, multiethnic context. At a time when our population, while growing, is becoming a smaller share globally, the nation must maximize the contributions of all Americans to our economy and democracy. We cannot afford to leave anyone behind—especially those populations on the rise. But today's public policies are outmoded and ill-equipped to provide every American with the tools needed to help themselves and the nation succeed in the next economy.

As a nation we must make a collective decision. Will we act proactively to take the steps necessary to turn change into an advantage for our economy and democracy, or will we do nothing and let current trends continue and eventually overwhelm us? Are we bold enough to follow the lead of

those generations who came before us and boldly embrace a changing America?

CAP and PolicyLink hold the view that standing still and holding fast to the present is not an option; trying to recapture a past that was only good for some, while leaving too many out, is a self-defeating path. The only real choice is to face the future, recognize its vast potential, and move forward.

Whether one accepts, rejects, or remains ambivalent about America's diversity, the fact is that as a nation we have little choice but to devise the best paths forward for everyone regardless of their background. The country will either rise together as one nation with many different faces and voices doing their part for themselves and others, or fall as a divided country unable to bridge its differences and achieve mutual success.

In short, we need an All-In Nation. To get there, though, we first need to know and accept where we are destined by demography to reach over the next four decades and to understand the peril we face as a nation if we fail to change course.

## The changing face of America

In many parts of the country, our multiracial, multicultural future is already here. People of color already constitute the majority in 49 of the nation's 366 metropolitan regions, as well as four states (California, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Texas).

Other regions and states are racing toward this milestone, with another 40 regions and nine states projected to become majority people of color by the end of this decade.<sup>3</sup>

And the nation's demographic transformation runs much deeper than a simple majority accounting portrays. Almost every community is experiencing dramatic changes in the makeup of its population, including rural counties, small towns, and suburbs in addition to the large cities that have traditionally had diverse populations and served as immigrant gateways. Even in Iowa, which remains 91 percent white, one in four residents of Marshalltown (population 27,552) is now Latino, and the Latino share of the population doubled over the last decade. More than half of the schoolchildren in this rural meatpacking town, which sits in the heart of the state, are now people of color, and last year the high-school prom king and queen were Latino.<sup>4</sup>

One telling statistic about the extent of America's demographic change is that 92 percent of population growth in the United States over the past decade came from people of color. When you look community by community at what groups drove population growth or decline, you see that many places—145 of the nation's 366 metropolitan regions—would have actually experienced population *decline* were it not for the growth of their diverse populations. And this is true in predominantly white regions such as Duluth, Minnesota, and Grand Forks, North Dakota, as well as more diverse metros, including Los Angeles and Miami.<sup>5</sup>

Latinos are the main driver of demographic change in America, accounting for more than half of the total population growth over the past decade. Contrary to popular misperception, this increase was due more to births among Latino families than to immigration. But Latinos are not alone in changing the face of our nation. The Asian population grew at a faster pace last decade than any other group, and the number of people who identify as multiracial is also increasing at a rapid clip. African American and Native American populations also grew, but unlike Latinos, Asians, and multiracial populations, they did not increase their relative share of the population. The non-Hispanic white population grew slightly, but other groups are gaining population so much more rapidly that the share of the population that is white is quickly decreasing.

## Rising inequality and stalled mobility

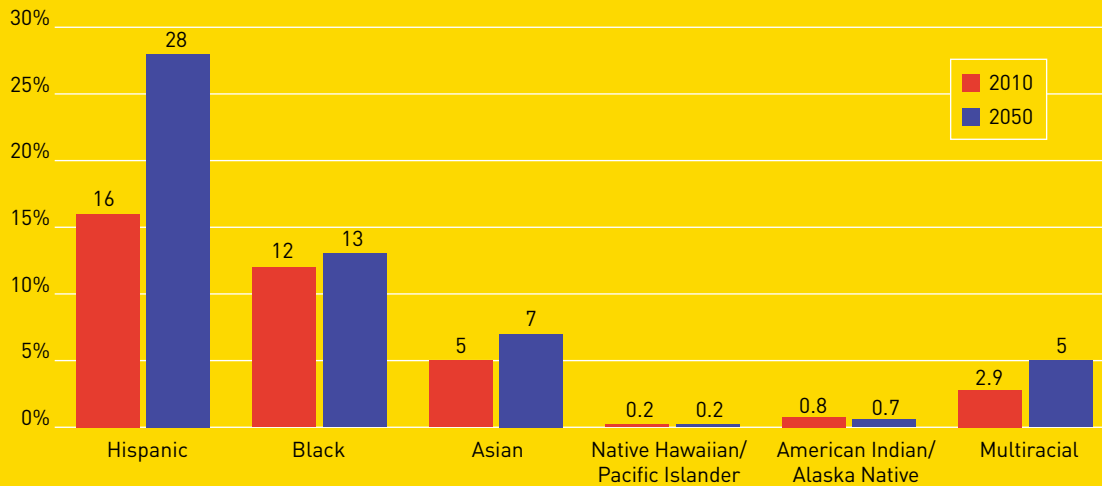
As our nation continues to grow its demographic diversity, it is hardening in terms of economic inequality and social mobility, with communities of color often stuck at the bottom of the economic ladder. News reports, academic research, and increased social discontent—manifested by the Occupy movement—all attest to the rise in inequality in America. For several decades following World War II, strong economic growth corresponded with rising incomes for families of every race and ethnicity, though families of color saw their incomes increase much more modestly. People of color, especially blacks, were

# America in 2050

What will America look like in 2050? The best guess comes from the U.S. Census Bureau's population projections, which provide estimates of our race-ethnic distribution by five-year intervals up to 2050.

According to these projections, sometime in the early 2040s, non-Hispanic whites will become a minority of our population. By 2050 they will be only 47 percent, with communities of color combining to form a solid 53 percent majority. (see Figure 1) Hispanics will make up 28 percent of the population, up from 16 percent in 2010, and blacks will be 13 percent, about 1 percentage point higher than their level in 2010. Asians will be 7 percent, up from 5 percent in 2010, and another 0.7 percent will be made up of American Indian and Alaska Native, unchanged from their 2010 level. Finally, multiracial individuals could potentially see very strong growth, nearly doubling in size from their current 2.9 percent to 5 percent in 2050.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Comparing race-ethnic distribution in 2010 and projections to 2050**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.



In this July 12, 2012 file photo, a young customer eats a cupcake bought from the Flirty Cupcakes food truck in Chicago.

AP PHOTO/SITTHIXAY DITTHAVONG



blocked from many of the fruits of the postwar boom by deep-rooted and pervasive prejudice that significantly limited opportunities through to the early 1970s. But since this high-water mark for the middle class in the mid-1970s, incomes have essentially stagnated—just as people of color began at last to enjoy the benefits of equal opportunity in our economy and our society. Then, in the first decade of the 21st century, the typical family’s income actually declined.<sup>6</sup>

While the majority of families have faced increasing costs and diminished earnings, the incomes and wealth of those at the top of the economic ladder have skyrocketed. Income inequality is currently at its highest level since the 1920s,<sup>7</sup> and wealth inequality is even worse. Since 1979 the incomes of the top 1 percent of households have risen by an astounding 275 percent, while incomes for the middle 60 percent have risen about 40 percent, and incomes for the bottom 20 percent have risen a paltry 18 percent.<sup>8</sup> The Great Recession wiped out nearly two decades of accumulated wealth for many households, primarily due to the housing crisis and declining home values.<sup>9</sup> The top 1 percent now commands 36 percent of the country’s wealth, and the top 10 percent holds 75 percent of national wealth, while the bottom 80 percent of families holds only 13 percent.<sup>10</sup>

Everyone else has suffered as the wealthy claim more and more of our nation’s income, but rising inequality has taken its heaviest toll on communities of color, who were hit first and worst by the financial recession and have been slow to regain

their lost income and wealth.<sup>11</sup> African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and some Asian groups are less likely to hold jobs with family-supporting wages, own homes, and have the security of health insurance, retirement benefits, or savings. Household income for whites is more than double that for African American and Latino households, and white family wealth is 20 times higher than that of African American families and 18 times higher than that of Latino families.<sup>12</sup> And 1 in 10 whites lives in poverty, compared to one in four Latinos, African Americans, and Native Americans. Poverty rates are also high for many Asian subgroups such as the Hmong, Cambodians, Laotians, and Vietnamese. People of color are more likely to live in underserved neighborhoods that do not provide the good jobs, quality schools, retail options, parks, transportation, and services essential to live healthy lives and succeed economically.

## **Inequality places our economy and democracy at risk**

Growing inequality runs counter to our identity and values as Americans. It is also a threat to the economy and to our democracy.

As inequality has spiked, there is growing concern that such high levels of inequality not only deprive those at the bottom of having a fair shot, but put the economy as a whole at a disadvantage. Recent reviews of the economics literature on inequality and growth find a growing academic consensus

that inequality has a negative impact on economic growth.<sup>13</sup> And a recent analysis by the International Monetary Fund measured inequality and growth in more than 100 countries and found that nations with high inequality were more likely to have shorter periods of economic growth. For every 10 percent increase in a country's inequality, it had a 50 percent shorter period of economic growth.<sup>14</sup>

There are several reasons why inequity is a drag on growth, but one of the most convincing is that the broad-based purchasing power of a strong and diverse middle class is essential to economic growth. When a small percentage of people control large percentages of income and wealth, there simply isn't enough money flowing through the economy to buy the goods and services necessary to keep growth, profits, employment, and wages high and drive new productivity and innovation.<sup>15</sup>

Another economic risk of rising inequality is that as a nation we are not building a strong and prepared workforce that can successfully compete in the global economy. The workforce is diversifying much more quickly than the overall population, yet people of color face many barriers to gaining the skills and education they need to maximize their participation and contributions. The Center for Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University estimates that by 2018, 45 percent of all jobs will require an associate's degree or higher. Yet today, only 27 percent of African Americans, 26 percent of U.S.-born Latinos, and 14 percent of Latino immigrants have that level of education.<sup>16</sup> Meeting the skills challenge

will require raising the skills and education of the fastest-growing segments of the workforce.

Rising inequality also undermines the fundamental American value of upward mobility. As Alan Krueger, chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, argues, rising income inequality corresponds directly with lower economic mobility.<sup>17</sup> Unlike the promise of the American Dream, where people rise and fall according to their talents and ambitions and where parents are able to create a better life for their children, we are quickly becoming a society where the rich stay rich and the poor stay poor. The United States is on track to have the lowest level of social mobility among the world's leading economies.<sup>18</sup>

A rigidly class-bound society divided by race and ethnicity is inconsistent with the notion that “all men are created equal” and endowed with unalienable rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Nor does it meet our constitutional promise to “form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.”

## **Diversity is an economic opportunity**

Beyond posing economic risks, inequity also hinders the nation from seizing the numerous opportunities offered by its growing diversity.

Diversity is the seedbed that produces innovation and creates new businesses and new markets. Diversity drives the innovation process that is so fundamental to economic progress. Research finds that teams of diverse individuals, for example, are better at solving problems and coming up with new ideas.<sup>19</sup> And diverse businesses have better economic performance. Companies with more diverse workforces have higher revenues, more customers, higher returns on equity and assets, and a greater market share.<sup>20</sup> The private sector is catching on to this insight and recognizing the bottom-line benefits of diversity. As the CEO of PepsiCo, Indra Nooyi, puts it, “The diversity of people in a corporation promotes innovation because it achieves greater diversity of ideas. There is a link between diversity and innovation that’s not theoretical - it’s real.”<sup>21</sup>

Diverse communities also create new markets by providing a significant consumer base for existing businesses and by developing new enterprises. If it were its own country, America’s \$1.2 trillion Latino market would be the 15th-largest economy in the world—just below Canada and just above Indonesia.<sup>22</sup> Because of changing demographics alone, the buying power of African Americans and Asians, as well as Latinos, is increasing much more quickly than that for white Americans.

Communities of color are also starting new businesses at a rapid rate—despite lingering barriers to accessing low-cost capital, contracts, mentorship, and technical expertise. Between 2002 and 2007 the number of businesses owned by blacks,

Latinos, and Asians grew more than three times as fast as white-owned businesses, and revenues grew more than twice as fast.

Lastly, America’s transformation into a world nation inside its borders can also help it connect to—and succeed in—the global economy. A multilingual and multicultural population can help entrepreneurs, companies, and organizations communicate with, understand, and respond to potential customers, suppliers, and collaborators across the globe. And immigrant entrepreneurs are helping the United States meet its goals to increase exports, thanks to their ties to markets in their native countries. Latino- and Asian-owned firms account for two-thirds of the nation’s exports to Latino and Asian countries.<sup>23</sup>

## Meeting the American promise

Shifting demographics offer our country the chance to live up to the ideals upon which it was founded: that we would be a nation of many different people and communities, each empowered by opportunities to make the most of our lives, and the potential to fully contribute to building a strong nation. To make this American Dream a reality, the nation’s institutions and public policies must reflect this diversity and represent the interests of all, not just a select few.

For long-term economic and social success, we must create a society with rising opportunity for all—black, white, Latino, Asian, and Native American;

rich, poor, and middle class alike. This will require taking steps to better educate our people and prepare our workers for global competition, and create the high-quality, high-wage jobs that are fundamental to shared prosperity. And it will require reorienting the public, private, and nonprofit sectors toward the task of giving all people a fair and equal shot in life regardless of their family background or historic patterns of exclusion.

Fortunately, this is not a new task for America and we have many traditions and political values to draw upon. Since 1776 when Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams first proposed a national motto to the Second Continental Congress, America has been guided by the principle *e pluribus unum*, or “out of many, one.” The Founders’ original idea for a national seal contained a shield with the countries of origin of the earliest non-native Americans—England, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, France, and Germany—surrounded by the 13 newly independent states. The message of the proposed national seal and motto was clear: The United States is a nation of distinct people from distinct regions united in the common cause of securing liberty and opportunity for all.

Despite its ideals of diversity, this founding vision excluded as many people as it included. Native Americans, slaves, free blacks, women, and those who did not own property were all left out from this founding vision. Racial, ethnic, and religious minorities and some immigrants also faced fierce discrimination as the nation developed.

Over time, and through constant struggle by citizens and committed social movements, the United States has slowly reduced its legal barriers to equality for all people. The Constitution was amended to end slavery, guarantee due process for all, and grant African Americans, women, and young people the right to vote and full citizenship. It took time for these constitutional changes to take root across all of our country, but today the constitutionally condoned barriers to equality for just about all of us except for gay and transgender Americans have been removed.

The nation’s leaders also created a policy framework that fostered economic security and mobility, allowing for the creation of a strong middle class that propelled our economic growth through the postwar era. The Social Security Act of 1935 ensured that future generations of American workers could look forward to a more secure old age. The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 set maximum hours and minimum wages for most workers, helping to close some of the gap between the wealthy and poor. Such laws and programs helped many families move into the middle class.

At the same time, just as the ideal of diversity and equality espoused by the founding fathers was not mirrored by reality, federal policies have sometimes perpetuated inequities. While it is true that many policies facilitated economic mobility and that some had universal benefits, other policies favored some groups while shutting out others. The National Housing Act in 1935 and the G.I. Bill in 1944, for example, helped millions of families access affordable home



In a Wednesday, Oct. 12, 2011 photo, Merih Engin, left, puts toppings on a pizza while Uzeir Ispahev, right, takes a pizza out of the oven, at the New York Pizzeria restaurant in Dayton, Ohio. Ispahev's Turkish family owns and runs the restaurant. They are among one of several small but growing groups of immigrants in Dayton that the city wants to welcome, and hopes will help rebuild its population and economy.

AP PHOTO/AL BEHRMAN

mortgages and build assets and wealth, but very few African Americans, Native Americans, or immigrants were able to take advantage of the federally subsidized mortgages made available through these programs due to the discriminatory practices embedded in the mortgage-financing system at the time. Whole neighborhoods in American cities that were home to people of color were “redlined” on the underwriters’ maps used to determine eligibility for federally insured loans, which led to rampant disinvestment and white flight.<sup>24</sup> During the 1930s and ‘40s, the

suburbs were essentially closed to people of color: More than 80 percent of these communities contained racial covenants barring people of color from buying homes in those neighborhoods.<sup>25</sup>

We as a nation must draw on our founding principles—and learn from past mistakes—to make real on the promise of equality for all. The remainder of this chapter lays out a broad framework for how best to create an equitable economy that meets the needs of our diverse nation.

## Creating an All-In Nation

The nation needs a guiding vision, a new narrative about its future, and a set of concrete strategies to create an equitable society—one in which everyone has a genuine chance to succeed and to help the nation as a whole flourish.

An agenda to create an All-In Nation in a diverse America would include strategies to reduce inequality and social divisions, remove racial and ethnic barriers, and grow the good jobs that are essential to inclusion in the future. It would provide all with a foundation for improving their lives and contributing to the well-being of their families, communities, and the nation.

This approach is wholly consistent with America's democratic and liberal traditions of individual rights and capitalism coupled with strong governmental measures to eradicate inequality, expand economic avenues for people, and provide the public goods necessary for all to thrive. It is broadly focused on the steps necessary to build and sustain a strong middle class made up of people across racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, and gender lines. (see below) It directly addresses the disproportionate impact of poverty, undereducation, and the lack of decent jobs and wealth-creation opportunities for many communities of color while also recognizing that people across the board are suffering from chronic unemployment, deteriorating wages, social dislocations, and cultural difficulties associated with the long-term decline of the middle class.

Many different theoretical models have been employed over the years to describe how we should think about a multiracial, multiethnic society—pluralism, assimilation, integration, class, multiculturalism—in addition to a host of metaphors such as the “melting pot” or a “mosaic.” Each of these approaches offers something useful in terms of a broader understanding of diversity by encouraging us to both respect social, cultural, religious, economic, and political differences and continue to search for common ground around core values that define us as a nation.

The All-In Nation description of the America that we need to build toward bridges the many different racial and economic terms that divide rather than unite us as a nation. As America becomes a place where no racial or ethnic group will be a majority of our citizens, it is essential to focus on the collective need to cultivate the talents and potential of all Americans, irrespective of their racial or ethnic backgrounds. In a nation where no racial or ethnic group will be a majority, moving past black and white, Latino and Asian, Native American and Pacific Islander enables us to craft policies in the best tradition of our American values.

The framework for guiding the development of an All-In Nation policy agenda is based on four principles, each of which is further described below:

- Equity
- Human capacity
- Good jobs
- Participation

## Equity

For our nation to achieve its goal of shared prosperity, all of its people must be able to participate fully in the nation's economic, political, and civic life. In an equitable society, a person's race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or ZIP code would not determine their health, income, wealth, or access to opportunity.

Equity is a moral imperative aligned with American values of equal opportunity. And as we undergo this demographic transition, equity also becomes an economic imperative for the nation. Our country's success—your success, my success, our success—will depend on the success of the growing communities of color.

## Human capacity

America's economic strength now and in the future depends more heavily on human capital—the capacity of our population—than it ever has in the past. The nation simply cannot afford to waste anyone's talents or ingenuity, and our policy priorities must support a healthy and vital workforce.

Nothing is more important to the success of a diverse nation than ensuring all Americans live in safe, healthy, and engaging environments that set them up to manifest their full potential throughout their lives. Our policies need to ensure that everyone is able to learn in challenging and supportive environments from pre-K through college or vocational schooling. The benefits of investing in our growing communities far outweigh the societal costs of neglecting them, which include poverty, crime, distressed neighborhoods, unemployment, incarceration, and poor health outcomes.

## Good jobs

Work is central to human dignity and the well-being of our communities. When jobs disappear, or fail to pay enough to live on, everyone suffers from a downward spiral of declining demand for goods and services, further job erosions, diminished communities, increased stress and anxiety, and rising expenditures for social protections necessary to counteract negative economic effects. An All-In Nation is sustained by policies that support full employment and living wages so that all able-bodied Americans are able to find jobs that pay enough to support themselves and their families and build wealth over time.

## Participation

American democracy thrives when every citizen has an equal voice in the priorities and policies of our government and has an effective voice in the public square. Today too few voices are heard and,



Michelle Black, left, and James Patterson watch their son James, 4, center, play during a visit to Renaissance Park in Harlem, N.Y., on Tuesday, June 28, 2011.

AP PHOTO/BEBETO MATTHEWS



more importantly, listened to in day-to-day policy debates. As our nation grows in diversity, our institutions must evolve to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to participate in our democratic processes and create a deeper policy bench of leaders representing all communities ready to step up to public service.

### Conclusion

America will face serious challenges over the next few decades beyond the coming demographic shifts. The economy is not producing sufficient good jobs and rising incomes. The middle class is eroding while the ranks of the poor are growing. Our country is unprepared for increasing competition with other nations in the global economy. Our government is failing to find common ground around new solutions to these problems and too many of our elites are looking out solely for themselves and their own well-being.

America need not continue down this path of decline and division. If our nation pursues an inclusive model of the opportunity society—an All-In Nation—outlined here, Americans can both enhance individual freedom for all citizens and create a platform for mutual prosperity and national growth. The rest of this book will explore these ideas in greater detail and put forth a concrete set of policy proposals to best take advantage of our nation's rich diversity and the talents of all our people. ■



The secret to change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.

SOCRATES

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CHAPTER TWO

# Charting New Trends and Imagining an All-In Nation

*An All-In Nation in 5 Charts*

BY ROBERT LYNCH AND PATRICK OAKFORD



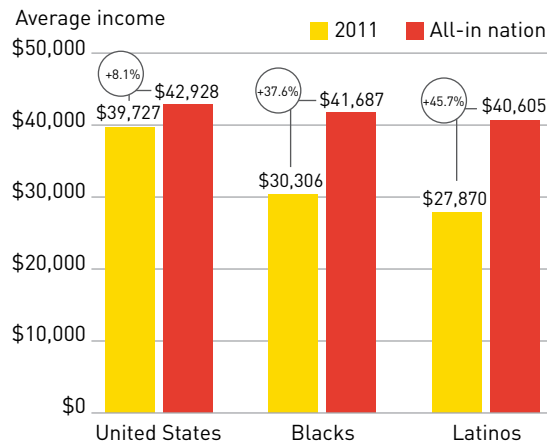
n All-In Nation is not only necessary to fulfill our founding ideals, but it is also an economic imperative if our elected officials care about our future prosperity.

Closing racial and ethnic gaps would yield concrete economic gains for the nation. As the analysis below shows, eliminating racial inequities would increase earnings, gross domestic product, and tax revenue while reducing poverty and improving the solvency of Social Security.

## The effects of eliminating racial disparities

FIGURE 1

Higher total earnings: Average yearly income 8.1 percent higher, or \$3,201 more

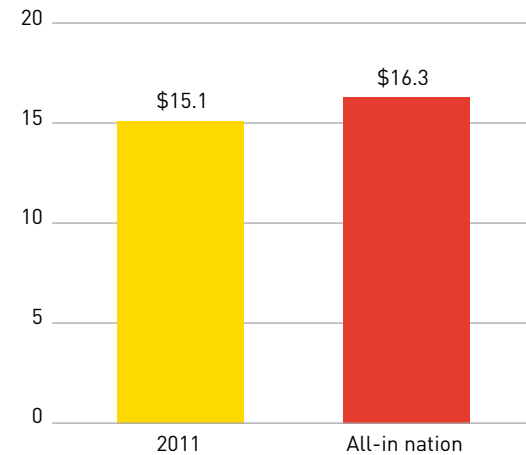


Source: Author's calculations of 2012 March Current Population Survey.

If racial and ethnic differences were eliminated, the average total personal yearly income in the United States in 2011 would have been 8.1 percent higher, or \$3,201 more—\$42,928 versus \$39,727. The average earnings of African Americans would have been 37.6 percent higher—\$41,687 versus \$30,306; the earnings of Hispanics would have been 45.7 percent higher—\$40,605 versus \$27,870; and the earnings of a subset of Asians<sup>1</sup> would have been 14.1 percent higher—\$43,576 versus \$38,203. These figures would have closely matched the average earnings of white non-Hispanic Americans in 2011—\$43,439. The total increase in earnings across all groups of people in the United States in 2011 would have summed to \$687 billion.

FIGURE 2

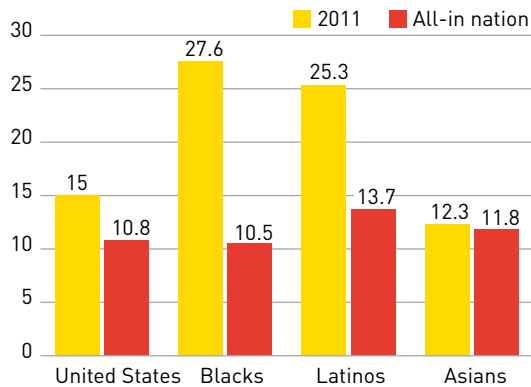
Increased national standard of living: GDP \$1.2 trillion higher



Source: Author's calculations of 2012 March Current Population Survey.

If we had eliminated racial and ethnic disparities, the gross domestic product, or GDP, of the United States would have been at least \$1.2 trillion higher in 2011, totaling at least \$16.3 trillion instead of the \$15.1 trillion recorded that year. This is a conservative estimate as the impact on GDP of higher earnings would have been even larger had the ancillary effects of higher incomes on spending and economic activity been taken into account.

**FIGURE 3**  
**Reduced poverty: 13 million people lifted out of poverty**

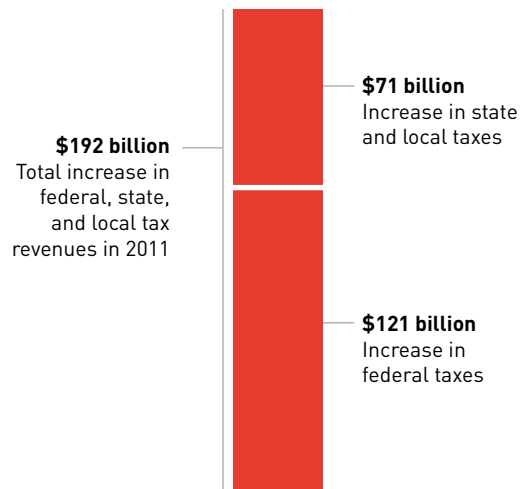


Source: Author's calculations of 2012 March Current Population Survey.

In 2011, 46 million people in the United States—15 percent of the population—were living in poverty as defined by the Census Bureau.<sup>2</sup> This included 27.6 percent of African Americans, 25.3 percent of Hispanics, and 12.3 percent of Asians, which translates into more than 26 million people of color who lived below the federal poverty threshold. If racial and ethnic disparities in income earnings

were eliminated, then the black poverty rate that year would have dropped to 10.5 percent, Hispanic poverty would have dropped to 13.7 percent, and the poverty rate for Asians would have dropped to 11.8 percent. These figures more closely approximate the white poverty rate of 9.8 percent. This lowering of the poverty rate for communities of color would have had the effect of lifting 13 million people out of poverty, including nearly 6.8 million African Americans, 6.1 million Hispanics, and 100,000 Asians. The overall poverty rate in America would have fallen sharply from 15 percent to 10.8 percent.

**FIGURE 4**  
**Added tax revenue: Federal, state, and local tax revenues increased by \$192 billion**

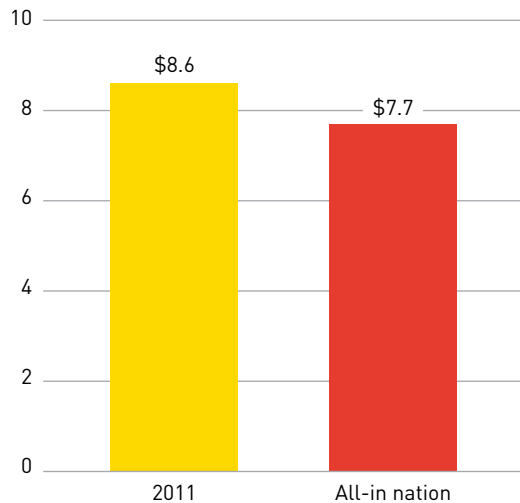


Source: Taxes on increased earnings were calculated by applying federal, state and local tax rates for average income in 2011. See, "Who Pays Taxes in America?" Citizens for Tax Justice, Washington, DC, April 4 2012.

Note: Taxes on increased earnings were calculated by applying federal, state and local tax rates for average income in 2011. See, "Who Pays Taxes in America?" Citizens for Tax Justice, Washington, DC, April 4 2012.

The elimination of racial and ethnic disparities would have increased federal, state, and local tax revenues by \$192 billion in 2011—\$121 billion more in federal revenue and \$71 billion more for state and local governments.<sup>3</sup> The positive impact on government budgets would have been substantially greater if reductions in means-tested public services were taken into account.

**FIGURE 5**  
**Improved solvency of Social Security:  
Long-run deficit reduced by 10 percent,  
or \$860 billion**



Source: Source: Author's calculations of 2012 March Current Population Survey and The 2012 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Federal Disability Insurance Funds.

Eliminating racial and ethnic disparities would have multifaceted effects on the solvency of the Social Security system, but in general, the long-run deficit in Social Security would be reduced by more than 10 percent.<sup>4</sup> This would reduce the estimated present value of Social Security's long-term financial shortfall by at least \$860 billion. The increase in earnings projected above increases the wages subject to Social Security payroll taxes and thereby raises revenues for the system. On the other hand, the higher earnings also increase the benefits paid out by the program because initial Social Security benefits are indexed to wages—in general, individuals with higher wages receive more in total benefits. Hence, the improvements in the Social Security system's long-run finances from eliminating racial and ethnic inequalities are limited but still significant.

These charts paint a compelling vision of what our economy could look like if we were to close the racial economic disparities that the United States faces today. This vision is attainable and within our grasp, provided Congress and the administration work to erase America's lingering racial divide. ■



## About the analysis

This analysis quantifies the economic costs of racial and ethnic inequalities by providing estimates of the economic impacts of eliminating them. Following the practice of the U.S. Census Bureau, the researchers use non-Hispanic whites as the comparison group for other race groups and Hispanics.<sup>5</sup> We then calculate what America could have looked like in 2011 if all racial and ethnic groups earned the same median income, adjusted for age differences.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, we estimate the hypothetical earnings of America if racial/ethnic groups earned the same median “total personal income” of non-Hispanic white Americans. We do so by assigning various racial/ethnic groups the same mean (average) total personal income, adjusted for age and by percentile, as that of non-Hispanic white Americans as determined by the March Current Population Survey, or CPS, of 2012, which estimated income in the United States for 2011. The median and mean (average) total personal income across racial/ethnic groups in our hypothetical, disparity-free America continue to vary because the exact percentage of observations in each percentile, the age distribution, and the sample sizes vary by group.

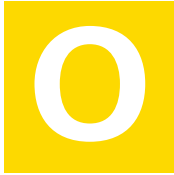
## Endnotes

- 1 This subset comprises all groups of Asians except those born (or those with one or more parents born) in India, China, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan. These groups were excluded from the Asian subset because their mean personal income was already higher than that of white non-Hispanics. In other words, these groups do not face income disparities relative to white non-Hispanics.
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- 5 The term "non-Hispanic white" refers to people who are not Hispanic and who reported white alone as their race in the March 2012 Current Population Survey.
- 6 The median income is the income at the middle of the income distribution, such that it divides the income distribution into two equal groups: one having incomes above the median, and the other having incomes below the median.

**CHAPTER THREE**

# **America's Future Workforce**

**BY ANTHONY P. CARNEVALE AND NICOLE SMITH**



ver the next several decades, the strength of the labor force and American global competitiveness will depend on the investments the United States chooses to

make today. With the impending mass retirement of the Baby Boom generation, the nation faces serious shortages in its workforce. Fortunately, however, this workforce shift coincides with a national demographic shift that will result in communities of color growing in size across the country. Fulfilling the potential of this young, dynamic, and

growing generation requires reforming current education and job-training investments to make sure that it is well prepared to keep the United States competitive in the global economy.

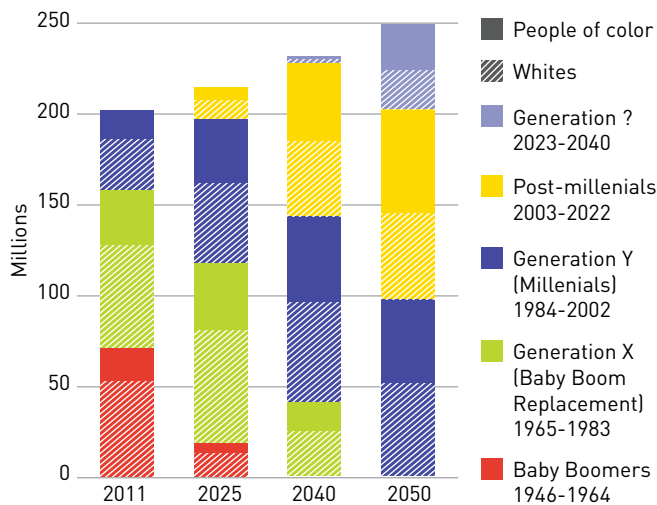
## Our changing labor force

The Baby Boomers retiring in 2013—an estimated 10,000 turn 65 each day, according to the Pew Research Center<sup>1</sup>—are predominantly white, and by 2025 the majority of Baby Boomers will have exited the labor force entirely. The replacement labor force—those individuals born between 1965 and 1983—is also predominantly white as well in 2013, but as time progresses, this group will become increasingly people of color. By 2041 whites will be a minority in the population and just four years later, in 2045, they will be a minority in the labor force as well. Projections for 2050 show that the Baby Boom generation and the generation that replaced them will be long retired. As a matter of fact, the people who will be of prime working-age in 2050 have not even been born yet.

The trend is abundantly clear. People of color are increasingly entering the labor force in record numbers, accessing postsecondary education and training in record numbers, and graduating from our nation’s secondary and postsecondary institutions in record numbers as well. People of color are indeed moving in the right direction. But there are some potential problems ahead that might hinder both the economic prosperity of our populations of

**FIGURE 1**  
**Labor force by generation, and whites and people of color, 2013–2050**

*In the five generations displayed below, America’s people-of-color population is fast growing. Whites will no longer be the majority by 2040.*



Source: Authors’ analysis of Bureau of Labor statistics data. Designed and created by Juan Carlos Guzman, director of research at the Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame.

color as well as the economic prosperity of our nation.

## An education gap for people of color

The correlations that exist between labor-force participation and race, educational attainment and race, and lifetime earnings and race are undeniable. The major challenge is the disconnect that exists between the current educational attainment of people of color and the profile of education demand in the economy. This is especially true for African Americans and Hispanics, who will increase their share of the labor force from 27 percent in 2010 to 42 percent in 2050, when the share of white workers will fall to 45 percent, down from 66 percent in 2010.<sup>2</sup> (see Figure 2)

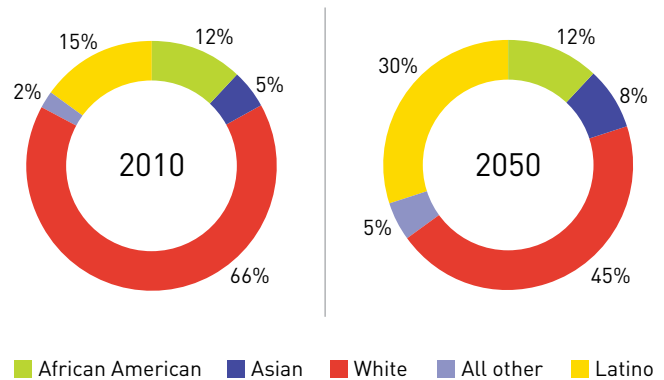
As America's diversity increases, we rely on the educational system, especially our public education system, for mediating broad cultural inclusion and preserving an increasingly diverse national heritage. Since industrialization we have looked to education to help us reconcile democratic citizenship with class differences and various forms of diversity. Education has also been a common route to economic success since the closing of the frontier, and has been the preferred path to good jobs in the post-World War II era.

It is not news that education is a favored institution to promote inclusion. What is news is that since the early 1980s, access to postsecondary education has emerged as not only the preferred route

**FIGURE 2**

### Labor force by race, 2010 projected through 2050

The share of whites in the labor force will decline by 19 percentage points, while the share of African Americans and Latinos combined will increase by 15 percentage points by 2050.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

to the middle class but also the most well-traveled pathway to middle-class earnings for individuals and, for the nation, the best way to ensure economic competitiveness. Since 1983, however, the supply of college-educated workers in the United States hasn't kept up with demand.<sup>3</sup>

As the world changed and innovation became ubiquitous to many traditional occupations, the demand for skills favored those with a postsecondary education. This change inadvertently melted away the premium offered to union membership—a majority of union members have high school educations—in favor of workers with postsecondary education, especially as computers both substituted and complemented production occupations.<sup>4</sup>

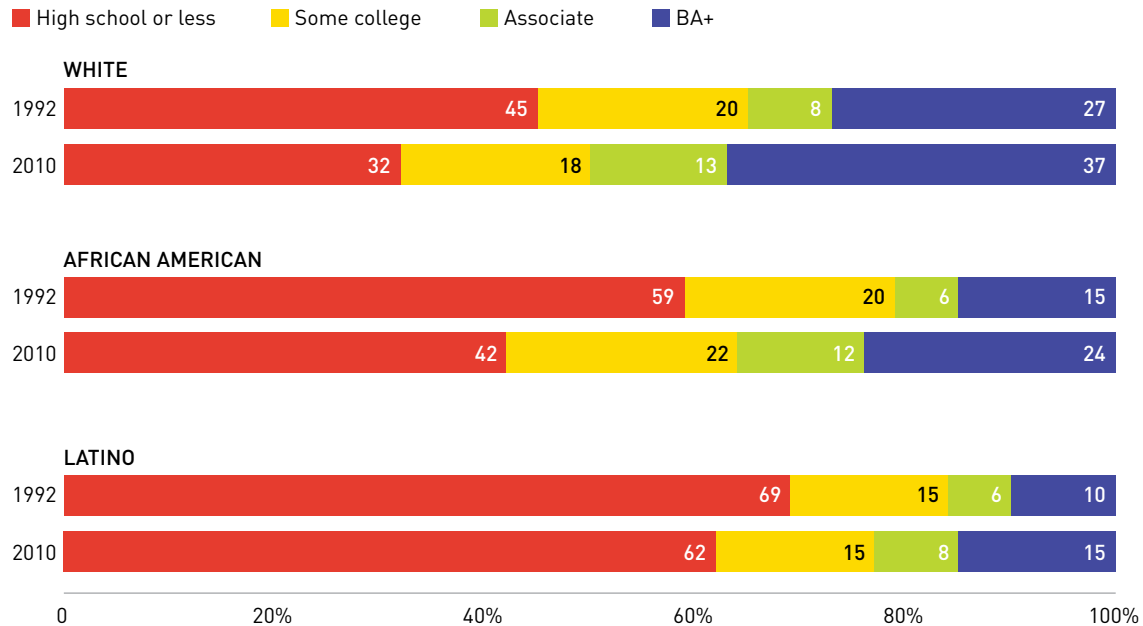
Demand for postsecondary education and training for the nation as a whole continued to grow at an average annual rate of 3 percent, while the share of workers with post secondary education grew by 1 percent annually. As a consequence, the wage premium for college compared to high school increased from 40 percent to 74 percent over this time period, between 1980 and 2010.<sup>5</sup> The failure to provide the U.S. workforce with enough postsecondary education and training to keep up with the demands of

the information economy is one of the principal causes of the growth in wage inequality since the early 1980s.

Since the end of the 1980–1981 recession, the U.S. economy has been undergoing rapid structural change. This evolution has been driven by what economists call skill-biased technological change. That is to say, a shift in production related to technological advances that favors skilled labor

**FIGURE 3**  
**Education attainment by race**

*Latino workers are falling behind faster than any other ethnic group—38 percent of Latinos had postsecondary education in 2010, while 59 percent of jobs required postsecondary education in 2010.*



Source: Current Population Survey

over unskilled labor. Since the early 1980s, technology, led by computing technology, has been automating repetitive tasks and activities in jobs. As a result, more and more jobs, tasks, and activities left to people at work are nonrepetitive and require skills beyond a high school education. The resultant increasing entry-level skill requirements for work have made postsecondary education the gatekeeper for access to training on the job and state-of-the-art technology. The synergy between postsecondary preparation and formal learning on the job accounts for a growing major share of the ingredients in the recipe for U.S. economic growth. Consequently, postsecondary education and training has become more important than ever in today's economy.

In 1973, when 72 percent of all jobs required a high school diploma or less, 68 percent of working whites had a high school diploma or less. The comparable percentages for African Americans and Hispanics averaged 15 percentage points higher than that for the white population at 82 percent and 85 percent respectively. Almost four decades later in 2010, 59 percent of the nation's jobs required postsecondary education and training beyond high school.

While the white population has kept up with education attainment at a pace that remains similar or greater than workforce requirements—68 percent of the white population had postsecondary education in 2010—African Americans, and even more so, Hispanics, have fallen behind. In 2010, 48 percent

of African Americans had postsecondary education. For Hispanics that number was 62 percent—close to white attainment levels four decades earlier.

Though enrollment of students of color has increased at a steady clip in postsecondary institutions, graduation and attainment rates remain wanting. What this means over the long run is a likely growing skills gap between attainment levels and skills requirements of jobs as the fastest-growing ethnic group—Latinos—has current attainment rates that are decades behind the requirements of 21st-century jobs.

## The educational system is becoming increasingly polarized

There is far more diversity among young people than in the adult population, and thus the share of people of color attending college increases each year. Underlying the higher enrollment levels by students of color, however, are lower completion and persistence rates that have a great deal to do with preparation, but even more to do with the selectivity of schools that students of color tend to gravitate toward—open-admission four-year colleges and two-year colleges.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, as postsecondary access has increased especially among communities of color, whites and people of color are on separate postsecondary pathways. Between 1994 and 2008, 68 percent of new African American enrollment and 72 percent of new



In a photo from April 10, 2013 in Detroit, Gregory Pierre assembles wristwatch mechanisms at the Shinola manufacturing facility.

AP PHOTO/CARLOS OSORIO



FIGURE 4

### Growth in college enrollment by race

■ Hispanic ■ African American ■ White

GROWTH RATE OF ENROLLMENT AT OPEN-ADMISSION FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES AND TWO-YEAR COLLEGES



GROWTH RATE OF ENROLLMENT AT MOST SELECTIVE FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, "Analysis of Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data 1995-2009."

Hispanic enrollment has been at four-year colleges with open-admission policies and two-year colleges. (see Figure 4) Over the same time period, 82 percent of new white enrollment has been at the 464 most selective four-year colleges.

Whites who have moved more and more into the selective four-year colleges receive more educational resources, which leads to an 82 percent completion rate, access to graduate school, and somewhere between \$2.3 and \$3.7 million in median lifetime earnings. By way of contrast, African Americans and Hispanics are tracked into the least selective four-year colleges and the overcrowded and underfunded community colleges, leading to a 49 percent completion rate and median lifetime earnings of \$1.6 million.<sup>7</sup>

White students are fleeing the lower echelons of the postsecondary hierarchy and moving up into the more highly funded tiers of college selectivity. At the same time, African Americans and Hispanics are crowding into the underfunded, overcapacity, and

nonselective four-year colleges and community colleges. African Americans have stalled in their move up the selectivity tiers and 73 percent of them are still concentrated in the least funded tiers—community colleges and less-selective schools.

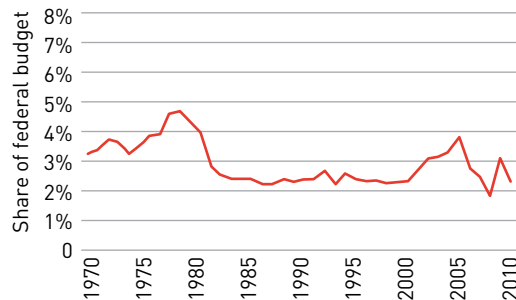
While a larger share of Hispanics gained access to college education, the gap in the Hispanic share of college enrollments relative to their share of the 18- to 24-year-old population has not budged—there are 5 percentage points fewer Hispanics in college than in this youth population.

### The federal government is spending less on education and training as a share of all spending now that it did four decades ago

While the value of education and training has increased significantly in the modern economy, as evidenced by the growing college-wage premium,

the increasing demand for more highly educated workers from employers, and the rising share of high-skill occupations, the share of government spending invested in these human-capital-development functions has remained roughly flat over the past 40 years and is currently at historically low levels. Federal investment in human-capital development declined from 3 percent of the budget in 1970 to 2 percent in 2011. (see Figure 5)

**FIGURE 5**  
Investment in education, training, and employment as share of federal government spending, 1970–2011



Source: Office of Management and Budget, "Table 3.2—Outlays by Function and Subfunction: 1962-2017," Historical Tables.

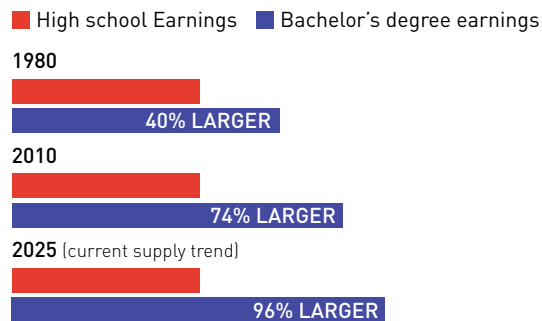
Likewise, employment and training programs such as the Workforce Investment Act have declined as a share of federal spending on human-capital development. These programs provide irreplaceable training, support, and labor-market services that connect education and training to real jobs. Yet these programs continue to be devalued by the federal government. In 1980, 34 percent of human-capital investments by

the federal government (budget function 500) were spent on job-training and employment services. By 2010 the share had decreased to 9 percent.<sup>8</sup>

## Higher-level degrees are worth more than lower-level degrees on average, but averages are deceiving

Since the 1980s the median earnings for those with more postsecondary education increased—that is, those workers with higher postsecondary education attainment levels do better and better relative to those with no postsecondary education or those with less postsecondary education. Obtaining a postsecondary credential is almost always worth it as evidenced by higher earnings over a lifetime.

**FIGURE 6**  
The growing college-wage premium over high school  
*The college-wage premium over high school grew from 40 percent in 1980 to 74 percent in 2010, and will grow to 96 percent by 2025.*



Source: Anthony P. Carnevale and Stephen J. Rose, "The Undereducated American" (Washington: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2011).

Studies show that the higher the level of educational attainment, the higher the payoff. What's more, the gap is widening. In 2002 someone who attained a bachelor's degree could expect to earn 75 percent more over a lifetime than someone with only a high school diploma. Today, that premium is 84 percent.<sup>9</sup>

Even at the height of the Great Recession, the premium paid to holders of a bachelor's degree was substantial. Earnings of college graduates declined slightly during the recession but held up in the recovery. Yet on average, college graduates still earn nearly twice as much as high-school graduates. (see Figure 6)

The other major trend since the 1980s is that an individual's employability and earnings increasingly depend on his or her field of study in postsecondary programs. There are significant earnings variations between different levels of educational attainment depending on postsecondary fields of study. Consider the following:

- 42 percent of people with some college/no degree earn more than the median earnings of workers with an associate's degree.
- 28 percent of people with an associate's degree make more than the median of workers with a bachelor's degree.<sup>10</sup>

To put it in the simplest of terms: What you make depends more and more on what you take. Often-times, lower-level programs outperform higher-level

degrees. Consider, if you will: Men with only one-year certificates in fields such as computers, electronics, and engineering earn more than a substantial number of people with associate's degrees and bachelor's degrees.

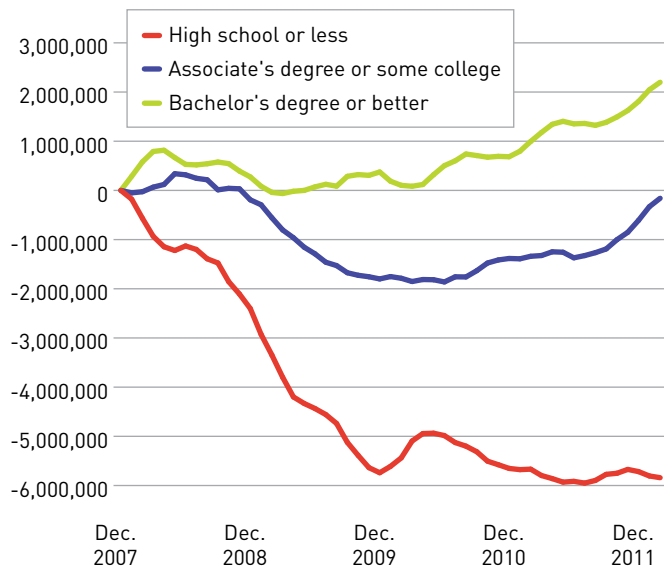
Postsecondary vocational certificates have been offered to many as a short-term stepping stone along the education pathway. For many, the road to a postsecondary certificate is not necessarily linear, and many may choose to revert to this credential after having earned associate's degrees or better. For those whose highest level of attainment is a postsecondary vocational certificate, however, the benefits of this credential often depends on gender.

Moreover, postsecondary vocational certificates are a mixed bag. Depending on the field of study chosen and whether or not you work within specific fields, some certificates can be quite profitable and lead to jobs that pay rates above the median earnings for workers with similar credentials. Vocational certificate holders acquire job-specific skills that can be rewarded in the labor market above and beyond their general academic skills. But a large proportion of certificates lead to jobs that pay low wages on average, particularly those certificates in fields that are dominated by women such as cosmetology and food services. These are professions where average earnings can be lower than those for workers with a high school diploma who have not completed a certificate—especially if they do not work in fields with a workforce overly represented by women.

**FIGURE 7**

### Job growth in the recession and recovery

*During the recession and recovery, only holders of bachelor's degrees experienced positive job growth. The steepest losses were felt by workers with a high school education.*



Source: Anthony P. Carnevale, Tamara Jayasundera, and Ban Cheah, "The College Advantage: Weathering the Economic Storm" (Washington: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2012).

For many young people, choosing a postsecondary program is their first big investment decision, especially for the majority of students who will finance their postsecondary programs with loans. These students need to understand the risks and rewards associated with their choice of colleges and fields of study. As the cost of particular certificates and degrees grows and the labor-market returns shift, prospective students need more information to guide their choices and to insure high returns on their investments.

Vocational certificates are disproportionately held by students of color (15 percent of African American and 13 percent of Latino students, compared to 8 percent of white students enrolled in certificate programs). Three types of institutions are primarily responsible for awarding certificates: private for-profit schools, public nonprofit schools, and private nonprofit schools. Most of these institutions are classified as two-year institutions, and the majority of their student body consists of students of color.<sup>11</sup>

### Post-recession growth has favored workers with postsecondary education

Since the beginning of the Great Recession, historically high unemployment among recent college graduates has hidden the continued structural shift from an economy that provided good-paying jobs for high-school-educated workers to an economy in which the vast majority of good-paying jobs require at least some postsecondary education.

What is clear in the Great Recession, as in the last several recessions, is that most of the jobs lost were ones that required a high school diploma or less, and those jobs are gone and are not coming back. On the other hand, jobs that require at least some college will continue to recover and grow as a share of all jobs. To date, almost half of the jobs lost in the Great Recession have been recovered, and virtually all of those recovered jobs required some form of postsecondary education.<sup>12</sup>

The Great Recession also impacted wages as earnings declined for all workers since the beginning of the economic downturn. But college-educated workers' wage advantage over high-school-educated workers has remained high and has held mostly stable since the recession began. Moreover, the peak unemployment rate for college-educated workers in the Great Recession was 5.1 percent compared to 15.7 percent for high school dropouts. The current unemployment rate for college-educated workers is 3.7 percent, compared to 12 percent for high school dropouts.

Although the unemployment rate for all college-educated workers has been low, it has been a tough job market for new college graduates. But the job market has been far worse for those without a college education. In 2012, 7 percent of new college graduates were still unemployed and another 14 percent were underemployed in jobs beneath their skill levels.<sup>13</sup> By comparison, the unemployment rate for new high school graduates in 2012 was 24 percent and 42 percent for those underemployed.<sup>14</sup>

Jobs that require a bachelor's degree have been the big winner, increasing by 2.2 million jobs since the recession began. Jobs that required some college or an associate's degree declined by 1.8 million in the recession, but 1.6 million of those job losses have been regained since the beginning of the recovery in 2010. At the same time 5.8 million jobs for those with high school or less have been lost since the recession began.<sup>15</sup>

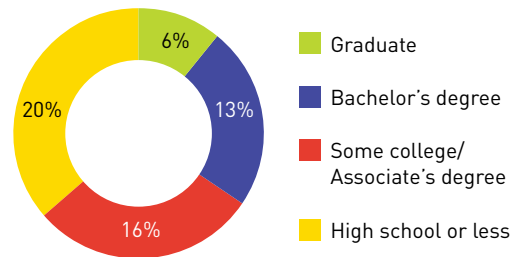
## Demand for postsecondary education and training will continue to grow

Projections over the next 10 years show that if the recovery continues, there will be 55 million job openings, due to 24 million new jobs added to the economy and 31 million openings from Baby Boomer retirements. Two-thirds of these job openings—36 million—will require some education beyond high school, but we will not have enough workers to fill those jobs and will fall short by an estimated 5 million workers. (see Figure 8)

Figure 8

### Job openings by education requirement, 2010–2020

*Two-thirds of the job openings between 2010 and 2020 will require some postsecondary education.*



Source: Anthony Carnevale and Jeff Strohl, "Separate and Unequal" (Washington: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, forthcoming).

**Table 1**

### **Job changes by education level in the recession and recovery**

*Job gains by individuals with bachelor's degrees or better made up for more than a third of job losses by those with a high school diploma during the recession and recovery.*

Educational attainment	Job change			Percent job change		
	Recession*	Recovery**	Net change***	Recession*	Recovery**	Net change ***
High school or less	-5,611,000	-230,000	-5,841,000	-10%	0%	-10%
Some college/ associate's degree	-1752,000	1,592,000	-160,000	-4%	4%	0%
Bachelor's degree or higher	187,000	2,012,000	2,199,000	0%	4%	5%
All	-7,176,000	3,374,000	3,374,000	-5%	2%	-3%

Source: Carnevale and others' 2012 analysis of CPS data. \* Recession: The period from December 2007 to January 2010 \*\* Recovery: The period from January 2010 to February 2012

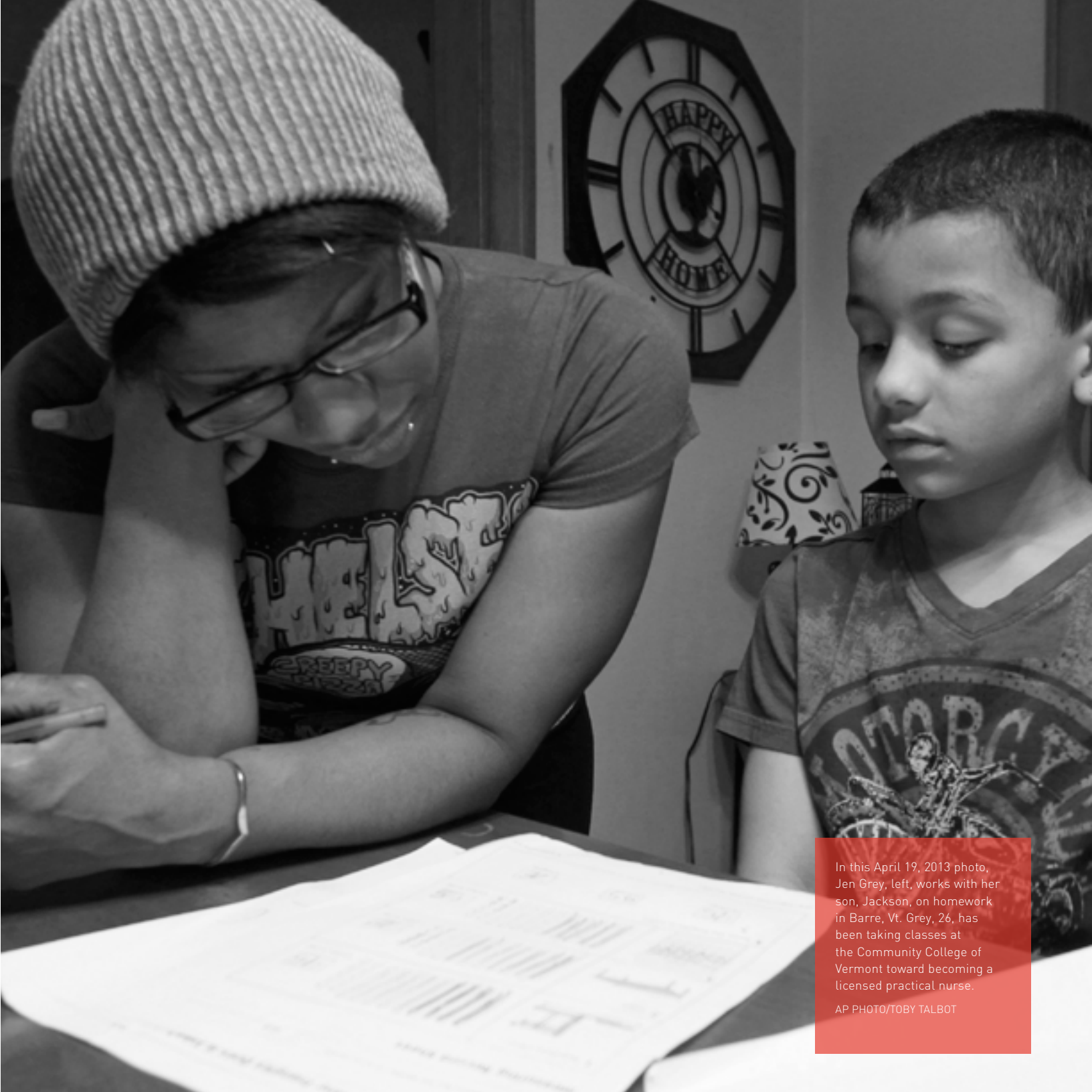
\*\*\* Net change: The period from December 2007 to February 2012

### **As access to postsecondary education determines earnings, college completion is a major source of the intergenerational transfer of privilege**

In the United States, compared to other countries, the circumstances into which you are born play a greater role in where you end up as an adult. The United States ranks first in the extent to which parental education determines an individual's future educational attainment. That is, if a parent has a college education, it is very likely that his or her child will have one also. If a parent has a high school education, however, it is far harder in the United States than in other OECD countries for his or her child to obtain a college degree.

### **Conclusion**

Our growing reliance on education as the arbiter of individual opportunity results from mutually reinforcing economic and cultural trends. Changes in the real economy have been reinforced by social trends that emphasize individualist and market biases in American culture and politics. Americans welcome our increasing reliance on education as the arbiter of opportunity because, in theory, education allows us to expand opportunity without surrendering individual responsibility. After all, we each have to do our own homework to make the grades and ace the tests, which seems fair in a society that prefers to reward individual merit and character. But is it fair?



In this April 19, 2013 photo, Jen Grey, left, works with her son, Jackson, on homework in Barre, Vt. Grey, 26, has been taking classes at the Community College of Vermont toward becoming a licensed practical nurse.

AP PHOTO/TOBY TALBOT

Not really, especially when students fail to receive the same preparation in advance of those tests and grades. In a society where people start out unequal, facing different circumstances and receiving varying levels of familial and societal support, educational success measured by test scores and grades can become a dodge—a way of laundering the found money that comes with being born into the right bank account or the right race.

We know that our future workforce will look different and have different needs. We also know, fortunately, that our population is growing in a way that could enable us to fill these needs. Yet unless we make the right investments today in preparing the next generation to take the jobs of the future, we

will lose out on this advantage, watch our workforce shrink, and fail to succeed in the global economy. Ultimately the economic role of postsecondary education, especially its role in preparing American youth for work and helping adults stay abreast of economic change, is central. The inescapable reality is that ours is a society based on work. Those who are not equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to get and keep good jobs are denied full social inclusion and tend to drop out of the mainstream culture, polity, and economy.

With growth, productivity, and competitiveness at stake, America needs to work harder to improve the educational outcomes in our fast-growing communities of color. ■



## Endnotes

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## QUICK VIEW

# America's Future Workforce



he demographics of our labor force are changing rapidly. Today Baby Boomers—those born between 1946 and 1964—are predominantly white, but these workers will exit the labor force by 2025. The replacement labor force, “Generation X”—those individuals born between 1965 and 1983—is also predominantly white today. But as “Generation Y”—those born in the mid-1980s through 2000—enters the labor market the American workforce will increasingly be comprised of people of color. Ultimately by 2050, if not sooner, people of color will be the majority in the American labor force.

Reading those facts and looking at the inequities that exist in America, the question arises: As a nation, are we taking steps to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate and contribute in the 21st-century global economy?

American jobs require ever higher levels of education and skills: Within a decade from now, two out of every three job openings will require some postsecondary education, and the number of jobs requiring a high school diploma or less will continue to decline. But while people of color are making great strides in education, they are still lagging behind in terms of educational attainment. Only 38 percent of Latinos and 58 percent of African Americans have some postsecondary education.

As America's diversity increases, we must speed up the educational progress for communities of color and expand opportunity to all Americans to ensure that the nation maintains global economic competitiveness. Smart investments in education and job training at the federal and state level will ensure people of color can access the best jobs, earn family-supporting wages, and contribute to a strong American economy. ■

## Facts at a glance

- **42 percent:** The share of the workforce that African Americans and Hispanics will comprise in 2050, compared to 27 percent today
- **15 percent:** The percentage of the Latino/Hispanic population with a bachelor's degree or above in 2010, compared to 37 percent of the non-Hispanic white population and 24 percent of the African American population
- **66 percent:** The share of jobs, by 2020, that will require at least some postsecondary education
- **74 percent:** The wage premium for college graduates compared to workers who have only completed high school
- **\$1.6 million:** The expected median lifetime earnings of high school and community college graduates, compared to \$2.3 million and \$3.7 million for holders of bachelor's and graduate degrees
- **72 percent:** The increase in postsecondary access for Hispanics—compared to 68 percent for African Americans and 0.03 percent for whites—between 1994 and 2008 at two- and four-year open-admission institutions

## Endnotes

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Hiep Doan, front, a resident of Boston and immigrant from Vietnam, places his hand on his chest while singing the U.S. national anthem along with some in the crowd during naturalization ceremonies at Fenway Park, in Boston, Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2008.

AP PHOTO/STEVEN SENNE

# An Equity-Focused Policy Agenda for America

As described in preceding sections, a new framework is needed for guiding the development of an All-In Nation that is based on the principles of equity, human-capacity development, good jobs, and full participation in democratic society. Given the unprecedented and unstoppable demographic shift happening in communities across the nation, America needs to overcome longstanding inequities and create the conditions to allow everyone to fully participate.

The stakes are enormous; the nation's future hangs in the balance. This is why it is incumbent upon the nation's policymakers to lead the United States into a future marked by equity and inclusion, that allows everyone to participate and prosper.

The chapters that follow provide policy recommendations that can help secure the nation's future in the global economy and ensure opportunity for all in our nation. The recommendations address key issue areas: infrastructure; education and workforce; jobs, income, and assets; health care; criminal justice; immigration; and civic participation. The recommendations are collectively a road map that policymakers can use as a guide as the country travels into the future. If adopted, these policy recommendations are the foundation upon which to implement an equity agenda that grows good jobs, erases barriers to full participation in the economy and in democratic systems, and builds the capabilities of America's strongest asset—its diverse workforce. Only then can we realize a truly All-In Nation. ■

# Reclaiming the Proud American Tradition of Thinking Big

BY FORMER GOV. EDWARD G. RENDELL



hen I was 8 years old, my father, despite never being involved in politics, deeply believed in the Democratic Party, and he imbued me with that same belief. But

things were different in 1952 when we went out and handed out campaign fliers for Adlai Stevens. On election night, we didn't have a television and there were no exit polls, so my dad and I went to the neighborhood grocery store to hear the election returns. At the store, the radio blared that Gen. Dwight Eisenhower had just captured enough states to win the presidency.

On the way home I saw tears flowing from my father's eyes. That's the only time I saw that in our life together. The memory of his tears still make me yearn for the days when the Democratic Party

thought big and was much less shy about demanding that government do what is necessary to grow the economy and produce enough decent jobs so that every able-bodied American can find work.

As bad as that election loss was, President Eisenhower turned out to understand that in order for America to prosper, he needed to take bold action. His experience leading the troops in Europe during World War II made it clear to him that world-class infrastructure was essential to strong economic growth. Fortunately, in those days, being a Republican didn't mean being antigovernment. Today, Ike shares the prize with Abe Lincoln for taking the lead in paving the way for this nation to have the largest economy in the world—Lincoln by successfully campaigning for federal funds to construct the transcontinental railroad linking the nation's booming East

with its expanding West, and Eisenhower by building the national highway system.

It wasn't easy for President Eisenhower to persuade Congress to pass the Federal Highway Act in 1956. It was a slog, where the needs of the nation were subject to the needs of politics. But he was dogged and found a way to build a consensus to get something big done, something that would secure a brighter future for generations to come.

I was only 12 years old at the time that the Act passed. I was too young to really grasp what building a national highway system really meant, but not too young to be impressed with the general's grand vision, moxie, and persistence. Even in my solidly Democratic household, the National Highway Act was hailed.

For the next 35 years, the federal government led the charge to physically connect America's cities and towns with more than 47,000 miles of interstate highways and local roads—a stunning achievement envied around the world. The highway system built the modern economy by opening up new markets for entrepreneurs, facilitating interstate commerce, and creating pathways for millions of people, including the thousands of workers who built our national road system, into the middle class.

Much of the impact of this great national building campaign wasn't so obvious to me growing up in Manhattan. I took for granted the 660 miles of subway tracks that made it possible for me and my fellow New Yorkers of every class and race to travel the

boroughs of the Big Apple with ease. Later in life, after serving as Philadelphia's mayor and then as governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, my appreciation of President Eisenhower grew, and his powerful vision and political skills really hit home.

When I became mayor, Philadelphia's transit system was subpar and we lacked the funds to make it great. Despite my best efforts, with only 2 of 15 seats on the regional transit system board, Philadelphia's transit needs played second fiddle to the suburban demands for increased services. Our city roads, potholed and puckered, needed upgrading as well, but here again Philadelphia was outnumbered on the



Regional Planning Organization's board responsible for allocating federal highway system dollars across seven counties. This is not a blame game, but the cards are stacked against cities when it comes to tapping federal funds for the essential transportation improvements needed by cities—where most of the residents are people of color and families who are increasingly poor or struggling.

Finally, I became governor and I thought I could really level the playing field for cities and poor rural communities. For these communities I wanted to improve public education and rebuild their infrastructure. While I can proudly say that I accomplished much of what I set out to do, when it comes to infrastructure, many of our best proposals were left on the cutting-room floor. Not because the ideas weren't sound or too expensive. They were not adopted because too many elected officials were afraid to think big. And worse yet, I faced a growing cabal of elected leaders dead set against the government serving as a partner with the private sector to build the infrastructure necessary to grow the economy.

That's some bad Kool-Aid! It's especially bad for those seeking to expand economic opportunity for all.

In 1952 when President Eisenhower was elected, the Hearst Newspapers wrote:

*The obsolescence of the nation's highways presents an appalling problem of waste, danger and*

*death. Next to the manufacture of the most modern implements of war as a guarantee of peace through strength, a network of modern roads is as necessary to defense as it is to our national economy and personal safety.*

*We have fallen far behind in this task—until today there is hardly a city of any size without almost hopeless congestion within its boundaries and stalled traffic blocking roads leading beyond these boundaries. A solution can and will be found through the joint planning of the Federal, state and local governments.*

Much worse could be said about much of our infrastructure today. Without real leadership, by 2050, when our population will be nearly 100 million people larger, more urbanized, and majority people of color, our infrastructure will be completely obsolete and overburdened.

It's time to reclaim America's proud bipartisan tradition of thinking big. It's time to reaffirm that government is a useful lever for growth so all Americans can share the great promise of opportunity. It's time for our elected leaders on both sides of the aisle to lead in the tradition of President Eisenhower and put the interests of this great nation first above all and any other parochial interest. It's time to rebuild America. ■



**CHAPTER FOUR**

**Infrastructure:  
Supporting  
Communities So  
All Can Thrive**

**BY SARAH TREUHAF**



Infrastructure only makes headlines in the wake of disaster. The levees and floodwalls breached by hurricanes Katrina and Sandy. The collapse of the I-35 bridge over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis. These events, which are becoming more and more frequent, expose the poor and uneven quality of so much of our infrastructure and spark urgent calls to address the situation. But when infrastructure works well, no one thinks much about it.

Take a moment and reflect on your morning routine—your trek from bed to work, school, or errands around town. It's probably safe to assume that infrastructure is not the first thing that comes to mind.

But go a little deeper. Before you even made it to the shower, you probably checked your email messages, caught a snippet of the morning news on TV, or listened to a radio traffic report. Maybe you walked your dog in your neighborhood park, or took a quick jog around the nearby school track. Next you bathed, brushed your teeth, washed dishes, and perhaps did a load of laundry. Then you most likely ate something—your bowl of cereal, some fresh fruit—that was trucked in from another part of the country. Finally, you scooped up your keys, got in your car, and either drove to work, dropped the kids off at school, headed to a doctor's appointment, or went to visit friends and family. Or maybe you left the car in the garage and walked or biked to the transit stop to catch the bus, light rail, or subway.

## Economic benefits of investing in infrastructure

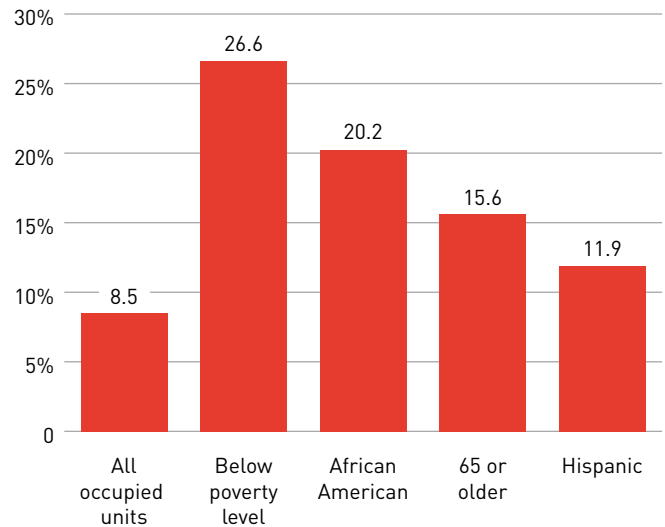
- A \$1 billion investment in infrastructure creates about 18,000 jobs, while the same size tax cut would generate 14,000 jobs and no new public assets.<sup>1</sup>
- Every \$1 invested in public transit brings nearly \$4 back to a community's economy in business activity and tax revenues.<sup>2</sup>
- Making the investments needed to renew the nation's infrastructure would create an additional 2.4 million jobs per year.<sup>3</sup> Most of these jobs would pay good wages and provide a path to the middle class, particularly for families of color.

None of these routine activities would have been possible without the cable, broadband, telecommunications network, parks, sidewalks, water and sewer lines, schools, roads, bridges, and transit systems that make up our national public infrastructure. Infrastructure is the invisible support that helps you to show up ready and able to work, learn, and interact with your family and participate in the life of your community. And it is the same for millions of others every single day.

Added all up, infrastructure is the foundation of so much of what defines us as Americans, including our economy. Our public infrastructure is the skeletal support that makes movement, interaction, and innovation possible—connecting individuals to each other, to economic opportunities, and to regional resources. It underlies the health, vitality, and productivity of the people, communities, and businesses that make up our national economy.

But for the increasingly diverse communities that are quickly becoming the majority in America—communities that are also disproportionately low income—this foundation is often shaky. Streets are pitted with potholes, sidewalks are cracked and uneven, water mains are rusting, and park structures are dilapidated. We know, for example, that people of color own fewer cars than whites and are more likely to rely on buses and rail lines, yet a spotty public transit system leaves many people stranded.<sup>4</sup> Bus routes, if they exist, provide infrequent service and constantly face budget cuts. Rail stops are few and far between or missing altogether.

**FIGURE 1**  
Percent of households without a vehicle, 2005



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, American Housing Survey for the United States, H150 (via U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Transportation Statistics Annual Report, 2006).

Aging water systems often fail to deliver clean water to neighborhood homes and schools. Under these conditions, the regular routine you likely carried out this morning becomes impossible.

Take Juventino Gonzalez's situation in Lanare, a rural, low-income, unincorporated community in California's Central Valley. Juventino moved to Lanare more than 40 years ago to get a job as a farmworker, and as a retiree has been leading community efforts to improve the town's water, sewer, and road infrastructure.

Lanare lacks the basic necessities that most of us take for granted, such as clean drinking water, sewer systems, sidewalks, streetlights, and storm drains. Its water is contaminated with arsenic and bacteria, and smells of sulfide, yet the water treatment plant built in 2007 to fix the problem had to be shut down just six months after opening because of high operation costs.<sup>5</sup> Juventino and his neighbors, most of whom live in trailers, pay \$54 a month for tap water that's too contaminated to drink. As a result, they shell out about 10 percent of their income for bottled water while struggling to pay for septic tank repairs and medical bills that stem from preventable health issues.<sup>6</sup> Juventino describes the dire tradeoffs: "People here are poor and they fend for themselves how they can. I can assure you that plenty of people are drinking the contaminated water in this community. We are contaminating ourselves."<sup>7</sup>

The residents of Lanare are hardly alone in facing such challenges. Across the state of California, 1.8 million people live in similarly neglected low-income, unincorporated communities, and a rough estimate puts the number at 10.6 million nationwide.<sup>8</sup> And the challenge of clean water extends into many other urban and rural communities. A *New York Times* investigation of water pollution found that the drinking water for 1 in 10 Americans contains dangerous chemicals or does not meet federal quality standards for a host of other reasons.<sup>9</sup> Studies suggest that low-income communities and communities of color face the most severe drinking water contamination.<sup>10</sup>

Infrastructure deficiencies in urban and rural communities of color often stem from years of inequitable and discriminatory land-use planning. Ill-conceived downtown redevelopment projects built in the decades immediately following World War II tore apart many urban communities of color. Highways were rammed through dozens of African American communities like West Oakland in California; Overtown in Miami, Florida; North Nashville in Tennessee; and St. Paul, Minnesota's Rondo community—displacing thousands of residents and small businesses and ripping apart the fabric of these long-established neighborhoods.<sup>11</sup> These infrastructure projects were implemented with little, if any, community input and they contributed to white flight, disinvestment, and severe patterns of racial segregation and isolation. Decades later, many of these neighborhoods bear lasting scars to their urban landscapes that prevent them from fully realizing their potential as neighborhoods and economic centers. Among residents of these once-vibrant communities, the legacy of mistrust often runs deep.

Crumbling infrastructure also burdens many of the nation's older, diverse suburbs and small towns—places such as Madeira, Ohio, outside of Cincinnati; Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, less than three miles from downtown Philadelphia; and hundreds of other so-called first suburbs.<sup>12</sup> Aging water and sewer systems, bridges, roads, sidewalks, homes, and parks are a huge fiscal burden for their governments and taxpayers. New investments in roads and other infrastructure in outer-lying, more modern suburbs made moving



Chris Doherty, who rebuilt on the existing foundation of his destroyed home, cleans his porch in the Lower 9th Ward, the New Orleans neighborhood that was hit the hardest when Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast

AP PHOTO/GERALD HERBERT

out a good proposition for people with means, leaving these older communities with populations that were not only shrinking but also had lower incomes to contribute to the tax base.

Lack of infrastructure also plagues tribal communities. Among Native American households, 14 percent lack access to electricity and 12 percent lack complete indoor plumbing compared to 1 percent of households nationally.<sup>13</sup> Two-thirds of reservation roads are unpaved, making it difficult for many Native Americans to access employment, stores, medical care, and other needs.<sup>14</sup>

## The potential of infrastructure investments

Sound, well-planned infrastructure investments can transform struggling communities of color into healthy, thriving neighborhoods by linking them more firmly with their regional economies. But this will only happen if infrastructure investments are targeted to these communities and carried out in a way that benefits their current residents.

The case of a new transit investment in St. Paul illustrates many of the opportunities and challenges posed by infrastructure improvements in communities of color. A new \$1 billion Central Corridor light-rail line is currently being constructed along St. Paul's University Avenue, one of the region's busiest thoroughfares, to connect its downtown to the downtown of neighboring Minneapolis, with service slated to begin in 2014.

The "Green Line," as it is known, cuts through some of the most diverse neighborhoods in the region, with a mix of Hmong, African American, Latino, college students, and working-class white residents. But when the first project plans were announced in mid-2006, the train was slated to completely bypass three of the lowest-income, most diverse, and most transit-reliant neighborhoods without stopping to pick up their residents. The residents of these communities reacted, organizing a "Stops for Us" campaign to ensure the new transit line provided them with service. One of their rallying cries was "We don't want another Rondo!", referring to the 1960s freeway project that shattered St. Paul's tight-knit African American community of Rondo, displacing thousands of residents.

After four years of concerted organizing and advocacy, the campaign was ultimately successful.<sup>15</sup>

After successfully fighting to get the rail stops built, neighborhood advocates are now working to make sure that longtime residents and the many small, ethnic businesses located along University Avenue can benefit from the new transit infrastructure. Two major potential benefits are jobs and business contracts associated with the new construction. Connecting local workers to the 4,000 construction jobs being created through the project, and making sure that small local contractors have a fair shot at accessing the contracts for the work are community priorities.<sup>18</sup> So far, the Green Line rail project is meeting its hiring and contracting goals, with people of color performing 18 percent of the work hours on the project, women performing 6 percent of work hours, and disadvantaged businesses—small

companies owned by people of color or other economically disadvantaged groups—securing 15 percent of the contracts.<sup>19</sup> The Metropolitan Council, the regional agency overseeing the rail line’s development, estimates that minority- and women-owned firms could fulfill \$70 million in subcontracts.<sup>20</sup>

How the construction of the Green Line will affect housing costs in the surrounding neighborhoods is another area of community concern. Building a new transit stop in a neighborhood can generate new economic, social, and cultural activity—attracting new residents and businesses and strengthening the housing market. This can be positive for existing residents, bringing in needed shops, services, and new neighbors. But it can also push vulnerable low-income residents out. Studies show that new transit stops often spark an increase in housing prices and rents, causing them to rise at a much faster rate than residents’ incomes, leading to neighborhood gentrification and the potential displacement of low- and fixed-income residents.<sup>21</sup> To address this issue, a number of St. Paul community groups are working to make sure that existing affordable homes are preserved and new affordable homes are built along the line so that longtime residents are not pushed out as the neighborhood improves.

### **Improving the infrastructure planning process**

To fully realize the promise of infrastructure investments for communities of color, infrastructure



Sound, well-planned infrastructure investments can transform struggling communities of color into healthy, thriving neighborhoods by linking them more firmly with their regional economies.

decisions need to be coordinated, representative, and inclusive. Despite the importance of infrastructure decisions for the health and well-being of people and communities, these decisions are often made in an uncoordinated, piecemeal fashion, and take place in boardrooms and committee meetings that are attended by few community members and receive little public scrutiny.

There is no single place where decisions are made in a transparent manner about the various pieces of infrastructure that make up a community. Often-times, a dizzying patchwork of government agencies at the local, state, and federal level, special districts, and private service providers decide the particulars of infrastructure provision.

Washington, D.C.'s iconic, century-old Union Station illustrates the typical complexity of urban infrastructure provision. Opened in 1907, Union Station, built in the grand Beaux-Arts style, is the transportation hub for city bus lines operated by two transportation companies, six regional bus services, two regional rail lines, the Washington Metro subway, and the Amtrak national passenger rail line—a total of 11 separate public, quasi-public, and private transportation providers all come together in this one terminal.

On top of the jumble of local transportation operators that cobble together the transit infrastructure in any given place, regional and federal agencies play major roles in governing and funding transportation systems. Regional planning and

## Metrics matter: Federal policy and the case of the missing stops

One of the main barriers to getting the three additional transit stops built in St. Paul was the formula used by the Federal Transit Administration to determine eligibility for \$477 million in federal funding. Beginning in 2005 the agency used a cost-effectiveness index that measured cost per travel time saved for commuters as a pass-fail test for whether a project was eligible for federal funds through the New Starts program.<sup>16</sup> This metric favored longer distances between stops and did not consider the consequences for local residents. Community advocates took the issue to the agency head, Peter Rogoff, who visited St. Paul in 2010 to learn more about the missing stops and that year changed the formula used to determine funding eligibility to assess a broader range of criteria to measure how a project will improve community livability, mobility, and economic development.<sup>17</sup>



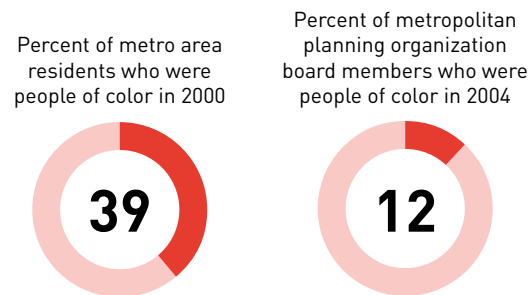
transportation agencies decide where to develop and prioritize which projects to build. And the federal government sets the rules for many transportation projects and often provides a critical piece of the funding. The Department of Transportation, for example, spends about \$50 billion a year and determines how the money will be split between roads and transit and how projects proposed by state and local governments will be evaluated.<sup>22</sup>

Within all of these various decision-making bodies, the people making decisions about infrastructure are generally not representative of the communities they serve. Metropolitan planning organizations, or MPOs, for example, exist in every metropolitan region of the country and guide billions of dollars in federal and state investments in transportation and air quality, but the leaders of these organizations rarely mirror the diversity of the population served by the projects they fund. A Brookings Institution analysis found that metropolitan planning organization boards underrepresented urban residents and residents of color compared to suburban and white residents. For example, while 39 percent of metro-area residents were people of color in 2000, only 12 percent of the board members of metropolitan planning organizations in 2004 were people of color.<sup>23</sup> Local school boards are similarly unrepresentative. In California, for example, only about 15 percent of school board members were Latino in 2008–2009, while the state’s student population was 49 percent Latino.<sup>24</sup>

Because low-income communities of color have less representation on these critical decision-making

bodies and less political power to influence decisions, these communities often do not get their fair share of infrastructure investments. And without sufficient investment, they miss out on the potential benefits. The Initiative for a Competitive Inner City, a nonprofit focused on urban economic development, calculates that deficient infrastructure in inner-city areas has cost these communities 2 percent to 3 percent of their total job base, or about 250,000 jobs in good-paying industries such as transportation, logistics, and professional services.<sup>25</sup>

**FIGURE 2**  
**Residents of color under-represented in regional decision making**



Source: Thomas Sanchez, "An Inherent Bias? Geographic and Racial-Ethnic Patterns of Metropolitan Planning Organization Boards" (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2006), available at <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2006/06/01transportation-sanchez>.

What is happening now on the Lakota Sioux Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota exemplifies the promise that inclusive infrastructure planning processes hold for building strong regional economies. Pine Ridge is one of the more than 140 regions nationwide developing collaborative and



This photo released by DTE Energy Co. shows crew members working to clear broken utility poles in Sterling Heights, Mich., on Sunday, Jan. 20, 2013.

AP PHOTO/DTE ENERGY CO.,  
MARK HOUSTON

community-driven regional development plans thanks to the federal government's Sustainable Communities Initiative. (see page 55)

The challenges facing Pine Ridge, however, can't be downplayed. It is one of the 10 poorest census tracts in the nation, nearly half of its residents are unemployed, and life expectancy is nearly 30 years lower than the national average.<sup>26</sup> But in the Pine Ridge community, Lakota leaders have shifted from reacting to the deep-rooted poverty that has been plaguing their community for more than a century, to proactively planning for the tribe's strong and viable economic future. Using the sustainable communities planning model, the Lakota people are building the infrastructure needed to get them there. One economic development strategy in the works is a community food processing facility, which will allow tribal members to process and distribute game. A new regional planning office will also support the construction of thousands of new, sorely needed quality homes.

## **Building the foundation for tomorrow**

The infrastructure deficit in urban and rural communities of color reduces the chance that the nation's fastest-growing communities can achieve economic and social success. And that means that public investments are not laying the groundwork for a robust and sustainable economy that works for everyone.

While communities of color are often far behind when it comes to infrastructure investments, the focus cannot only be on catching them up. Yes, we must address the most dire infrastructure deficits, and that needs to happen immediately. But we must also build new infrastructure that allows these communities to leapfrog into a "next economy"—a future economy that is driven by innovation, shared prosperity, and sustainability. Deliberate and thoughtful public investments can make this possible.

Rebuilding the infrastructure in communities of color would generate much-needed new jobs and business opportunities in addition to creating or revitalizing valuable public assets. Making the investments needed to renew the nation's infrastructure—bridges, roads, schools, water and sewer systems, rail and public transit—would create an additional 2.4 million jobs per year, the majority of which would pay good wages to workers who have some advanced training but not a college degree, and provide solid stepping stones to the middle class.<sup>27</sup>

Achieving equitable infrastructure investments will take deliberate policy strategies and robust community organizing and engagement. History shows that neither the new and improved infrastructure nor the jobs created through infrastructure investments will automatically benefit the communities that need them the most. An analysis of how the stimulus dollars under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 were spent, for example,

found that black- and Latino-owned businesses each received less than 2 percent of the funds, even though they represent 12 percent of all businesses.<sup>28</sup>

In recent years, state and local governments—together with advocacy groups and private-sector investors—have led the way in creating equitable infrastructure policies through several policy strategies, including:

- **Targeting investments to the diverse communities most in need of jobs and reinvestment.** Last year responding to advocacy from many organizations promoting economic and social equity, the state of California specifically targeted \$45 million in sustainable communities planning and urban-greening project grants for economically disadvantaged urban and rural communities.<sup>31</sup>

- **Linking local residents to jobs, training opportunities, and career pathways generated by infrastructure investments.** Several cities, including Cleveland, Los Angeles, New York, Oakland, and Portland, as well as the state of Oregon, have implemented “community workforce agreements” on public-works projects that include targeted hiring goals, job-quality standards, and workforce-training strategies.<sup>32</sup> Groundbreaking transportation departments in Missouri, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin have agreed to devote a share of some of their infrastructure project budgets to job-training efforts that get workers who are underrepresented in the construction workforce into apprenticeships.<sup>33</sup> And since the mid-1990s, 140 cities and counties have passed living-wage laws

## Expanding infrastructure job opportunities

Before the Twin Cities community organized itself around equitable hiring and contracting on public works projects related to the Green Line and other investments, the Minnesota transportation department was not meeting its goals for contracting with disadvantaged businesses.<sup>29</sup> Community pressure and oversight—including a campaign begun by HIRE Minnesota in 2009—along with more ambitious department policy goals, has dramatically changed the picture: In 2011 about 12 percent of workers on the state’s top 14 transportation construction projects were people of color, compared to about 6 percent department-wide in 2008.<sup>30</sup>

requiring that companies that receive contracts or subsidies from local governments pay wages that allow workers to meet their families' needs—generally ranging between \$9 and \$16 per hour.<sup>34</sup>

- **Creating economic opportunities for local and minority-owned businesses along the infrastructure supply chain.** Cities and states are setting goals for contracting with companies owned by people of color and women. Among states, Maryland has set the highest bar, aiming to direct 29 percent of its \$8 billion in annual contracts to minority- and women-owned companies.<sup>35</sup> Other communities are revising their contracting policies to create a more level playing field for small businesses (New York City, New Orleans) or prioritize companies that are creating the most local jobs (Los Angeles, Houston).

## Policy recommendations

The federal government should learn from these local innovations and establish a policy framework to renew America's infrastructure in a way that consciously connects the nation's diverse, vulnerable communities to economic opportunities and ushers in a new era of equitable growth. This framework would incentivize and prioritize infrastructure investments that are targeted to the communities most in need, improve the health and vitality of those communities, move the nation toward a clean energy economy, maximize the number of good jobs created that go to local workers, and create business opportunities that allow small, minority-owned enterprises to sustain themselves and grow.

CAP and PolicyLink suggest six infrastructure investment priorities that will uplift communities of

## Targeted hiring goals

Goals for hiring underrepresented and vulnerable workers on infrastructure projects vary widely. Portland, Oregon's workforce agreement for its home energy retrofitting program requires that local residents perform at least 80 percent of work hours, with 30 percent of those hours going to historically disadvantaged and low-income residents. So far, people of color have performed almost half of work hours.<sup>36</sup> Missouri's workforce-development program for the \$524 million I-64 highway project, completed in 2009, also exceeded its hiring goals for people of color, aiming to hire 14.7 percent people of color and actually hiring 19.8 percent people of color.<sup>37</sup>



In this Aug. 26, 2011 photo, commuters get on board a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) train at the Civic Center stop in San Francisco.

AP PHOTO/PAUL SAKUMA

color while strengthening our institutions, revitalizing the economy, and benefiting all.

### Modernize the nation's infrastructure according to national infrastructure objectives that include clear measures to assess progress toward inclusive and equitable growth

Federal infrastructure investments need to be distributed in a manner that is transparent, accountable, democratic, and with a focus on achieving clearly articulated outcomes that ensure the economic prosperity, health, and vitality of all communities, including growing communities of color. The federal government can begin to move toward a results-oriented system by taking actions focused on job creation and economic opportunity outcomes.

- Invest an additional \$129 billion annually over the next 10 years to repair the nation's infrastructure, increase economic competitiveness, and grow 2.4 million additional jobs per year.<sup>38</sup>
- The Office of Management and Budget should require every government agency to develop a plan outlining how its spending choices can maximize local job creation and business development for small, minority- and women-owned firms, and what it can do to eliminate barriers to and create incentives for hiring workers from low-income communities of color.

- Federal agencies should develop methods for distributing infrastructure funds that are based on objective measures of need, such as infrastructure quality, unemployment, and poverty rates. A significant portion of infrastructure funds—CAP and PolicyLink recommend 50 percent of all funds—should be targeted to underinvested areas, and the local matching funds requirement should be waived or adjusted as needed.

### Build a transportation system that promotes access, mobility, health, opportunity, choice, and good jobs for all

Transportation is a crucial link to opportunity, yet communities of color often face transportation options that are unaffordable, unreliable, or nonexistent. Federal transportation policy choices—what we build, where we put it, who builds it, how we operate it, what energy powers it—need to increase access and opportunity for these communities.

- The Department of Transportation should develop and use an equity-analysis tool to evaluate how well funding proposals submitted by local jurisdictions and states reach access, mobility, health, choice, and economic-opportunity goals for the diverse communities the projects will serve.
- Implement a construction careers program replicating successful local and state models that create career pathways for underrepresented workers in

the construction trades. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) recently introduced legislation that can serve as the basis for a federal program.<sup>39</sup>

- The Department of Transportation should develop a procurement best practices program for transit agencies' rail and bus purchases that maximizes the creation of good career-path jobs, incentivizes bringing bus and rail factories to this country, and includes specific requirements for training and hiring disadvantaged workers. This program should provide agencies with a model Request for Proposal, or RFP, for transportation equipment purchases.

### Retrofit America's homes and buildings

America's building stock accounts for 39 percent of our carbon emissions—more than industry or transportation.<sup>40</sup> Improving the energy efficiency of homes and buildings would help achieve climate change goals while reducing government waste, cutting family utility bills, and creating hundreds of thousands of good union jobs and career paths for workers without college degrees. Federal policy should support retrofits in the communities where the cost savings and renewed infrastructure are most needed through financing programs, tax incentives, and pilot programs to expand and spur local innovation.

- Continue support for utility assistance and weatherization programs for low-income homeowners via the Low-Income Housing and

Energy Assistance Program and Weatherization Assistance Program. Incorporate incentives in the Weatherization Assistance Program for local governments to develop creative financing mechanisms to help low-income homeowners retrofit their homes.

- Promote public-housing finance reform legislation that preserves long-term affordability and leverages private-sector investments for capital improvements, including energy-efficiency upgrades.
- Advance commercial energy-efficiency retrofits through the Better Buildings Initiative, which facilitates public-private partnerships to retrofit commercial buildings, and better incentivize commercial retrofits by restructuring the energy-efficient commercial buildings tax deduction into a credit.

### Upgrade and green the nation's water infrastructure

The nation's water systems are in sore need of upgrading and repair—especially in the older urban and rural areas that are home to many communities of color. Revamping water infrastructure creates an opportunity to improve health and sustainability, since stormwater runoff is a major cause of water pollution in urban areas.<sup>41</sup> Pioneering cities like Cincinnati, New York, Seattle, and Tucson have begun greening their stormwater infrastructure by using vegetation, soils, and natural processes to absorb



water and reduce pollutants in the water supply. Green-stormwater management can also create new jobs that lead to stable careers.

- Prioritize funding water projects that protect health, expand drinking water access, and generate new jobs for underserved communities.
- Provide greater flexibility to states in awarding funds through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, providing 20 percent of federal awards in the form of grants and targeting at least 10 percent of those grants to underserved communities. Further incentivize investment in underserved communities by providing a 2-to-1 federal match for local investments.
- Establish a clean water trust fund for water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure, with

dedicated funding to small (less than \$5 million) projects with the above-mentioned priorities.

- The Environmental Protection Agency should move forward stormwater-runoff regulations already under its review and develop standards for innovative green-stormwater projects.

### Promote integrated regional planning for sustainable communities

To support community vitality, the plans and priorities for various pieces of community infrastructure need to be coordinated and inclusive. The federal government plays an important role in helping regions build infrastructure efficiently, democratically, and in ways that meet national infrastructure objectives. Two important ways to do this are by strengthening the Partnership for Sustainable

## Facilitating integration: The Partnership for Sustainable Communities

In 2009 the federal agencies in charge of the environment, housing, and transportation came together to form an unprecedented partnership to help communities better coordinate their infrastructure investments in ways that improve environmental and public health, economic vitality, and social equity. The partnership aims to meet six “livability principles”: 1) provide more transportation choices; 2) promote equitable, affordable housing; 3) enhance economic competitiveness; 4) support existing communities; 5) coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment; and 6) value communities and neighborhoods. The partnership has provided \$3.5 billion in grants and technical assistance to more than 700 communities across the country.<sup>42</sup>

# A National Infrastructure Bank

Economists and policy experts have long advocated the creation of a National Infrastructure Bank to overcome two major infrastructure challenges: attracting private investment and ensuring that investments go toward worthy projects that produce clear economic, environmental, and social benefits. A National Infrastructure Bank would be a government entity run by appointees that would supplement the current system of appropriating infrastructure dollars.<sup>43</sup> It would provide a mix of financing options including grants, loans, and loan guarantees, in order to support a mix of projects that can and cannot raise revenue (via tolls, taxes, or other mechanisms).

Communities (see text box below) and by setting guidelines for effective and representative metropolitan planning organizations.

- Expand the Partnership for Sustainable Communities regional-planning grants to additional regions, with a continued focus on ensuring that plans achieve equity goals and are developed with robust participation from diverse community residents.
- Foster greater fairness in regional metropolitan planning organizations by stipulating that federal funds be allocated based on county population density and requiring metropolitan planning organization boards to submit annual reports to the Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development on the geographic and racial/ethnic

composition of their boards in relation to the populations they serve.

- The Department of Transportation should issue administrative guidance on equity in the governance and performance of metropolitan planning organizations, and provide financial incentives for metropolitan planning organizations that are representative of their populations.

## Develop equitable, long-term infrastructure financing mechanisms

The federal government should take immediate steps to establish robust mechanisms for financing the public infrastructure needed to connect all communities—including fast-growing communities of color—to their regional economies and, by so doing, to the global economy.

- Congress should renew and make permanent the Build America Bonds program. These taxable municipal bonds were established by the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009 and funded \$181 billion worth of infrastructure investments before the program expired at the end of 2010.
- Congress should establish a National Infrastructure Bank that would:
  - Use objective criteria for selecting projects that advance equity, economic competitiveness, and environmental sustainability
  - Give preference to projects that are located in underserved communities, meet community economic needs, reduce poverty and inequality, create or retain jobs, expand workforce training, have robust minority-contracting plans, improve public health, and engage community stakeholders in the planning process
  - Clearly define “public-private partnerships” in order to protect the public interest
  - Ensure that the process to evaluate, allocate, and evaluate projects is open and transparent to the public

## Conclusion

While infrastructure is rarely at the forefront of our minds when we think about America’s changing demographics, it should be. The nation’s infrastructure deficit is often worst in communities of color, and closing that gap—by repairing streets and bridges, building 21st-century transit systems, making buildings more energy efficient, upgrading and greening water systems, and more—can physically connect the people who are leading the nation’s growth to the opportunities they need to participate, contribute, and thrive while meeting national goals for sustainability and economic competitiveness.

In the process of closing the country’s infrastructure deficit, we can also make significant progress in meeting our challenges of unemployment, poverty, and low-wage work. When made in a thoughtful and transparent manner, infrastructure investments can link unemployed and low-wage workers to living-wage jobs and careers, and help small, local, minority- and women-owned businesses expand, growing local jobs. By promoting innovative local strategies that tie infrastructure investments to the prosperity of the workers, communities, and businesses that have been left behind—and setting a policy framework that encourages further local innovation—the federal government can put every infrastructure dollar toward building an economy that works for everyone. ■

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## QUICK VIEW

# Infrastructure—Supporting Communities So All Can Thrive

**I**nfrastucture—bridges, roads, schools, water and sewer systems, rail and public transit—is the foundation upon which our nation moves, interacts, and innovates. High-quality infrastructure is also the key to a productive and thriving economy. But much of America’s

infrastructure is crumbling, especially in low-income communities and communities of color. Robust and targeted infrastructure investments that bring jobs and connectivity to the communities most left behind are critical to creating a robust and sustainable economy that works for everyone. ■

## Facts at a glance

- **2.4 million:** The number of new jobs created every year by making the investments needed to renew the nation’s infrastructure<sup>1</sup>
  - A \$1 billion investment in infrastructure creates about 18,000 jobs, while the same size tax cut would generate only about 14,000 jobs and no new public assets<sup>2</sup>
- **12 percent:** The share of U.S. businesses owned by blacks and Latinos, although just 2 percent of infrastructure contracts under the 2009 economic stimulus went to these firms<sup>3</sup>
- **\$4:** The amount a community’s economy gains in business activity and tax revenues for every \$1 invested in public transit<sup>4</sup>
- **1.1 million:** The number of new transit-related jobs that would be created in just five years if the nation’s 20 largest metro areas shifted 50 percent of their highway funds to transit—and that’s all without a single dollar of new spending<sup>5</sup>
- **\$15 billion:** How much the city of Philadelphia will save over the next 25 years by adopting green stormwater infrastructure strategies, which will also employ 250 people per year<sup>6</sup>

## Call to action

Smart, deliberate infrastructure investments can create millions of good jobs and transform struggling communities of color into healthy, thriving, economically vital places. Congress and the administration should work together to:

- Modernize the nation's infrastructure according to national objectives for inclusive and equitable growth
- Build a transportation system that promotes access and equity
- Retrofit America's homes and buildings
- Upgrade and green the nation's water infrastructure
- Promote integrated regional planning for sustainable communities
- Develop equitable, long-term infrastructure financing mechanisms

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# Building Healthy Communities Promotes Economic Opportunity

BY DR. ROBERT ROSS



For more than seven years, from 1983 to 1990, I practiced pediatrics in a bustling community health center in Camden, New Jersey. It was the most remarkably enlightening—and sobering—period of my professional career. The principal reason was crack cocaine, which was spreading like a terrible disease through our nation’s urban communities.

With crack going for only \$5 a vial, I witnessed the fabric of a poor but once-proud community of South Camden quickly unravel. Infant mortality and premature births soared. People struggling with domestic violence, child abuse, and neglect crowded the emergency rooms of local hospitals. Gang violence and youth homicides were daily occurrences, and sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS were pervasive.

As a young pediatrician just learning to hone his craft, I received a rude but abundantly clear lesson in what public health professionals call “the social determinants of health.” That’s policy-wonk speak to describe how the challenges of unemployment, poor housing, substandard education, and hopelessness conspire to create a toxic brew of disease and poor health. I quickly learned in Camden what an Ivy League medical education and the finest practical training had not taught me about the health of a community: place matters.

Today, more than two decades later, after a career in public health and now at the California Endowment—a private foundation committed to improving the health of underserved populations—my life’s calling remains firmly planted at the nexus of *place* and *health*.



While our nation struggles to eliminate the wide disparities in health that plague many communities of color and low-income populations, we also see glimpses of hope that support a simple, powerful proposition: The health of a community promotes economic opportunity, and economic opportunity advances better health.

Communities across our nation are illuminating the pathways to wellness, health equity, and opportunity. Boston's Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative has brought together thousands of residents over the past few decades to reclaim hundreds of abandoned properties and transform them into affordable homes, new schools, playgrounds, gardens, and a town commons. In East Los Angeles, Homeboy Industries integrated mental health counseling and tattoo-removal services into its job-training programs for ex-gangbangers and ex-felons, restoring not only employment but, more importantly, hope. After Louisville Youth Advocates, a group of about 50 youth activists, canvassed west Louisville, Kentucky, neighborhoods and found limited access to fresh, healthy foods, they advocated for a city-backed initiative providing fresh produce and nutritious food options to urban communities, and have seen the opening of six new Health in a Hurry corner stores.

These and other stories represent the future of a healthier and economically thriving America. The time is right to build on the lessons from these moments of success and scale them up through a robust national policy strategy.

They offer some important lessons for national policy:

- The importance of bottom-up, grassroots-engaged leadership, including youth leaders
- Integrative "silo-busting" actions, where leaders unify health, education, economic, and planning strategies to advance a wellness and prosperity agenda
- A mix of public and private financing to support programs
- The value of a "prevention mindset"



Most importantly, the leaders behind these efforts embody the best three-word definition of leadership I've heard: Hope in action.

As inspiring as these wellness and prosperity stories are, they also represent a cornerstone for a brighter economic future for America. Each young person steered away from gangs and toward a college degree represents a step toward a healthier community and global competitiveness for our nation. Each ex-felon whose life is transformed and finds full employment represents a new taxpayer contributing to civic society, instead of a \$47,000 burden—the annual price tag for keeping someone incarcerated. Each young person who avoids a lifetime of obesity and diabetes represents an extraordinary savings to our health system, including the Medicaid and Medicare programs.

We are learning a great deal about what it takes to transform an expensive, disease-treating health care system into a more efficient and community wellness-promoting health system. With the passage and implementation of the Affordable Care Act—known both affectionately and not-so-affectionately

as Obamacare—states and localities have been provided with a golden opportunity to expand needed, affordable care for the uninsured and at the same time pivot from an expensive sickness health system model to a more effective wellness system. Since the issues of poverty, unemployment, community violence, and stress contribute significantly to the burden of chronic disease in our nation, it is critical that prevention approaches take center stage in systemic reform.

Unfortunately, too many so-called political leaders and pundits represent America's future as a series of zero-sum games with false and limited choices. The successful implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, better known as Obamacare, with its historical and unprecedented opportunities to expand health insurance coverage and promote wellness, will greatly benefit both individual and community health. It will create an even stronger foundation for economic prosperity—rather than at the expense of it, as has been falsely alleged. Two decades from now, historians will wonder what all of the political fuss surrounding Obamacare was about. ■

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**Building  
Healthy  
Communities  
for a Healthy  
Nation**

**BY STEPHANIE BOARDEN AND ERIN HAGAN**



What comes to mind when you think about your five-digit ZIP code? Maybe you think about your house or block, your neighborhood park or school, the restaurants or shops in the area, the quality of city services such as street cleaning, or how safe it is for your children to play outside in the evening.

It is unlikely that your health makes that list. But a new paradigm emerging in the world of public health suggests that it should.

Consider this: In New Orleans, if you live in the 70112 ZIP code—which correlates to the Tremé

neighborhood, a community of color, and the ZIP code with the highest level of poverty in the parish—you can expect to live to be almost 55 years old. But if you instead live in the 70124 ZIP code—an area that includes the Lakeshore/Lake Vista neighborhoods adjacent to Lake Pontchartrain, which is predominantly white and has the lowest poverty rate in the parish—you can expect to live to see your 80th birthday.<sup>5</sup>

What accounts for this dramatic 25-year difference in life expectancy within the same city? Decades of public health research suggests the different physical, social, and economic conditions within the neighborhoods play a major role. If you live in a community

## Economic benefits of closing health care disparities

- Closing health disparities could generate annual savings of \$57 billion in medical expenses and \$252 million in lost productivity.<sup>1</sup>
- In Michigan healthy food initiatives working to triple local food production could result in 1,889 jobs and \$187 million in personal income.<sup>2</sup>
- Healthy community design in urban communities such as Portland has generated a “green dividend” of approximately \$850 million in annual savings in the city due to avoided expenditures that residents do not have to make as a result of living in walkable, mixed-use communities.<sup>3</sup>
- Reductions in obesity rates can potentially save an estimated \$283 billion in national health expenditures over 10 years.<sup>4</sup>

with good schools, living-wage jobs, places to buy healthy food, safe parks and streets, high-quality public transit, clean air and water, shops, services, low crime rates, and well-maintained housing, you are more likely to thrive. And if you live in a neighborhood without these things, you are more likely to suffer from preventable health problems such as obesity, asthma, and diabetes.<sup>6</sup>

Conventional wisdom holds that medical care and individual choices determine health. But the reality is that place—neighborhood and community environments—also has a strong influence on whether people will be healthy or sick, and how long they will live. This is particularly true for communities of color because American neighborhoods remain highly segregated.<sup>7</sup> Due to historic patterns of racism and disinvestment, the neighborhoods where people of color live tend to have fewer of the resources and opportunities that promote good health and more of the elements that conspire against good health. Numerous studies document how communities of color have fewer grocery stores, farmers' markets, quality health care facilities, and safe streets and parks, while they have an abundance of fast-food outlets, liquor stores, and pollution sources.<sup>8</sup>

Persistent residential segregation contributes to stark health inequities by race in this country. For example:

- Roughly 38 percent of Latino children and 36 percent of black children are overweight or obese, compared to 29 percent of white children.<sup>9</sup>



Obesity and related preventable diseases are already taking a toll on the economy—adding up to more than \$200 billion in health care costs every year and diminishing workforce productivity.



An investment of just \$10 per person each year in programs to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and prevent tobacco use could save our country more than \$16 billion in annual health care costs within five years.

- About 6 in 10 black women and 4 in 10 Latino women are obese, compared to 3 in 10 white women.<sup>10</sup>
- Diabetes rates are eight times higher for Native American teens and three times as high for African American, Asian, and Latino teens, compared to white teens.<sup>11</sup>
- Black children are twice as likely to have asthma and Latino children are almost one-and-a-half times as likely compared to white children.<sup>12</sup>

Such health inequities are a tremendous liability for a country that is becoming increasingly racially diverse—and whose future will depend on a healthy, productive population and workforce. Obesity and related preventable diseases are already taking a toll on the economy—adding up to more than \$200 billion in health care costs every year and diminishing workforce productivity.<sup>13</sup> Improving the quality and decreasing the cost of health care can help alleviate the burden of these diseases, but neighborhood environments also play a significant role in determining how healthy people are and how long they will live. In fact, where someone lives can impact his or her lifespan by more than a decade.<sup>14</sup> Investing in community-based prevention strategies can save lives and money. An investment of just \$10 per person each year in programs to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and prevent tobacco use could save our country more than \$16 billion in annual health care costs within five years.<sup>15</sup>

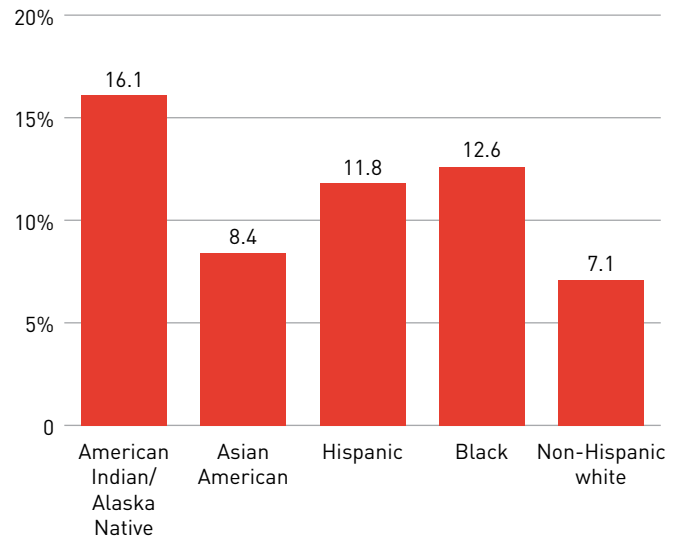
To secure a bright future for our nation, we must put everyone on a path to good health. This means ensuring high-quality health care for all and expanding “healthy communities” strategies that can make neighborhoods healthier places to live, work, learn, and play, and that will prevent people from getting sick in the first place.

### Toward a comprehensive approach to health

In 2010 Congress passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. This landmark health reform legislation set in motion sweeping reforms that will improve our health care delivery system, invest in preventive strategies, control health care costs, and significantly expand insurance coverage—especially for low-income people and people of color. People of color currently represent about one-third of the total U.S. population—and growing—yet comprise more than 50 percent of our nation’s uninsured, in part because many work low-wage jobs that often do not offer health benefits.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, people of color are most likely to benefit from expansions to Medicaid, as well as financial assistance offered to help low-income individuals purchase health insurance through the Affordable Care Act’s state-based health insurance exchanges. Although full implementation is still several years away, millions of people are already benefiting from the historic legislation in important ways.

While quality care and coverage are the primary focus of the Affordable Care Act, the legislation

**Figure 1**  
Prevalence of diagnosed diabetes, U.S. adults age 20 and older, by race and ethnicity, 2007 to 2009



Source: Center for Disease Control, 2012 available at <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pubs/pdf/DiabetesReportCard.pdf>

also recognizes the importance of prevention—both to meet the goal of improving health and to control health care costs. The Affordable Care Act’s Prevention and Public Health Fund, for example, is an unprecedented source of dedicated funding for community-based prevention strategies. These types of delivery models integrate and coordinate primary, acute, behavioral, and long-term health services for people. The Affordable Care Act is also supporting the expansion of community health centers in medically underserved areas—350 new centers were built in 2011—as well as school-based health centers and “medical homes.”<sup>17</sup>

# The cost of obesity

- Childhood obesity costs the nation more than \$14 billion every year in medical expenses.<sup>18</sup>
- The direct medical cost associated with adult obesity is an estimated \$45 billion.<sup>19</sup>
- The total lost productivity of the workforce—due to absenteeism *and* poor productivity—as a result of obesity is estimated at \$11.7 billion per year.<sup>20</sup>
- In 2008 obesity-related illness cost Medicare \$19.7 billion, Medicaid \$8 billion, and private health insurance \$49 billion.<sup>21</sup>

Obesity is a huge drain on our economy that could be greatly reduced through comprehensive prevention strategies.

In addition, the Affordable Care Act establishes financial support, training, recruitment, and retention programs to help people of color pursue careers in health. The alignment of patient and practitioner race or ethnicity is recognized as a strategy for improving the quality of care.<sup>22</sup> One example of such a program is the National Health Service Corps, which offers loan repayment for recent health professional school graduates as a means of promoting a diverse workforce that includes people of color, LGBT individuals, and people from rural areas.

Even as the Affordable Care Act is charting a new course for national public health policy and practice, new initiatives continue to challenge the traditional health care paradigm. Health Leads, an

organization working in 22 clinics in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, New York, Providence, Rhode Island, and Washington, D.C., exemplifies a more comprehensive approach to successfully implementing health care at the community level.<sup>23</sup> The brainchild of Rebecca Onie when she was a 19-year-old sophomore at Harvard College, Health Leads is built on the premise that addressing a person's basic needs must be a requisite part of how doctors provide care for their patients.<sup>24</sup> Health Leads helps clinics go beyond traditional medical care to connect their patients with the resources they need to be healthy—basic needs such as healthy food, safe housing, exercise programs, home-heating assistance, and job training. Clinic doctors write “prescriptions” for these basic



needs, which are then filled by college-student volunteers who help track down the prescribed resources for the patients.

The story of Patricia—a middle-aged African American woman living in East Baltimore among scores of vacant properties and few, if any, banks or grocery stores—illustrates the necessity and power of the Health Leads model. When Patricia visited her doctor at Johns Hopkins Hospital’s Harriet Lane Clinic to be treated for her high blood pressure, she also needed other help to keep herself and her family healthy.<sup>25</sup> She struggled to put enough food on the table for herself and her son and she was also having a difficult time getting her landlord to remove the mold in her apartment, which was triggering her son’s asthma. With assistance from Health Leads, the doctors were able to help Patricia control her blood pressure, and volunteers were able to find a source of healthy and affordable food for her and her family and were successful in clearing up the family’s mold problem. Patricia is just one of about 23,000 patients that Health Leads has served since 2010.<sup>26</sup> Although the Health Leads model is not explicitly advanced through the Affordable Care Act, it is these types of pioneering initiatives that are leading the way in accounting for the full range of resources necessary to lead a healthy life, and helping to introduce a more holistic approach to the system of health care in our country.

### **Increasing access to healthy food**

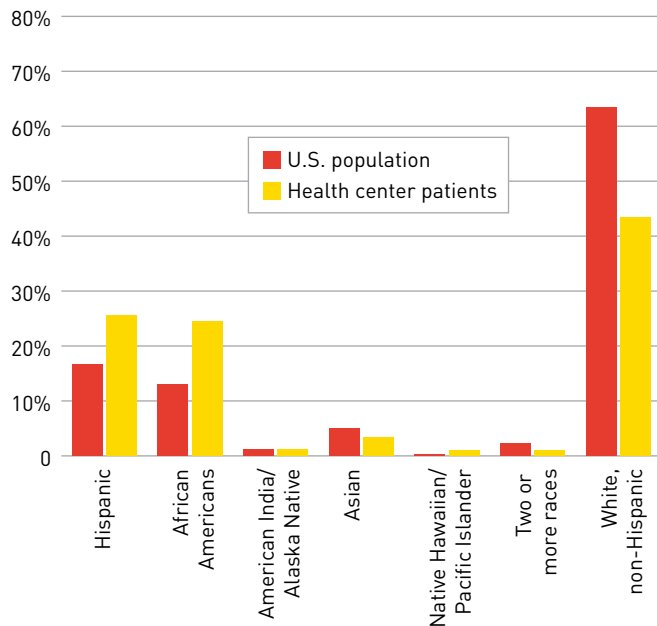
Accessing healthy food is a challenge for many Americans, particularly those living in low-income neighborhoods, communities of color, and rural areas, which increases the



Improving access to healthy food in communities with the greatest need can lead to both improved health outcomes as well as positive economic impacts.

**Figure 2**  
**Community health centers are key to communities of color**

*Race/ethnicity of CHC patients compared to U.S. population, 2011*



Source: Author analyzed data from HHS, Health Resources and Services Administration, Table 3A- Patient by Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity/Race/Language available at <http://bphc.hrsa.gov/uds/view.aspx?q=r3b&year=2011&state=->; U.S. Census Bureau

likelihood of suffering from obesity and other diet-related diseases.<sup>27</sup> There are fewer retail outlets selling affordable, nutritious food in low-income communities than in wealthier ones, and in predominantly African American and Latino neighborhoods than in white neighborhoods.<sup>28</sup> Improving access to healthy food in communities with the greatest need can lead to improved health outcomes as well as positive economic impacts.<sup>29</sup> A focus on access to healthy food has swept the nation in recent years, spurring the

implementation of a variety of strategies to improve the food environment in communities with limited access. Initiatives that limit unhealthy food, such as zoning restrictions and moratoriums on new establishments, can work in concert with approaches that increase the availability of healthy food, including urban agriculture, community gardens, food hubs, mobile markets, corner store and bodega conversions, farmers' markets, voucher programs, and strategies to attract grocery stores to low-income communities. The highly successful Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative, which provides low-cost loans for new or upgraded grocery stores in low-income neighborhoods with limited access to fresh food, has prompted similar programs in other cities and states and served as a model for the federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative.<sup>30</sup>

Milwaukee, Wisconsin's Fondy Farmers Market, on the city's distressed north side, was created as part of a long-term strategy to spur local economic growth and increase food security in the neighborhood. Today the market supports more than 36,000 shoppers and nearly \$500,000 in annual sales.<sup>31</sup> A good portion of the market's sales—nearly \$41,000 in 2012—comes from food stamps, indicating that low-income residents are shopping at the market.<sup>32</sup> The market is one of the most diverse and integrated venues in Milwaukee: 70 percent of the vendors are Hmong immigrants and the remaining vendors include a mix of whites, African Americans, Jamaicans, Latinos, and Filipinos. The market's diversity extends to its customers as well, with African Americans, whites, and Asians, all representing a range of



Rick Steffen, left, bags green beans for Randy Boyle at the farmer's market in Portland, Ore.

AP PHOTO/DON RYAN

income levels.<sup>33</sup> The Fondy Farmers Market provides the community with multiple benefits: It's a source of fresh and affordable produce, a gathering place that embraces people from diverse backgrounds, and serves as an economic driver for the neighborhood.<sup>34</sup>

The Fondy Farmers Market is also among the growing number of farmers' markets across the country that are offering vouchers to help increase the purchasing power of low-income consumers for locally grown healthy foods. More than 100 farmers' markets in Michigan participate in the innovative Double Up Food Bucks program, which doubles the value of the

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, benefits when they are used to purchase Michigan-grown fresh produce at participating markets.<sup>35</sup> The Double Up program, which is funded and managed by the national nonprofit Fair Food Network, has the dual goals of increasing access to affordable healthy foods for low-income people and creating new sales opportunities for Michigan farmers.<sup>36</sup> In 2011 Michigan farmers did more than \$1 million in sales from SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks.<sup>37</sup> Similar initiatives have been successful in other communities and are improving access to healthy food for all communities while spurring economic activity across the country.

## Designing healthy neighborhoods

How communities are planned, designed, and developed has significant health consequences. Understanding this link between the built environment and health equity has become a new area of focus for policymakers, advocates, and researchers. Historically, low-income communities and communities of color have been subject to discriminatory housing policies and practices that have resulted in the residents of these communities having to endure poor living conditions and the associated health inequities. Communities with failing infrastructure, poorly maintained housing, inadequate transportation, and a lack of safe green space can create serious health risks for residents. Unreliable and expensive transportation costs create barriers to accessing resources and opportunities, such as health care, education, and employment. Neighborhood blight and deteriorating infrastructure can also reinforce negative perceptions about community safety and create an environment that fosters crime. And a lack of quality and safe recreational and park space may deter youth and families from spending time outdoors and being physically active.

The good news is that some communities are taking action to address these barriers. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, or CPTED, is a relatively new concept by which communities are reshaping design features of their immediate built environment to discourage crime and prevent violence. “Complete streets”—roadways that are designed and operate in a way that enables safe

access for all users—are being incorporated into new road construction or major road maintenance projects in order to consider the needs of users of all modes of transportation—cars, public transit, biking, and walking.

Transit-oriented development is another growing trend that creates compact, walkable communities centered on transit system stops. When implemented with an eye toward enhancing equity and preventing gentrification and displacement, this approach to community development can improve access to opportunity and jobs for low-income residents and working families, promote a more active and healthy lifestyle by increasing the walkability of a neighborhood, and decrease dependency on automobiles, which may lead to reduced air pollution and lowered transportation costs for households.

Even smaller-scale projects such as youth-led projects to cover gang-related graffiti with original artwork are among the innovative solutions being implemented in neighborhoods across the country. Both perceptions of safety and actual violence are important factors in when it comes to community residents spending time being active or even just socializing outdoors. Engaging youth in neighborhood revitalization improves community safety, cohesion, and health, and instills a sense of ownership and pride in the community.

Whatever the approach to improving a neighborhood, these strategies must be grounded in collaborative planning and joint-design decisions involving

planners, developers, public health officials, and community members. Community- and economic-development efforts must shift their focus to better understand how to integrate health considerations in healthy community design.

### **Thinking systemically: Embedding health into all policies**

Many of the neighborhood-level variations in health outcomes in the United States are due in large part to inadequate access—not just to health care, but also substandard access to high-quality housing, financial services, employment opportunities, and education. As such, systemic and institutional change is an imperative for achieving and sustaining health equity. To address these differences at the community level, all sectors must consider health and equity in policy-making, as well as be held accountable for the impact of those policies on health.<sup>38</sup>

Acquiring and maintaining a state of good health requires the support and partnership of sectors not immediately associated with health care—for example, housing, transportation, and education. Broad system changes must be implemented so that health considerations are viewed as a natural component of each sector’s mandate.

Housing policies, for example, are beginning to focus on so-called “healthy-housing strategies” to ensure that homes are free of toxins that can contribute to asthma and other diseases. The health of people

living in both urban and rural low-income communities and communities of color is threatened by the presence of toxic substances emitted through waste sites, factories that produce highly concentrated air emissions, pesticide spraying, oil drilling, poorly enforced refinery practices, and generally poorly planned communities. Low-income people and people of color often live in close proximity to freeways and shipping ports where excessive diesel emissions cause higher-than-average asthma rates. Although a number of government agencies have been charged with ensuring “a fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens,” compliance, enforcement, and basic protections are lacking.

Likewise, agriculture policies impact how decisions are made about food production and access. Decisions about how transportation funds are spent can make the difference in how much money is allocated for highways or for public transit, which can influence whether and how families get to doctor’s appointments, grocery stores, or jobs. To improve the health of residents, communities require the partnership of government agencies, community-based organizations, schools and academic institutions, philanthropy, business leaders, and community leaders all coming together to consider a neighborhood’s health-related needs.

Increasingly, there is greater acceptance that “non-health” sectors affect health outcomes, and greater importance is being placed on collaboration among multiple fields. The Obama administration’s executive order on environmental justice, for example,



In this photo taken July 19, 2010, Kyle Thomas, 7, jumps into a pool of cool water at his family's home on the Onondaga Nation, N.Y.

AP PHOTO/HEATHER AINSWORTH

charges all federal agencies to identify and address adverse health and environmental effects of any programs, policies, and activities on low-income people and people of color. This was a bold step in assuring fair and equitable policies and practices in communities disproportionately affected by a concentration of pollution and toxic waste. In an effort to create similar attention to health outcomes, health impact assessments and “health in all policies” campaigns are emerging to ensure that all policy decisions consider the potential impact on health outcomes. A number of local governments are setting the example by taking bold steps to transform their system internally and externally.

In 2003, spurred by the recognition of and desire to highlight racial and ethnic health disparities in Boston, Mayor Thomas M. Menino, a longtime champion for health equity, commissioned an action plan to address health inequities across the city.<sup>39</sup> As a result, the Center for Health Equity and Social Justice, housed within the Boston Public Health Commission, was created. The Center for Health Equity and Social Justice provides training and mentorship to other public health organizations in the region, awards grants to community-based organizations, and advocates for addressing health disparities at the local and national level.<sup>40</sup> The Center for Health Equity and Social Justice has also invested close to \$1 million in organizations committed to eliminating health inequities by increasing access to healthy and affordable food, introducing youth to health-career programs, and working with communities

to develop local strategies to address differences in health outcomes.

Regional strategies are also developed through funding that supports the work of coalitions throughout New England. One of the Center for Health Equity and Social Justice’s past grantees, Groundwork Somerville, located in Somerville, Massachusetts, is an environmental nonprofit organization working to promote sustainable community development and revitalization by creating educational jobs and community-engagement opportunities. In an effort to address equitable transit and green space development, Groundwork Somerville is engaging residents, particularly residents of color, to be leaders in community-planning processes through participation in the Community Corridor Planning coalition, an effort to promote equitable transit and green space development.<sup>41</sup>

The Boston Public Health Commission requires that all employees throughout the agency receive training on institutionalized racism, and it has established standards and mechanisms for addressing structural racism within the agency as well as externally. With a focus on the effects that social factors and institutional racism have on health, the Center of Health Equity and Social Justice works toward wide-ranging solutions that include those outside the health care system, in sectors such as education and housing.<sup>42</sup>

On the other coast, the Equity and Social Justice Initiative in King County, Washington, also arose

out of efforts that began in the public health department. In 2008 the county launched the initiative to eliminate longstanding and persistent inequities in the area, and in 2010 King County passed the first-ever ordinance to embed equity throughout all aspects of its work, from community engagement and planning to budgeting, staffing, and day-to-day operations.<sup>43</sup>

The law is already starting to have a broad impact. With the addition of race and income measures to local economic outlook reports, transit services have been increased in neighborhoods where low-income people and people of color live, and felony conviction questions have been removed from all county job applications. A new tool—the Equity Impact Review Tool—is now being utilized to assess equity impacts when making budgetary decisions and has led to real shifts in spending priorities, such as maintaining a youth sports program in a low-income, unincorporated community. Alongside aspects of health equity such as race, ethnicity, and income, King County is also working to expand the integration of social discrimination and exclusion related to factors such as sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability in its initiatives.<sup>44</sup> Using the principles of “fair and just” to guide decision making, King County is pioneering a new approach to governing.

These and other cities, counties, and towns across the country—Alameda County and Richmond, California; Portland, Oregon; and Fort McPherson military base in Eastpoint, Georgia, to name a few—are

leading the way to embed health into their decision making, providing models for national policy.

## Policy recommendations

A robust federal policy agenda that prioritizes the health and well-being of all can support local environments that allow and encourage people to make healthy choices. CAP and PolicyLink offer the following six policy targets to create healthy communities.

### Fully implement the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Having been upheld nearly in its entirety by the Supreme Court, the true test of the Affordable Care Act now lies in the ability of the nation, states, and localities to fully implement its mandates. As the act’s rules and regulations continue to be released, now is the time for advocates to voice their concerns about how the policy will be implemented and for federal officials to ensure the legislation is able to meet the goals of making health care more accessible to all and creating a system that helps keep people healthy. We call on the federal government to:

- Ensure funding is available to implement the Affordable Care Act provisions that expand Medicaid eligibility to include most individuals with incomes up to 133 percent of the federal poverty line. Currently, nearly 60 percent of the 22 million nonelderly, uninsured people at this income level are people of color.<sup>45</sup>





Lyn Shimuzu, left, and her partner, Silvia Castellanos, right, play with their children, 6-year-old twins Che, left, and Liana, right, at their home in San Francisco.

AP PHOTO/ERIC RISBERG

Moreover, many are members of communities that are systematically disadvantaged by inequality in employment, exclusionary insurance industry practices, and a restrictive definition of “family” that frequently denies recognition and support to LGBT-headed families, families with mixed-immigration status, and multigenerational families.

- Ensure funding is available to implement the Indian Healthcare Improvement Act, which permanently authorized critical health

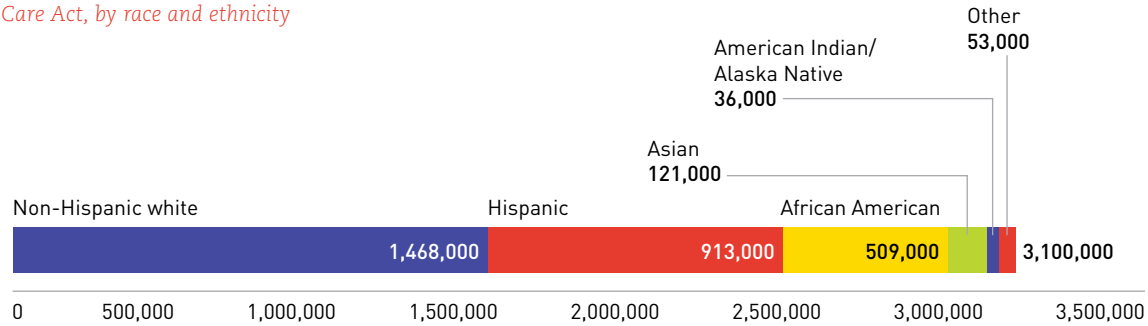
programs for American Indians and Alaska Natives. Currently, the Indian Health Service budget only provides for about half of the necessary health services authorized under this law—leaving Indian health facilities to seriously ration vital services.<sup>46</sup>

- Provide assistance to states to conduct outreach strategies to enroll all eligible participants into the new insurance exchange programs, since high enrollment is essential to keep plan costs affordable and accessible.

Figure 3

### How the Affordable Care Act has already helped young people of color

Estimated number of young adults (19-25) acquiring health insurance due to the Affordable Care Act, by race and ethnicity



Source: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/2012/YoungAdultsbyGroup/ib.pdf>

- Hold insurance companies and health care practitioners accountable for providing quality care and ensuring affordable coverage is available to the most vulnerable.

### Protect and expand funding for prevention

The Prevention and Public Health Fund in the Affordable Care Act and the National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy, led by the U.S. surgeon general, signal our nation's first steps to a system of *health care* versus sick care. Explosive rates of chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes are stressing the health care system, but this burden can be dramatically lowered with an increased focus on preventive care. Prevention is

a smart, cost-efficient investment that can reduce health care costs in the long run and contribute to the nation's economic vitality by ensuring a healthy, productive workforce. CAP and PolicyLink strongly urge the following:

- Congress should prevent further cuts to the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which provides funding to local and state governments, tribes and territories, nonprofit organizations, and communities to implement community and clinical prevention strategies. The Affordable Care Act allocated \$15 billion to this fund over 10 years.<sup>47</sup>
- The Congressional Budget Office should develop new and widely accepted methods of accounting for the cost benefits and economic

savings attributable to comprehensive prevention strategies to underscore the advantages of preventive care.

### Advance health equity through all policies

Decisions about transportation, housing, education, and other policy arenas have an impact on health, a reality that has led some states and localities to adopt “Health in All Policies” initiatives—an approach that incorporates health considerations when making policy decisions across all sectors. Their example is encouraging and a simple, but a powerful, three-part agenda can bring this approach directly into federal policymaking and administration. CAP and PolicyLink suggest the following:

- The National Prevention Council should ensure health equity is advanced through the implementation of the National Prevention Strategy as outlined in the National Prevention Council Action Plan.
- Projects and programs that receive federal funding should be required to assess the effects they will have on the health and equity outcomes of community members, especially those experiencing the greatest health inequities. Scoring criteria should give preference to projects that improve health outcomes.



Increasing access to healthy food would improve health outcomes while bringing economic benefits, including new jobs and tax revenues, to low-wealth neighborhoods.

- Increase enforcement of the environmental justice executive order, which requires all federal agencies to identify and address adverse health and environmental effects of all programs, policies, and activities on low-income people and people of color.

### Improve access to healthy food

More than 23 million people in our nation live in low-income areas where the nearest grocery store is more than a mile away. Increasing access to healthy food would improve health while bringing economic benefits, including new jobs and tax revenues, to low-wealth neighborhoods. The vehicles by which federal policies and resources can motivate local actions to close the healthy food access gap have been established, and the next several years will be critical in order to build on recent progress. To address the challenges related to accessing healthy and affordable food, CAP and PolicyLink offer the following suggestions:

- Congress should include the national Healthy Food Financing Initiative in the next iteration of the Farm Bill and authorize funding to continue implementing this initiative to address the problem of food access across the country. The Healthy Food Financing Initiative is a joint effort by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Treasury, and the Department of Health and Human Services to provide low-interest loans, small grants, and technical assistance to healthy-food retail outlets in low-income underserved communities.

- The federal government should maintain funding for key provisions of the Farm Bill that support healthy food initiatives, especially those targeted toward low-income people, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, or WIC; and measures to improve redemption of these benefits at farmers' markets and through other "nontraditional" healthy food retail outlets.

- Congress should incentivize and subsidize the production and purchasing of healthy produce by continuing and expanding initiatives such as the Farmers' Market and Local Food Promotion Program, Specialty Crop Block Grants, Hunger-Free Community Incentive Grants, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

### Incentivize and create opportunities for healthy community design

The physical fabric of a community—whether a neighborhood, for example, has well-maintained sidewalks, crosswalks, and homes; is free from blight and other safety hazards; has parks; and provides multiple modes of transportation—has an important bearing on the health of its residents. While not directly part of this physical fabric, other neighborhood characteristics that also impact health outcomes, such as perceptions of safety and violence, are influenced by the built environment. The federal government can encourage and support communities in the process of

designing environments that promote health by taking the following measures:

- The Department of Transportation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development should incentivize and prioritize housing and public transportation projects that promote healthy, equitable active living. The Department of Transportation should include indicators of health and equity impacts of transportation projects—for example, safety, air quality, risk of gentrification/displacement, and more—and plans as a part of its performance measures. The Department of Housing and Urban Development should develop standards for housing habitability that can be used when local or state standards do not exist to minimize health hazards and ensure homes are healthy environments.
- Congress, through the federal transportation authorization, should dedicate robust funding for walking and biking infrastructure and programs, prioritize funding for low-income communities, require “complete streets”—streets that accommodate all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, and transit riders of all ages and abilities—in new roadways, and incentivize complete streets for road repair projects.
- The Environmental Protection Agency should issue clear guidance and set standards for a more robust and systematic analysis of health and health equity under the National Environmental Protection Act and the Environmental

Justice Mandate, and hold agencies accountable to implementing strong analyses.

- Federal agencies should incentivize Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design as a means for improving neighborhood safety and remediating violence. The Justice Department, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other agencies that promote the prevention of crime and violence and neighborhood redevelopment should issue guidance to support local implementation of these efforts to redesign buildings and public spaces.
- The U.S. National Park Service should target resources for the acquisition and development of new parks and trails in communities with the least access to green space, and ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to support the equitable distribution of parks.

### Reposition schools as incubators of health

Schools are uniquely positioned to serve as hubs for promoting health and well-being in communities, working to prevent chronic diseases, and offer treatment for existing physical and mental illnesses. School-based strategies should be supported by federal agencies in the following ways:

- The Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education should work

with state education and health departments to help communities access funding and technical assistance for School-Based Health Centers. These centers provide a range of health promotion, screening, and prevention activities, including primary and mental health care, substance abuse counseling, and nutrition education.

- The Agriculture Department should continue to provide resources and support to schools and communities to fully implement the components of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, including the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, the Summer Food Service Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Farm to School programs.
- In the next Transportation Authorization Bill, Congress should reinstate reserved funding for the Safe Routes to School Program, which dedicates funding to ensure that students are able to safely walk and bicycle to school.
- The Department of Education should encourage local schools to provide more opportunities for physical activity—both during and outside of school hours—by adding a physical activity metric to the next iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Additionally, federal school-facilities funding should prioritize the shared use of existing school and community open spaces and recreational facilities.

- Federal agencies should do more to ensure schools are safe places that are conducive to learning. The Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design school-assessment principles and training and the recommendations from the U.S. Attorney General’s National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence offer concrete guidance for assessing and addressing youth violence. Efforts should be made to disseminate and provide assistance for implementing these and other strategies to remediate violence in schools.

## Conclusion

Achieving health equity is an essential component of a society that protects and promotes the well-being of all people. Not all strategies to improve health also advance equity, but momentum is growing for more targeted approaches to achieving health equity. Across the country, innovative solutions are being implemented to eliminate the unjust and unfair social and economic conditions that have caused and perpetuate disparities in health outcomes, particularly for low-income people and communities of color. There is a vital role for the federal government to play in promoting disease and illness prevention and community health and in creating the incentives and guidelines for positive change at the state and local level. Creating a healthier and more productive America requires us to transform divested communities into healthy places where everyone has opportunities to prosper economically, emotionally, culturally, socially, and, of course, physically. ■



Brianny Abreu, 6, has her  
vitals checked at the William  
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Center in New York, Wednes-  
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## QUICK VIEW

# Building Healthy Communities for a Healthy Nation

**P**lace—a neighborhood and community environment—is a significant determinant of health and well-being. Communities of color, low-income communities, and rural communities often lack access to healthy food; clean air and water; safety from violence; and well-maintained housing and infrastructure. Many of the fastest-growing racial and ethnic groups reside in places that are detrimental to their health, which impedes their ability to work and contribute to their families and communities.

### Facts at a glance

- **\$57 billion:** Approximate savings per year in direct medical expenses if health disparities could be eliminated<sup>1</sup>
- **More than 50 percent:** The share of the uninsured that consists of people of color, although people of color only represent about one-third of the total U.S. population<sup>2</sup>
- **23 million:** The number of low-income Americans that live a mile or more from the nearest supermarket<sup>3</sup>
- **56 percent:** The proportion of people of color among the 9 million living in neighborhoods within 2 miles of hazardous waste facilities<sup>4</sup>
  - Communities of color face greater environmental burdens due to their closer proximity to toxic substances emanating from freeways, seaports, and waste sites
- **\$283 billion:** The potential estimated savings in national health expenditures over the next 10 years by reducing obesity rates<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, without action, preventable illnesses and the growing costs associated with them will continue to escalate and cripple our economy. This challenge is a major barrier to realizing economic prosperity for our nation. The four approaches to healthy communities addressed in this chapter are: comprehensive health care, healthy food access, neighborhood design, and the inclusion of health in all policies. ■

## Call to action

Congress and the administration must join together to take a multipronged approach to addressing health disparities and fostering healthier places. Their approach must establish comprehensive health care for all Americans, promote access to healthy food, leverage neighborhood design for improved health, and include a health approach in all policies. To that end, Congress and the administration should take the following actions:

- **Ensure funding to implement provisions of the Affordable Care Act that expand Medicaid to individuals living at 133 percent of the federal poverty level.**
- **Promote prevention.** Maintain a robust level of resources for the Prevention and Public Health Fund and develop new methods of accounting to

accurately reflect the cost benefits and economic savings attributed to prevention strategies

- **Advance health equity through all policies.** Require all federal agencies to leverage new policies and programs to improve health outcomes
- **Improve access to healthy food access for disadvantaged communities.** As a first step, include the Healthy Food Financing Initiative in the next Farm Bill
- **Incentivize opportunities for healthy community design.** Instruct the Department of Transportation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development to prioritize projects that promote healthy and equitable living

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# Unlocking the Potential that Lies Within Every Child

BY GEOFFREY CANADA

**I** have spent the past 40 years working with poor children, and spent the prior 20 being one. So when I say that all children can learn, it is not just an academic theory for me. It is a belief based on decades of personal and professional experience.

In the 1960s I saw my own brother—a bright and thoughtful kid—labeled as “slow” and placed on the low-expectations track at our local public school in the Bronx. I watched as he battled against those expectations and eventually became a nuclear engineer. This past June I watched 17-year-old Morgan, outfitted in cap and gown, march with my charter school’s first graduating class of high school seniors having entered as a sixth grader labeled as a “bad boy” by five different elementary schools.

My belief that every child can learn inspires me every day and gives me an urgent sense of responsibility—to unlock the potential that I know lies within every child. It’s a belief that is all the more passionate because I have seen the harm done by adults who don’t believe all children can learn. What makes my belief controversial—and even dangerous to some—is the corollary that schools can be the key to the extent that they give primacy to children’s needs rather than the needs of adults.

Though a school can turn around a poor child’s odds of success, our country’s definition of “education” needs to broaden. Education—as a national policy—must start prior to kindergarten and extend beyond the walls of the classroom. These are areas where government has been reluctant to go, but where it must go if public education is to succeed for the

massive number of underprivileged children on the scale that is necessary. The return on these investments is simply too great to ignore.

While there are many programs and teachers who have accomplished what I call the “superhero” work of turning around teenagers lagging behind, we need to start much earlier to get at-risk children on track. Research shows that something as simple as talking more to an infant can enrich the neural architecture of the child’s brain, strengthening it for later learning. This is the kind of science that we need to share with parents to help produce big gains in our poorest, most disenfranchised communities.

Any teacher in America can tell you about a student whose life outside the classroom creates problems inside the classroom. There are “the squinters”—children with poor vision whose parents can’t afford glasses. Maybe it’s hunger pains interfering with a child’s ability to concentrate. Or sometimes it’s the fear of violence on the way home—or even at home—that’s distracting a child.

That said, it’s no secret that what’s going on inside many of our schools is horribly inadequate, particularly in low-income neighborhoods. Likewise, the solution, too, is no secret for anyone willing to really look. The solution resides in plain sight amid the many successful schools in middle-class neighborhoods. For these children, going to college is simply in the air around them. In these schools, if a child needs glasses, she gets them. If a student is struggling in math, he gets a tutor. These children have

safe, enriching afterschool activities, and for the most part don’t have to worry about whether they will get dinner after school or get shot on their way home. What we see among these schools is that there are a set of givens that allow educators, by and large, to succeed at the long, hard process of educating large numbers of children. Also implicit is that there is no time during a child’s development when we can simply drop our vigilance and assume he or she will be fine; our support system must run from birth through college.



In the debate about improving public education, some simply blame the parents. It is absolutely true that negative parenting can cripple a child's ability to learn, but I believe it is my responsibility as an educator to educate every child—even if the parent is uncooperative. I can't and won't give up on a child because she or he has a toxic parent—and neither can we as a society.

Others blame teachers—another easy target. Anyone who has stood in front of a classroom of students knows it is a herculean job. Unfortunately, the profession never gets the respect it deserves, which is just stunning when you consider the unparalleled role teachers play in building our future. Teachers should be treated and paid as the skilled professionals they are, and the great ones should be rewarded as such.

I believe, however, that the other side of that coin must be holding school staff accountable. We need to train and pay teachers more, but those who are demonstrated failures should not be routinely allowed to ruin the chances of children year after year. Certainly, failing teachers need support and training, but if they still cannot do the job, they cannot be allowed to continue on the job.

I wish I could say reforming our education system can be done without spending more money, but we cannot do this on the cheap. What I will say, and confidently so, is that smart investments in education, particularly done early in a child's life, will be more than offset by the reduction of societal costs. A high-quality prekindergarten program is a more humane and markedly less-expensive option than a high-security prison.

Children who are readied for the high-skills job market simply don't have the time or inclination to drift into antisocial behavior. Even if we don't want to look at the moral imperative, spending on education is a smart investment in our country's future. College graduates earn much more over their lifetime than high school dropouts. And, of course, those higher earnings bring in commensurate taxes for the country.

If we are going to stay competitive in the global marketplace, we cannot ignore the potential of all of our children—the future stewards of America. How can we not do everything humanly possible to make sure our children will continue to write the story of this country's incredible legacy? ■

**CHAPTER SIX**

**Education  
and Job  
Readiness for  
a Prosperous  
America**

**BY MELISSA LAZARÍN**



nsuring that tomorrow's workers—and today's—are equipped with the education and skills needed to excel as employees, entrepreneurs, and leaders is critical to building an All-In Nation. By some international measures, however, it appears that the United States is losing the global race in education competitiveness. According to the Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development, or OECD, the United States “is the only country where attainment levels among those just entering the labor market (25-34 year olds) do not exceed those about to leave the labor market (55- to 65-year olds).”<sup>7</sup> America's students are falling behind at every level—early, primary, secondary, and postsecondary education—and educational attainment gaps between students of color and their white counterparts are particularly disheartening.

## Economic benefits of reducing education and training disparities

- Reducing the high school dropout rate by half would result in \$45 billion per year in economic benefits.<sup>1</sup>
- Closing the achievement gap between black and Latino students and white students would have increased U.S. GDP in 2008 by as much as \$525 billion, or 2 percent to 4 percent, with rising benefits as demographics continue to shift.
- Closing achievement gaps experienced by low-income students would have increased U.S. GDP in 2008 by as much as \$670 billion, or 3 percent to 5 percent.
- A recent National Institutes of Health study of Chicago's preschool program projected that it will generate up to “\$11 of economic benefits over a child's lifetime for every dollar spent initially on the program.”
- Postsecondary education results in significant benefits including earnings advantages of 9 percent greater for two-year college attendees and 23 percent greater earnings for four-year college attendees than for high school graduates.<sup>5</sup>
- Low-income workers who participate in sector-focused workforce training increase their earnings by 29 percent.<sup>6</sup>



On international high school assessments, 15-year-old students in the United States rank 17th in science and 25th in math out of the OECD's 34 member countries.<sup>8</sup> Rather than being on par with students in countries that are relevant competitors for high-skill jobs, such as South Korea, Japan, Germany, Canada, and the Netherlands, American students rank similarly to students in the Czech Republic and Portugal.<sup>9</sup>

A closer examination reveals a familiar story. The average reading scores of white and Asian students in the United States are much higher than the overall U.S. average and are similar to the reading scores of students in Korea, Finland, and Canada.<sup>10</sup> Black and Latino students in the United States, however, have average reading scores that place them at the bottom of the pack—in the same ranks as students in Turkey and Chile.<sup>11</sup>

In short, the United States is losing its competitive edge globally. But it is not because the education system is failing all American students. Instead it is because our schools are failing a sizable group of students, specifically those of color. If the desired goal is to have a world-class workforce—one that is prepared for the future—then improving educational outcomes for communities of color, especially black and Latino students, is an essential step. This is especially true as our nation's schools and colleges become more diverse. Another critical step is upgrading the skills of today's workers, including workers of color.

Clearly, if the United States is to regain its global competitive edge, there are significant hurdles to



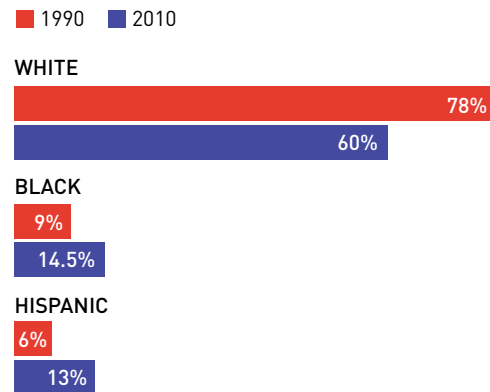
If the desired goal is to have a world-class workforce—one that is prepared for the future—then improving educational outcomes for communities of color, especially black and Latino students, is an essential step.

overcome. The lack of high standards for all students, insufficient learning time, and paucity of excellent teachers are just a few of the challenges we face as a country. There is also a lack of political courage to fund our schools fairly and retool our traditional notions of schooling to effectively educate today's students. And access to college and other postsecondary education and training opportunities remains a challenge for low-income people and people of color.

This chapter explains these important missed opportunities to improve student outcomes, describes innovative approaches that successfully reach the youth of color who are disproportionately falling behind academically, and presents policy recommendations to ensure all students are ready to be tomorrow's workers and leaders. It also addresses the education and job-training

needs that occur outside of the traditional pre-K-12 school system, including college access, career technical education, and workforce training.

**Figure 1**  
**College enrollment by race/ethnicity, 1990 and 2010<sup>14</sup>**



Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

## Changing student demographics

In 2010 white students made up 54 percent of the national pre-K-12 student population, a decrease from 67 percent in 1990.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile the Hispanic student population has more than doubled in the same period.<sup>13</sup> A similar trend is occurring at the postsecondary level.

A recent report by the Pew Hispanic Center finds that Hispanic students have reached a record 16.5 percent of all college enrollments.<sup>15</sup> Black and Hispanic students, however, continue to lag behind their white counterparts in attainment of college degrees, as white students earn 71 percent of bachelor's degrees and 65 percent of associate's degrees.<sup>16</sup>

## The significance of high expectations

Former President George W. Bush called the notion that a certain segment of our population lacks the ability to excel due to a variety of disadvantages the “soft bigotry of low expectations.”<sup>17</sup> This lowering of the bar is exacerbated by our nation’s fragmented school-governance structure, which largely entrusts the responsibility of educating our children and young adults to states and local communities. This decentralized system of governance has historically meant that place matters—namely, students in the United States, depending on where they happen to live, are working toward different expectations or standards of academic success. Comparing states using a common test to measure student academic attainment, such as the National Assessment for Educational Progress, reveals that most of the states with math and reading proficiency rates that are lower than the national average are located in the South, Southwest, and far West, and have a disproportionately larger share of low-income, nonwhite, and English-language-learner, or ELL, students.<sup>18</sup>

While federal law requires states to demonstrate that they have “adopted challenging academic content standards and challenging student achievement standards,”<sup>19</sup> states have had enormous flexibility in determining those standards. The thinking goes that students residing in states that have set high academic standards are more likely to excel academically as a consequence of having to reach those higher standards. On the other hand, students

attending schools in states that have weak standards may not reach their academic potential because the performance bar is set too low.

Take Massachusetts as an example. Experts generally agree that Massachusetts has long had some of the strongest math and English-language-arts standards.<sup>20</sup> Massachusetts students in the eighth grade on average perform significantly higher in mathematics than most students in the United States and just as well as their counterparts in Japan.<sup>21</sup>

But Massachusetts is not representative of other U.S. states. Fortunately, a majority of states have begun taking some important steps toward achieving state parity in setting academic standards. Forty-five states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Common Core State Standards—a single set of K-12 standards for English language arts and mathematics that states have jointly developed and may voluntarily adopt.<sup>22</sup> A common set of assessments that are aligned to the standards will accompany the standards in 2014-15. Similarly, 26 states have partnered to develop common K-12 science standards,<sup>23</sup> while 32 states and the District of Columbia have adopted a common set of K-12 English-language development standards and assessments to support English-language instruction for English language learners.<sup>24</sup>

High standards by themselves cannot improve student achievement, but they are a necessary ingredient, along with robust assessments and strong accountability. These three elements should work

## Needed: A cradle-to-college approach

On a spring morning in 2004, Francesca Silfa and Mark Frazier set out in search of potential college recruits. Knocking on many doors in central Harlem, they weren't combing the neighborhood to find high school seniors. Instead, they were seeking parents—specifically, parents of babies and toddlers. Silfa and Frazier, both outreach workers for the Harlem Children's Zone, were recruiting for Baby College, a nine-week parenting program. The pair was seeking to enroll parents in the college's innovative parenting program covering topics such as brain development in children, discipline, immunization, asthma, lead poisoning, parental stress, and parent-child bonding.

The Harlem Children's Zone aims to impact the lives of children by targeting not one but all of the issues that influence a child's development. The organization provides a network of services to address the many problems facing children living in tough neighborhoods, from crime to schools to health care to housing, offering constant and consistent support to children as they grow from birth all the way through college.

During the 2007-08 school year alone, the Baby College program dramatically improved the rates of storybook reading, increased the number of functioning home smoke detectors and window guards, and increased childhood immunization rates among participating families. Children enrolled in the Harlem Children's Zone's Harlem Gems preschool program showed marked improvement in their school-readiness scores, and students in the Harlem Children's Zone public charter school outperformed peers not just across that school district but also across New York City and even New York state. What's more, nearly all of the 281 high school students participating in the Harlem Children's Zone employment center continued on in school the following school year, resulting in a remarkable 99 percent student-retention rate.

The Harlem Children's Zone inspired the federal Promise Neighborhoods Initiative, which was launched in 2010. As of early 2013 a total of 49 communities are developing coordinated Promise Neighborhoods plans to provide children with the education, health, and social supports that will successfully guide them from cradle to college to career. If the success of the Harlem Children's Zone is an indicator of progress, these communities will be at the forefront of eliminating gaps in educational attainment across race and income.

hand-in-hand—standards provide the framework, assessments measure student progress toward the standards, and accountability mechanisms help foster a culture of responsibility for supporting the success of all students.

## Time matters

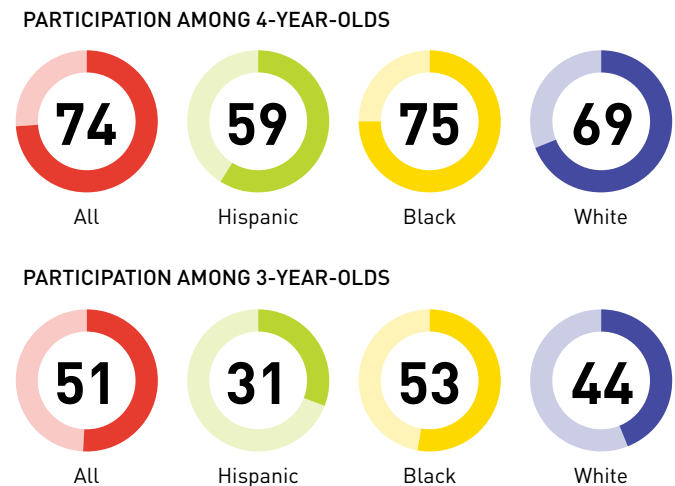
Many low-income students, English language learners, and students of color are already behind from the first moment they step through the schoolhouse door. At age 3 children from high-poverty families have a vocabulary of approximately 500 words compared to the 1,100-word vocabulary of children from wealthier families.<sup>25</sup> And many achievement gaps get progressively larger as children advance from grade to grade. By the first grade there is a full one-year reading gap between English language learners and native-English speakers, which grows to a two-year gap by the fifth grade.<sup>26</sup>

Increasing learning time on the front end—during the preschool years—appears to carry some of the greatest benefits. Studies of high-quality preschool programs, such as Chicago’s Child-Parent Centers, suggest that such programs can have important long-lasting effects on a child’s academic achievement outcomes and later life experiences. What’s more, these effects appear greatest for traditionally underperforming groups of students, such as Latino, black, low-income, and English-language-learner children—all of these students are more likely to perform better later on in primary school if they attend

early education programs.<sup>27</sup> The early gains that children make in preschool appear to really pay off when early education is paired with high-quality education opportunities in grades K-3.<sup>28</sup> This educational pairing ensures that the early gains that children make in preschool are supported and enhanced as they transition to kindergarten and to the early primary grades.

Unfortunately, participation in preschool programs is far from the norm in the United States. Nearly 50 percent of 3-year-old children and a quarter of 4-year-old children do not attend a public or private prekindergarten program.<sup>29</sup> Participation rates are

**Figure 2**  
**Preschool enrollment by race/ethnicity, 2011**



Sources: Enrollment of children ages 3 and 4 for the “all” group is from W. Steven Barnett and others, “The State of Preschool 2011” (New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2012), p. 6. Enrollment data for ethnic groups is from W. Steven Barnett and Donald J. Yarosz, “Who Goes to Preschool and Why Does it Matter?” (New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2007).

lowest among some of the very groups who could benefit the most, including Latino children and low-income children who are less likely to participate.<sup>30</sup> Ideally, enrollment in preschool would be as universally available as kindergarten.

Research suggests that high-quality preschool is one of the smartest investments our country can make for its future. Studies show that improved student academic outcomes and other lifelong benefits can save the public between \$4 and \$10 for every \$1 spent on high-quality early childhood education.<sup>31</sup>

Increasing learning time at school can also help prepare students of color for higher education and careers. While attending preschool is not the norm for many students, the traditional school day and year is nearly identical for today's students as it was for students 100 years ago. Students in the United States currently attend school an average of 6.6 hours a day, 180 days a year,<sup>32</sup> which traces back to the nation's agrarian past; a conventional school calendar of nine months, followed by a three-month summer vacation, allowed many children to help their families harvest crops. But faced with persistent academic achievement gaps and growing expectations for students, approximately 1,000 public schools have instituted a longer school day or year.<sup>33</sup> A third of these schools are schools where at least 99 percent of the student body is of color.<sup>34</sup>

Until a few years ago, students at Clarence Edwards Middle School, a public school in Boston's Charlestown neighborhood in which a majority of the pupils are students of color, ended their school day at 1:30

p.m. each afternoon. The seemingly early dismissal was typical of middle schools in the district. Edwards' low student performance and enrollment numbers were so low, however, that the school was on the verge of being shut down. School and district staff worked together to redesign and lengthen the school day to focus more instructional time on math and reading and fold typical afterschool activities, such as athletics and the arts, into the formal school day. The school day for Edwards' students now starts at 7:20 a.m. and the last period bell doesn't sound until 4:15 p.m., Monday through Thursday, with a shorter day on Friday. Since these changes were instituted in 2006, enrollment has skyrocketed and the school is one of the district's strongest-performing schools.<sup>35</sup>

Some communities are taking this approach of a lengthened school day or expanded school calendar districtwide. The Balz Elementary School District in Phoenix, Arizona—a five-elementary-school district where approximately 71 percent of the students are Latino and 15 percent are African American<sup>36</sup>—increased its school year from 180 days to 200 days in 2009. As a result, in 2012, third-grade and fourth-grade reading scores increased by 19 percent, and fifth-grade and sixth-grade reading scores went up by an astounding 43 percent.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, Colorado, Connecticut, New York, and Tennessee are following Massachusetts's lead and taking a systematic approach to redesigning and expanding learning time in targeted districts in their states.<sup>38</sup>

Additional learning time gives all students, including those at risk of falling behind, more time on task. Using



Teacher Crystal Kirch, center, talks to her students in her pre-calculus class at Segerstrom High School in Santa Ana, Calif., Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2013.

AP PHOTO/JAE C. HONG

data to identify achievement gaps and student needs, educators can target the added time for classroom instruction in a targeted, focused manner. Schools that expand learning time can close enrichment gaps by formally incorporating traditional out-of-school activities—such as the arts and service opportunities—into the official school calendar so that all students, including those living in the highest poverty, have access. Expanding the school calendar gives teachers more time to plan lessons that reinforce the learning concepts being taught in other classes and provides additional time for professional development.

## Good teachers make a difference

Research indicates that the quality and effectiveness of the teacher workforce is the single-most-important in-school factor affecting student achievement.<sup>39</sup> Yet low-income students and those of color are much less likely to be taught by some of our nation's best teachers compared to their high-income and white peers.<sup>40</sup> Take the Los Angeles Unified School District as an example: Latino and black students are half as likely as white or Asian students to be assigned to the district's strongest English-language-arts teachers.<sup>41</sup> As a consequence, low-income students and those of color, who are more likely to face hurdles to student achievement, are further hobbled by being taught by less-than-effective teachers.

Increasing the number of effective teachers is the only surefire way to ensure that all students,

including poor students and students of color, have access to a great teacher. But this is no easy task. This requires bold, comprehensive reforms that address the shortcomings in the way we prepare, recruit, support, and pay teachers.

One persistent challenge is antiquated methods of teacher preparation and recruitment. Schools of education have been churning out new teachers for decades with little knowledge of how well they are preparing them for the classroom, and most states have done little to encourage closer scrutiny of program quality.<sup>42</sup> Nearly half of all states do not measure the impact of new graduates on student learning when evaluating the quality of teacher-preparation programs in their state.<sup>43</sup>

States and the federal government need to do a better job to ensure that prospective teachers receive the training they need to be effective in the classroom and improve the quality of teacher-education programs based on teacher performance in the classroom. Better evaluation systems are needed to inform teacher compensation and rewards for performance and decisions to remove chronically ineffective teachers, as well as the on-the-job support individual teachers receive to improve their instruction. Research suggests that teacher effectiveness can be reliably measured by a balanced approach that takes into account classroom observations, student surveys, and student achievement gains.<sup>44</sup>

We should also tap new teaching talent by supporting high-quality alternative pathways to teaching.



Graduates of alternative certification programs, on average, perform at the same level as traditionally prepared teachers who work in similar schools.<sup>45</sup> Some of these programs are also helping to diversify the teacher workforce. Teach Tomorrow in Oakland, for example, is increasing the supply of effective and culturally diverse teachers who are committed to the Oakland community by recruiting candidates who have lived in the city for at least five years.<sup>46</sup> Participants receive support to earn a teaching credential and find a position in Oakland's school district in exchange for a five-year employment commitment. The program's participants are diverse—44 percent are African American, 15 percent are Latino, and approximately 23 percent are of mixed race.<sup>47</sup>

We must explore new ways to compensate teachers to help retain our strongest and ensure that they're teaching in the classrooms and schools that need them the most. Most school systems use a single-salary schedule to compensate teachers—a system that fails to recognize or reward differences, or the market demand for teachers with key knowledge and skills. More often than not, teacher salaries are based on two measures: years on the job and advanced degree attainment. The effectiveness of these classroom instructors in teaching students, however, is less-frequently considered. Our strongest teachers should be rewarded with higher compensation. Teachers who assume greater responsibilities in the school, such as master educators who support other teachers, and highly effective teachers who work in hard-to-staff schools or classrooms, should also be compensated accordingly.

Some school districts have taken steps toward sensibly differentiating teachers' pay. The Mission Possible program in the Guilford County School System in Greensboro, North Carolina, is one such district. The Guilford County district has been experimenting with a comprehensive compensation-reform effort that operates in 30 high-need schools.<sup>48</sup> In addition to professional development and support, teachers are offered recruitment or retention bonuses to work in hard-to-staff schools and become eligible for performance bonuses that are based on student achievement.

## Money matters

The gap between the haves and have-nots is perhaps no clearer than in the manner in which schools in the United States are funded. States and districts across the country spend \$334 less per year on every nonwhite student than on each white student.<sup>49</sup> The funding gaps can add up quickly for schools serving predominately students of color. Consider public schools in California: Schools in the Golden State serving 90 percent or more nonwhite students receive \$191 less per pupil than all other schools, and \$4,380 less than schools serving 90 percent or more white students.<sup>50</sup>

The federal investment in the Title I program, which provides \$14.5 billion per year, is intended to narrow the funding (and the achievement) gap between poor schools serving mainly students of color and more affluent schools. Its impact, however, is hindered by the nonsensical way federal lawmakers

have meddled with the formula since it was first developed in 1965. Instead of moving funds to districts with large concentrations of children in poverty, the Title I formula pushes funding to school districts with low concentrations of children in poverty, to school districts in wealthy states, and to very large school districts.

Take the Michigan school districts of Flint and Detroit as an example.<sup>51</sup> In fiscal year 2009 Flint and Detroit served roughly the same concentration of children in poverty—38 percent and 39 percent, respectively. But each low-income student in Flint’s school district generated \$1,984 in Title I funds while those in Detroit drew \$2,266. Detroit’s student-funding advantage comes purely from its size, where the district serves 80,000 students compared to Flint’s 9,600 students. A more equitable funding formula would focus on concentrations of children in low-income families.

There is also a great deal of inequity between schools within the same district boundaries. The ability of Title I dollars to equalize school funding is further undermined by a common practice that allows districts to use average teacher-salary figures and teacher-to-student ratios in their school-budget allocations, instead of basing budgeting on actual school-level expenditures. Because teachers’ salaries are primarily pegged to years of experience and the fact that veteran teachers tend to cluster in low-need schools while low-earning novice teachers are clustered in high-need schools, district funding decisions that overlook the actual amount spent

on salaries result in fewer state and local dollars for high-need schools.

The longstanding disparities in school funding are not solely responsible for the academic achievement gap between white and nonwhite students. To be sure, there are high-achieving, high-poverty schools of color.<sup>52</sup> But these schools are the exception and far from the rule.

## Challenge our traditional concept of schooling

Like the school calendar, the basic methods of schooling has changed surprisingly little in more than a century. The expectations we place on our schools, meanwhile, have increased in number and difficulty. In today’s workforce a high school diploma is the floor academically, not the ceiling. Yet half of Latino and African American students drop out of school before graduating high school, leaving these students at a particular disadvantage in the future economy. There is a high school dropout crisis in tribal communities as well. The Native American high school graduation rate was just more than 50 percent in the 2004-05 school year, compared to 77.6 percent for white students that year.<sup>53</sup>

Dropout prevention is critical, but what exactly does that mean and how is it accomplished? For many students, having highly effective teachers, high expectations, and adequate resources and support



In this Thursday, Feb. 10, 2011 picture, middle school students play in a class at the Poplar Middle School on the Fort Peck reservation in Poplar, Mont.

AP PHOTO/MICHAEL ALBANS

makes all the difference in the world. But schooling can and must change, too.

A study tracking approximately 4,000 freshmen in San Bernardino City Unified School District through their expected graduation from high school reveals an interesting trend. One-third of the district's dropouts eventually re-enrolled in high school, indicating that dropping out of school was not a permanent event for a substantial proportion of students.<sup>54</sup> Yet half of the re-enrollees in San Bernardino's school district returned to school for only one year or less, with many students citing school factors such as academic struggles and falling behind in the required number of course credits, as well as out-of-school factors such as homelessness, pregnancy, work, and gang pressures.<sup>55</sup>

Clearly, we must reinvent some of our schools, especially our high schools, to better meet the need of today's students. Seat-time policies that define course content mastery based on the amount of time a student has spent learning rather than on actual competency are ultimately a disservice to students and our workforce. And schools, especially those located in impoverished communities, must be prepared to meet students' needs, both inside and outside the classroom.

## Policy recommendations

America's public schools are best positioned to equalize the playing field and address opportunity and achievement gaps. For our schools to

accomplish their mission, however, we must arm them with a dependable pipeline of effective teachers, sufficient funding and time, and college-ready standards to successfully achieve these weighty goals. In order to adequately reform our education system so it serves the needs of individual students and meets the needs of the larger society, CAP and PolicyLink recommend the following priorities.

### Support a common set of standards, assessments, and shared accountability to support college and career readiness

Equity in academic achievement begins with setting high expectations for all students. Rigorous academic standards, paired with valid and reliable assessments and system of accountability, can help ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for college and career.

- States should ensure that their academic standards are sufficiently challenging and internationally benchmarked to ensure that all students graduate from high school college and career ready.
- States should ensure that their standards for English language development for English-language learner, or ELL, students correspond to their academic standards for their other students and support ELL students in reaching those standards.
- States should strive to make sure their academic standards are consistent or comparable with

college-ready standards in other states to support public transparency and equity nationwide and to reflect our increasingly mobile society.

- Districts and schools should ensure that students who are at risk of not reaching a state's higher standards receive the support necessary to meet these new standards.
- The federal government should continue to support state longitudinal data systems that provide meaningful information on the performance of the educational system at the state, district, and school levels.

### Increase access to high-quality preschool opportunities for all children

The fact that low-income children are participating in preschool at roughly the same rates as some middle-income children is largely due to the successful efforts of government-funded early education programs such as Head Start that target low-income children. The federal government should build on and grow these efforts by improving the quality of existing preschool programs and expanding access to families of all means.

- The federal government, in partnership with states, should offer every 3-year-old and 4-year-old child voluntary access to full-day preschool.
- The federal government should ensure preschool expansion is paired with robust reforms

to grades K-3 to ensure that the early gains that children make in preschool are supported and enhanced as they transition to kindergarten and the early primary grades.

### Increase learning time in high-poverty schools

Along with effective teaching and school leadership, time spent in school has also been identified as a key factor leading to academic success in high-performing schools.<sup>56</sup> And the federal government has encouraged states and districts to incorporate increased learning time as part of a comprehensive school-improvement strategy.<sup>57</sup>

- The federal government should encourage and support investments to expand the evidence base on the significant impact that increased learning time has on student performance.
- States and districts, with federal and state investments, should increase learning time among targeted high-poverty schools as part of a coordinated and comprehensive school-improvement strategy. Under such a strategy, schools would ideally increase the school day or year by 30 percent, or approximately 300 additional school hours a year, for all students.

### Improve the effectiveness of teachers

Students who attend high-poverty schools are short-changed when it comes to teacher quality. States and

# Building a 21st-Century Workforce and Education System

BY RUBÉN LIZARDO, POLICYLINK

Reforming America's public schools is essential to ensure today's youth can succeed in the workforce—but it is not enough. As presented in “America's Future Workforce,” education and training that goes beyond a high school degree is more important than ever for securing a good job that leads to a career. Yet communities of color still lag behind when it comes to obtaining the kind of postsecondary education and training that leads to well-paid jobs.

To catch them up, policymakers need to help everyone—especially those who are disconnected from the economy or at the bottom rungs of the economic ladder—obtain the skills, experience, and credentials they need to move up in the world of work. A 21st-century workforce and education system would reach people wherever they are and provide a comprehensive set of supports to enable them to realize their full economic potential.

Such a system would create workforce training onramps for workers who are at different starting points, whether they are disconnected youth, adults with low literacy and education levels, low-wage workers, transitional and dislocated workers, or others. It would ensure that high-quality postsecondary education and training opportunities—including two- and four-year college degrees and certificates, job-training programs, and union apprenticeships—are affordable and accessible for all, including low-income students and low-wage workers. It would provide today's high school students with opportunities to obtain skills and experiences that lead directly to good jobs or job-training programs. And it would foster a “high-road” economy, one in which employers pay family-supporting wages and offer benefits and opportunities for advancement.

But several roadblocks stand in the way of creating an effective and integrated workforce and education system that meets the needs of communities of color. One is the skyrocketing cost of higher education, which disproportionately affects students of color because they are more likely to come from low-income families. Diminished funding for workforce training is another.<sup>59</sup> Relatedly, workers with lower levels of education have far less access to employer-sponsored job-training programs compared to college-educated workers.<sup>60</sup> Limited funding for workforce-training programs has led to the challenge of scale within this policy arena: There are many excellent job-training programs that have measurably improved earnings for low-wage and vulnerable workers, but they are too small to reach enough workers to significantly change worker outcomes in the aggregate. The lack of alignment of workforce development with the needs of employers in high-growth sectors and the economic development strategies being undertaken to grow jobs in regions is an additional challenge.

To address these challenges and equip America's workers with the skills and education needed by current and future employers, the federal government should pursue the following policy goals:

**Secure and expand the Pell Grant program.** Pell Grants are the federal government’s most significant contribution to increasing access to higher education for poor students and students of color. This essential program is at risk due to underfunding. Congress must take action to secure the funding needed to sustain the program and increase its maximum award to account for the increasing cost of a college education.<sup>61</sup>

**Expand job-training programs for underrepresented workers.** Federal workforce development and job-training programs for low-income adults and youth decrease unemployment and boost earnings, yet funding for these programs has declined over the past three decades.<sup>62</sup> Sectoral workforce-training partnerships (including employers, unions, and education and training providers), apprenticeships in high-growth industries, and programs that blend basic skills instruction and occupational training should be expanded and integrated into the Workforce Investment Act. Congress should also pass a version of the SECTORS Act of 2011, which would provide grants for sectoral partnerships, that targets underserved workers.<sup>63</sup> Access to federal investments in these sector and regional revitalization strategies should be conditioned on the commitment of grant applicants to connect low-income adults and disconnected youth to these opportunities.

**Strengthen the community college system.** The nation’s 1,100-plus community colleges are a critical gateway to higher education and careers for low-income students, students of color, and first-generation college-goers, but they can only succeed if they have the resources to provide students with the supports they need to complete a degree and deliver curriculum that links them to good-paying jobs. Federal policy should support proven strategies, including career pathway approaches and community college-employer partnerships, such as those that would be supported by the Community College to Career Fund proposed in the president’s 2013 budget to train 2 million workers for well-paid jobs in high-demand sectors.<sup>64</sup>

**Support the “linked learning” model of preparing youth for careers and expand career technical education.**

Workforce-development strategies need to begin early, to help high school students as well as dropouts get the exposure and training they need to connect to good-paying jobs and careers. The upcoming reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Carl D. Perkins Act, Higher Education Act, and Workforce Investment Act should foster greater connections (linked learning) between the skills needed by industry and high school curriculum and career technical education.

**Ensure fair hiring of formerly incarcerated people.** For the estimated one in four adults who have a criminal record (who are disproportionately people of color), finding a job can be an insurmountable challenge.<sup>65</sup> The federal government should pass “Ban the Box” legislation to prohibit employers from asking about criminal convictions until the final steps of a job application process, and create incentives and supports for employers who hire former prisoners.



In this photo taken Wednesday, Feb. 6, 2013, Malachi Stewart, right, high-fives educational assistant Addison Hawk as Ahmed Omar continues with his work in their kindergarten classroom at Campbell Hill Elementary in Renton, Wash.

AP PHOTO/ELAINE THOMPSON

districts need to use a variety of tools and strategies to recruit and retain effective teachers in all schools, including high-poverty schools.

- The federal government and states should ensure that evaluation systems, which inform compensation, professional development, and retention, measure the impact teachers make on student learning. Teacher performance should be measured in multiple, objective, and valid ways that at a minimum include measures of student achievement, classroom observations, and student feedback.
- States and districts should reform teacher-compensation systems to pay teachers based on their levels of effectiveness, their roles and responsibilities, and service in high-demand subjects and hard-to-staff schools.
- The federal government and states in tandem should develop feedback mechanisms between teacher-preparation programs and pre-K-12 schools on student-learning outcomes. The federal government and states should also strengthen accountability for both traditional and alternative teacher-preparation programs



by establishing a common set of standards for teacher-education programs and enforcing an accountability system that factors in student learning, teaching-persistence rates, and feedback surveys from program graduates and employers.

- The federal government should fund the development and expansion of high-quality alternative certification programs. Congress should authorize competitive state grants for increasing high-quality alternate teacher-certification programs that are conditioned on the implementation of policies that ensure quality measured through student learning, teacher placement and persistence rates, and feedback surveys from program graduates and employers.

### Improve school-funding fairness and equity

Schools are grossly inequitably funded largely due to an outdated school governance structure that leaves schools at the mercy of local and state taxpayers. We must revisit school-funding mechanisms at every level of government—from the federal government down to the district level.

- Congress should simplify the Title I funding formula, from four formulas into one that is more transparent, more equitable, and less complex. The goal of this reform is to restore Title I to its original purpose: providing additional resources to districts serving concentrations of children from low-income families. A more equitable funding formula would focus on concentrations of children

in low-income families, look at the extent to which a state uses its own resources to finance public schools, and use a standardized method for calculating regional differences in education costs.

- Congress should require districts to demonstrate at least equal per-pupil distribution of state and local education funds between Title I and non-Title I schools, and require public reporting of the actual amount spent on teachers, other employees, and activities at each school, before federal Title I dollars are distributed. It should close the so-called comparability loophole that allows districts to mask funding inequalities by reporting districtwide averages for teachers' salaries instead of the actual amount spent on salaries.
- States should implement student-based budgeting systems, also known as weighted-student funding systems, that allocate dollars based on the extra educational needs of certain groups of students such as students from low-income families, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

### Develop and implement innovative, flexible forms of schooling to meet students' needs

While all students should be held to the same high academic standards, the delivery of schooling must become more personalized and flexible to meet students' diverse needs, both inside and outside of school.

- The federal government and states should support the continued development of community schools and other strategies that address place-based barriers to learning. Community schools are equipped to tackle some of the greatest challenges related to poverty, including inadequate health and social services, and foster family and community engagement.
  
- The federal government and states should follow the lead of the U.S. Department of Education’s Promise Neighborhoods program and augment place-based strategies by building a complete continuum of cradle-through-college-to-career solutions of both education programs and family and community supports with great schools at the center. Such efforts must be:
  - Interdisciplinary—to address the interconnected problems in distressed neighborhoods
  - Coordinated—to align the requirements of federal programs so that local communities can more readily braid together different funding streams
  - Place based—to leverage investments by geographically targeting resources and drawing on the compounding effect of well-coordinated action
  - Data and results driven—to facilitate program monitoring and evaluation, to guide action needed to make adjustments in policy or programming, and to learn what works and develop best practices
  - Flexible—to adapt to changing conditions on the ground<sup>58</sup>

- The federal government and states should support fast-track programs, such as early-college high schools (which allow students to earn college credits as they obtain a high school diploma), to help students stay on the track to high school graduation as they are exposed to the rigors of college coursework and earn free college credit.

## Conclusion

To build the human capital needed to regain our competitive edge in the global economy, we need to make smart investments in education and in workforce development. And in order to make sure that the youth populations who are growing the fastest—our communities of color—are not left behind, we must make sure that our reforms are targeted in ways that allow us to measure their impact on our most underserved populations.

Providing the education necessary to secure a prosperous future for all our children should not be up for debate—it’s the right thing to do. But there is also new economic urgency to the matter—unless we start to close these attainment gaps and expand opportunities to all of our children, no matter what they look like or where they live, we will endanger our entire nation’s economic future. Likewise, we must connect today’s workers—and tomorrow’s—with the education and training they need to succeed in an ever-changing economy. As the Baby Boomer generation retires in droves, every worker’s ingenuity and creativity will be needed to power our economy forward. ■

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## QUICK VIEW

# Education and Job Readiness for a Prosperous America



Human capital is the key to succeeding in the global economy, but America is currently falling behind when it comes to educating our children and training our workers. This is due in large part to our failure to adequately educate black and Latino students. In the coming decade people of color will leave schools and enter a workforce in which two-thirds of jobs will require some form of postsecondary education. Yet students of color often attend schools that lack high standards, sufficient learning time, and high-quality teachers. As a result, black and Latino students

lag behind whites in education attainment. Additionally, at a time when employers require ever-higher levels of skills, communities of color are not sufficiently obtaining the kind of postsecondary education and training that leads to well-paid jobs.

Equipping tomorrow's diverse workers—and today's—with the education and training needed to excel as employees, entrepreneurs, and leaders in the 21st-century economy is critical to building an All-In Nation. ■

### Facts at a glance

- **\$45 billion:** The amount of economic benefit per year to the United States of decreasing the number of high school dropouts by half<sup>1</sup>
- **\$310 billion to \$525 billion:** The estimated amount of increase to U.S. GDP in 2008 if there had been no gap between black and Latino student performance compared to white student performance<sup>2</sup>
- **69 percent:** The share of Hispanic 3-year-old children who do not attend pre-K, compared to 49 percent of 3-year-olds and 26 percent of 4-year-olds nationwide<sup>3</sup>
- **\$334:** The additional amount that states across the country spend on white students annually compared to nonwhite students<sup>4</sup>
- **\$4,380:** The additional amount that California schools serving 90 percent or more white students receive per pupil annually, compared to schools with 90 percent or more nonwhite students<sup>5</sup>
- **29 percent:** Increased annual earnings to low-income workers who participate in sector-focused workforce-training programs<sup>6</sup>

## Call to action

Congress, the administration, and states should act immediately to improve education and training opportunities to keep up with the demands and needs of today's employers and meet those of tomorrow's. Education and workforce-development policies must level the playing field and ensure all children and workers can access education and training that leads to good jobs and careers. We recommend the following actions:

- **Support a common set of standards and assessments to ensure college and career readiness.** The federal government should provide support for state longitudinal data systems to track and measure how well all schools prepare students for college and careers
- **Increase access to high-quality preschool.** The federal government, in partnership with states, should offer full-day early education to every 3- and 4-year-old
- **Increase learning time in high-poverty schools.** With federal and state investments, states and districts should be incentivized to increase learning time among targeted high-poverty schools
- **Improve the effectiveness of teachers.** States and districts should improve teacher evaluation systems and reform teacher compensation and rewards to recruit and retain effective teachers in all schools, including high-poverty schools
- **Improve school-funding fairness and equity.** Congress should simplify the Title I funding formula to be more transparent and equitable
- **Implement innovative, flexible school structures.** The federal and state governments should support the further development of community schools and neighborhood-based, "cradle-to-career" education models such as the Promise Neighborhoods Program
- **Secure and expand the Pell Grant program.** Congress should secure the funding needed to sustain this critical program to ensure college access for poor students and students of color
- **Expand job-training programs for under-represented workers.** Congress should support sectoral workforce-training partnerships and pass a version of the SECTORS Act of 2011
- **Strengthen the community college system.** Federal policy should support proven strategies, including career pathway approaches and community college-employer partnerships
- **Support the "linked learning" model of preparing youth for careers and expand career technical education.** The upcoming reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Carl D. Perkins Act, Higher Education Act, and Workforce Investment Act should foster greater

connections (linked learning) between the skills needed by industry and high school curricula and career technical education

- **Ensure fair hiring of formerly incarcerated people.** The federal government should pass “Ban the Box” legislation to prohibit employers from asking about criminal convictions until

the final steps of a job application process, and create incentives and supports for employers who hire former prisoners via down-payment assistance and other programs. Lastly, Congress should capitalize the National Housing Trust Fund to develop, preserve, and operate affordable rental housing and continue funding for the Second Chance Act

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# Inequity Threatens Our Future Growth

BY LAWRENCE SUMMERS

**D**espite our polarized politics, Americans from across the political spectrum share a common creed—that every person should have the opportunity to succeed in life, and that success should depend on one’s talent and hard work, not on being born rich or poor.

But today our commitment to this basic creed is in jeopardy.

For years America has thought of itself as the land of opportunity. But as inequality has widened and the middle class has withered, parents’ earnings and educational attainment increasingly dictate their children’s life prospects, placing children from less privileged backgrounds at an enormous disadvantage. Contrary to our national self-conception, we now have less economic mobility than nearly any country in Europe.

If we are to seriously grapple with this growing opportunity gap, we cannot ignore the role of race. For even as overt and explicit discrimination has

become less common, pernicious racial disparities have persisted. As a result, it continues to be especially hard for people of color to achieve economic security, let alone prosperity.

As explained throughout this book, racial disparities in poverty, employment, and wealth are widening. Take poverty. More than a quarter of blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians and Alaska Natives were living in poverty in 2011, compared to less than 1 in 10 whites. And poverty rates for African American and Hispanic children are 39 percent and 34 percent respectively, compared to 12.5 percent for white children.

Youth unemployment is especially worrisome, because it has the potential to profoundly reduce future earnings and career opportunities. Among Americans ages 16 to 24, the unemployment rate is 16.2 percent, more than double the national average. Yet the rates for some communities of color are even higher—for instance, a shocking 43 percent of black teens and 26 percent of black youths in their early 20s are unable to find work.

America also has a huge racial wealth gap, which grew even larger during the recession. While white household wealth dropped by 16 percent from 2005 to 2009, Asian household wealth dropped by 31 percent, and black and Hispanic households experienced drops of 53 percent and 66 percent, respectively, during the same span.

The gravity of these problems should be evident to anyone who is committed to the basic principles of fairness and opportunity for all. But as an economist, I also worry that these inequities pose a serious threat to our future economic growth. When people of color represented a small minority of the population, their exclusion from the economic mainstream was a profound moral problem, but it had a limited impact on aggregate economic performance. Now as people of color become a majority of the population, the failure to end their economic exclusion means the failure of the American economy.

In an advanced knowledge economy such as ours, economic growth is driven in large part by the human capital of its workers. That means it's critical to cultivate individuals' talents and to match them to jobs that will enable them to make the best use of their skills and abilities. For example, a 2009 McKinsey paper estimated that U.S. GDP would be 2 percent to 4 percent higher if we had closed the achievement gap between black and Latino students and white students during the 1980s and 1990s. The paper observes that these economic consequences will grow even larger as blacks and Latinos come to constitute a greater

share of the population. Another study by economists from the Chicago Booth School of Business and Stanford University found that 16 percent to 20 percent of U.S. economic growth from 1960 to 2008 can be explained by the entry of women and people of color into professional occupations from which they had previously been excluded. The lesson is clear: When a person's talents and abilities are squandered simply because he or she grows up in poverty or can't find a foothold in the labor market, we are all made worse off.



The opportunity gap also threatens to reduce growth by hindering entrepreneurship. We know that new Americans, particularly Latinos and Asians, start new small businesses at extraordinary rates. Yet poor access to financial capital and the loss of wealth in communities of color have made it difficult for many of these businesses to become large-scale endeavors and job creators. And without a wealth cushion, many prudent would-be entrepreneurs may conclude that starting a new venture is simply too risky.

So how can we begin to turn the tide and expand opportunity to more Americans? Our top priority should be to ensure that every young person has access to high-quality education from pre-K all the way up to college and graduate school. To achieve this goal, we must move beyond the sterile debate that pits more resources against more accountability. The fact is that we need to invest more resources while also pursuing reforms that ensure better outcomes.

First, enabling every child to attend high-quality preschool is a no-brainer. Study after study has shown that early education yields huge returns on investment and dramatically improves children's life outcomes, especially for the lowest-income kids. To expand and strengthen state programs, we both need to invest more and also promote stronger quality standards.

Second, given the innumerable ways in which affluent parents can confer advantages on their

children, it is unconscionable that our public education system further exacerbates the opportunity gap by placing our poorest children in our poorest schools. To close the achievement gap, states should consider lengthening the school day and the school year in high-poverty schools, adopt new strategies to attract high-quality teachers, and end the upside-down practice of providing poorer children with fewer educational resources rather than more.

We also need to expand access to higher education. This will require a suite of strategies—greater financial aid, a stronger commitment to recruit and admit applicants from less affluent families, and efforts to ensure that once these students are enrolled, they get the support they need to graduate. In addition, we must build stronger pathways to help students transition into the workforce. And we must reform our student-loan policies to ensure that they don't graduate with an unmanageable debt burden.

Beyond education, greater financial inclusion should also be a priority. One reason that households of color were hit especially hard by the housing crisis is that they had less access to affordable home loans than white families who were comparably credit-worthy. As a result, communities of color were more reliant on costly subprime loans, leading to higher default and foreclosure rates. We need to ensure that all Americans have access to safe and affordable financial products that help them manage their day-to-day lives as well as achieve future goals such as homeownership, sending a child to college, and a secure retirement. This requires not just the right

financial products, but also clear disclosure rules and opportunities to obtain financial counseling.

Of course, there are scores of additional policies that also merit consideration. Immigration reform, for example, would expand opportunities for millions of Latinos. Tax policies could be better targeted to reduce intergenerational wealth transfers and help low-income families get ahead. And we

need to ensure policy is encouraging, not discouraging, family structures that support children over the long term.

Ensuring that every American gets a fair shot in life will not be easy. But I draw hope from the belief that Americans continue to be committed to our core creed of opportunity for all. ■



**CHAPTER SEVEN**

**Jobs, Income,  
and Assets:  
Economic  
Security for All**

**BY CHRISTIAN WELLER, JULIE AJINKYA, AND SARAH TREUHAF**

## Economic benefits of erasing racial gaps in jobs, income, and assets

- Racial inclusion and income inequality are key factors driving regional economic growth, and are positively associated with growth in employment, output, productivity, and per capita income, according to an analysis of 118 metropolitan regions.<sup>1</sup>
- Eliminating racial gaps in income in 2011 would have boosted earnings by \$687 billion, much of which would recirculate in the economy and create more jobs, and would have increased U.S. GDP by \$1.2 trillion.<sup>2</sup>
- Regions that became more equitable in the 1990s—with reductions in racial segregation, income disparities, or concentrated poverty—experienced greater economic growth as measured by increased per capita income.<sup>3</sup>
- Making a national economy's income distribution 10 percent more equitable prolongs its typical growth spell by 50 percent.<sup>4</sup>
- Raising the national minimum wage from \$7.25 per hour to \$10.10 per hour would put \$51.5 billion annually in the pockets of affected workers, who are disproportionately people of color, and would create approximately 140,000 new jobs every year.<sup>5</sup>
- Preventing foreclosure and ensuring fair access to credit and stable homeownership would have prevented significant wealth losses for communities of color. In 2012 majority-people-of-color ZIP codes lost an average of \$2,200 per household, and ZIP codes with above-average shares of people of color lost \$2,000, compared to \$1,300 in majority-white ZIP codes.<sup>6</sup>
- From 2006 to 2008 a \$260.1 million investment in affordable housing leveraged roughly \$470 million in additional public and private funds and resulted in nearly \$1.4 billion in direct, indirect, and induced economic activity. This level of activity generated roughly \$62.5 million in state and local tax revenue.<sup>7</sup>





or too many families, economic security—having enough money to cover a family’s basic needs and enough savings or assets to invest in its future—has become increasingly elusive. Economic security can be thought about as a three-ingredient recipe:

- Good jobs that pay enough in wages to cover a family’s basic needs, offer benefits including health care and retirement savings, and provide stable and consistent employment
- Sufficient wealth or assets to weather short-term economic setbacks and invest in the future
- A dependable social safety net that provides income and other support—for example, food and child care—during periods of unemployment, disability, or poor health

While attaining economic security is a challenge for nearly all of us except the very top earners, communities of color face greater hurdles to accessing the first two economic security recipe ingredients, and the third ingredient—a dependable social safety net—has been unraveling for decades and is now frayed for everyone. Consider these experiences:

- After working at McDonald’s for more than 20 years, 44-year-old Tyree Johnson still makes minimum wage. He takes shifts at two of the restaurants’ locations, trying to cobble together enough hours to earn his \$320-per-month rent

at a single-room-occupancy hotel on Chicago’s north side. Despite the fact that he has a certificate in computer operations and even paid off his student-loan debt just a couple of years ago, he was unable to find a job in that field and ultimately ended up in fast-food service. Twice a month Tyree stocks up on food staples from church food pantries. He’s received some small pay raises and minimum-wage increases, but when the fast-food franchises change owners or he is transferred to a different location, his pay gets knocked down to minimum wage again. In November he joined employees from more than 100 Chicago retailers to demand a \$15-per-hour wage.<sup>8</sup>

- For nearly a year Alcides Rodriguez installed insulation for a Houston-area general contractor. After being paid in cash for most of the job, near the end of the project, the employer told Alcides and the other workers that they would be paid once the project was complete. But when the workers went to collect their pay, the company supervisor never showed. Twenty-three of the company’s employees now claim that they are owed \$25,000 in back wages for three months of construction work and are suing the company to retrieve their pay.<sup>9</sup>

- Deborah Goldring had beaten the odds. Growing up poor in an all-black neighborhood in Baltimore, raised only by her mother for much of her childhood, Deborah dropped out of high school at 16 and went to work cleaning hotel rooms.

Deborah eventually earned her GED, enrolled in community college, became an executive assistant at a hospital, married a man with a good job and a house, and lived a middle-class life. But things changed dramatically in 2007 when her husband got sick and the couple used up their savings to pay for nursing homes until he passed. Then Deborah lost her job after the hospital where she worked underwent restructuring. The bank was about to foreclose on her home of 30 years until she was able to get help from a state program that helped people behind on their payments due to layoffs or medical expenses.<sup>10</sup>

Tyree, Alcides, and Deborah's stories illustrate the economic security challenges for people of color, who are more likely to be unemployed, underemployed, or in the low-wage workforce, and as a result have more difficulty attaining middle-class status and a greater chance of slipping out of the middle class once they get there.

But low economic security is not only bad for families of color—it also hurts communities and the economy. People have limited capacity to participate productively in the economy without income and wealth. For one, they have less cash to spend on goods and services, which in the aggregate means less demand for businesses and fewer jobs. Economically insecure people also have less ability to weather a personal economic emergency or an economic downturn, which can contribute to overall economic instability. And they have less ability to plan for the future in ways that enable them

to realize their full talents and capabilities and to contribute to America's economic growth, such as starting a business, sending their children to college, and switching jobs and careers when new and better opportunities arrive.

## The challenge of economic security for communities of color

### The jobs challenge

African Americans, Latinos, and other people of color were hit first and worst by the Great Recession and continue to face much higher rates of joblessness than whites.<sup>11</sup> Unemployment rates for African Americans are consistently double those of whites, and even college-educated blacks are much more likely to be unemployed than whites, while Latino unemployment rates are about one-and-a-half times those of whites.<sup>12</sup> Native Americans are also more than one-and-a-half times as likely to be jobless as whites, with unemployment rates close to 11 percent.<sup>13</sup> African Americans particularly, but also Latinos, are also more likely to be among the long-term unemployed—those individuals who are out of work for at least 27 weeks.<sup>14</sup>

Employment insecurities are compounded for people of color who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, or LGBT. It has been well documented that LGBT workers experience extraordinarily high rates of employment discrimination based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. For LGBT

people of color, discrimination is magnified when accounting for race and ethnicity. For this reason LGBT people of color suffer from severe economic vulnerabilities; for example, black lesbian couples are twice as likely to be living in poverty compared to the general population.<sup>15</sup>

### The income challenge

While having a job is essential, it is often not sufficient because of America's glut of low-wage jobs. A growing legion of workers face Tyree's situation of having a job—or more than one job—but the combination of low pay and inconsistent hours make it impossible to make ends meet at the end of each month. Since the recession the U.S. economy has been shedding middle-wage jobs and adding low-wage ones, exacerbating the low-wage-jobs problem.<sup>16</sup> A quarter of all jobs in the United States now pay below poverty-level wages (about \$23,000 annually for a family of four), and half of all U.S. jobs pay less than \$34,000 annually.<sup>17</sup> And while the low-wage challenge affects all races and ethnicities, people of color make up a disproportionate share of the low-wage workforce compared to their share of the overall labor force.<sup>18</sup>

Low-wage workers are also less likely to receive benefits such as health insurance and retirement savings from their employers—both of which are essential ingredients for economic security.<sup>19</sup> And wage theft, as experienced by Alcides and his coworkers, is much more common than the public knows, contributing to the income challenge faced



The Pew Research Center's analysis of 2009 Census data found that whites, on average, have 20 times the net worth of African Americans and 18 times that of Latinos.

by people of color. A survey of more than 4,000 low-wage workers in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles found that two out of three of these workers had experienced wage theft in the past week, including working off the clock, working for less than minimum wage, not receiving overtime pay, having their tips stolen, or not being paid at all. In these three cities alone, wage theft adds up to more than \$56 million per week in lost wages.<sup>20</sup>

### The assets challenge

In addition to having fewer benefits and lower incomes, people of color have less savings and assets to help them weather unexpected financial crises and to pay for education, entrepreneurship, homeownership, or other investments that will pay off in the future. According to the Corporation for Enterprise Development, 4 in 10 households of color lack enough emergency savings to go three months without income, compared to 2 in 10 white households.<sup>21</sup> And the racial wealth gap is enormous: The Pew Research Center's analysis of 2009 Census data found that whites, on average, have 20 times the net worth of African Americans and 18 times that of Latinos.<sup>22</sup> The recession exacerbated this gap, since communities of color were hit the hardest by the foreclosure crisis. Nearly 8 percent of African Americans who bought homes between 2005 and 2008 lost them to foreclosure, compared to 4.5 percent of whites, even after controlling for income and credit rating.<sup>23</sup> The foreclosure crisis illustrates another challenge for people of color: The assets they do own tend to be less secure ones.<sup>24</sup>

As Deborah's situation illustrates, not having sufficient assets to draw upon in case of an economic emergency can create a very precarious middle-class existence, increasing the possibility of moving down, instead of up, the economic ladder. Examining data tracking families for nearly four decades, researchers at the Brookings Institution found that while 16 percent of white children born to middle-class parents end up poor, 45 percent of their black middle-class counterparts slip into poverty.<sup>25</sup> Racial segregation is an important factor that contributes to this wide racial gap: Almost half of black children born to middle-income families grow up in poor neighborhoods, compared to just 1 percent of white middle-income children, and growing up in a high-poverty neighborhood dramatically increases the chances of downward mobility.<sup>26</sup>

### Building economic security in an All-in economy

To increase economic security, our national economic policies must focus on creating good, family-supporting jobs; building a strong workforce and base of entrepreneurs; and strengthening the nation's capacity to innovate and produce.<sup>27</sup> In the context of growing racial gaps, these policies need to create real pathways for people of color to shape the new economy, enter the middle class, and contribute to our shared economic growth and democracy. Building an inclusive economy requires an approach that is sensitive to the general barriers to economic participation faced by those who are unemployed, underemployed, or working in



Diego Valdez, 3, waits for his mom, Veronica Majia, right, to sign in at the Maricopa County Workforce Connections job fair Tuesday, Nov. 23, 2010 in Phoenix.

AP PHOTO/MATT YORK

low-wage jobs, while also addressing the particular challenges faced disproportionately by people of color, such as being more likely to experience discrimination, live in high-poverty neighborhoods, attend racially and economically segregated schools, or be incarcerated.

### Inclusive job-creation strategies

Let's look more closely at one critical strategy for building an equitable economy—job creation—to further explain how it advances economic inclusion. Creating new jobs is central to boosting

employment, income, and assets for low-income people of color. But job creation in and of itself is not enough. The jobs that are created need to be accessible to people of color and pay family-supporting wages, along with offering benefits and career-advancement opportunities.

### Targeting high-need communities

One requirement for inclusive job creation is that the new jobs created must reach the communities where jobs are most needed. A 2012 Government Accountability Office assessment of federal economic development investments found that they

were not as well targeted as they could be. In urban areas, for example, with the exception of the cities with the highest rates of poverty and unemployment, the investments were fairly evenly distributed instead of being targeted based on the level of need according to poverty and unemployment data.<sup>28</sup>

### Creating career pathways

Clear pathways for workers of color to access jobs is another essential ingredient for inclusive job creation. Targeted hiring and job training and placement strategies focused on underserved workers can accomplish this goal. Workforce-training partnerships that are

## Evergreen cooperatives: Building income and assets in Cleveland

The Evergreen Cooperative Initiative is a network of worker-owned cooperative businesses located in some of Cleveland's lowest-income neighborhoods. It seeks to leverage a portion of the \$3 billion in annual supplies and services purchased by local universities and hospitals to create good jobs and ownership opportunities for hard-to-employ workers, who are also predominantly people of color. With investments including New Market Tax Credits and resources from the U.S. Treasury Department's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, Evergreen was able to start its first venture: a commercial green laundry. The cooperative eventually expanded to include a solar-panel installation firm and a lettuce greenhouse. To date, the three businesses have more than 100 worker-owners, half of whom have criminal records.

For Medrick Addison, a worker-owner at Evergreen Cooperative Laundry, the opportunity to not only have a job but to also be a part owner of a thriving business has been life-changing. As a younger man Addison ran afoul of the law and served time in prison. When he was released he found a job with Evergreen, an event that he says helped him turn his life around. And it's an opportunity he wants to extend to others. "We're hiring people that nobody else is thinking about," says Addison. "This initiative has been a real second chance." Other cities are beginning to take notice of the Evergreen model and are seeking to replicate it. In Richmond, California, for example, three new worker cooperatives have launched in the past year inspired by the work started in Cleveland.

designed for specific industry sectors—such as the Pacific Gas and Electric Company’s PowerPathway initiative in California—exemplify this approach. With an aging workforce and the prospect of 4 in 10 workers about to retire within the next five years, the utility company continues its partnership with community colleges and unions to implement a training program that provides opportunities for workers underrepresented in the utility sector to access good career-ladder jobs. The results are remarkable: More than half of its graduates are women or people of color—a majority of whom have taken utility jobs that pay between \$19 and \$29 per hour.<sup>29</sup>

#### Linking underserved communities with high-growth industry sectors

Another inclusive job-creation strategy is connecting underserved communities with the high-growth industry sectors that are critical to our nation’s economic growth. In Pittsburgh, for example, the Central Keystone Innovation Zone is bridging the longstanding gap between high-tech companies and low-income communities of color by encouraging startups to locate in the city’s historic African American Hill District community, helping local entrepreneurs develop their businesses, and placing interns from local community colleges with the startup companies. The recent Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge competitive federal grant program for regional economic development promotes a focus on underserved communities, and in 2011 the Central Keystone Innovation Zone and its partners received a \$1.95 million competitive grant to

help grow the area’s energy and health care sectors in an inclusive way.<sup>30</sup>

#### Fostering minority entrepreneurship

Cultivating the development of minority-owned businesses is yet another strategy for building an inclusive economy. Because entrepreneurs of color are more likely to both hire people of color and locate their firms in communities of color than other firms, their growth leads directly to more job opportunities for workers of color. But entrepreneurs of color face significant barriers to accessing the capital, information, and training that is needed to launch and sustain successful enterprises. Economic development strategies and small-business development programs can break down these barriers and help these entrepreneurs get started, expand their businesses—creating more jobs—or break into new markets and industries.

St. Paul, Minnesota’s Neighborhood Development Center, for example, helped the Payans, a first-generation immigrant Mexican family, expand their tortilla business to meet the needs of the Twin Cities’ growing Latino community. In so doing, they grew Tortilleria la Perla into a \$3 million company and expanded their payroll from a few part-timers to 50 full-time workers.<sup>31</sup> The Payans are just one example. Since 1993 the Neighborhood Development Center has collaborated with community-based organizations to help African American, Hmong, Latino, Native American, Oromo, and Somali communities obtain training, technical assistance, startup loans,



In this June 8, 2012 photo, Mary Lindsey, owner of the Jokes and Notes comedy club buses drinks for her waitresses during the first of two shows in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood.

AP PHOTO/CHARLES REX ARBOGAST



and low-cost business incubator space. Five hundred graduates of the center’s programs are currently operating businesses that have sustained 2,200 jobs and returned \$64 million annually to their communities in payroll, taxes, and rent each year.<sup>32</sup>

### Leveraging public investments for good jobs

Maximizing the good-jobs return on public spending and investment is an additional way to foster economic inclusion. Every year the federal government purchases billions of dollars’ worth of goods and services and invests billions of dollars in the public infrastructure—schools, roads, bridges, transit, health care, water systems, and more—that makes our economy run. Since these public investments touch millions of private-sector jobs—more than one in five people (about 26 million total) work for employers contracted by the federal government—these investments are a major lever for connecting under-represented workers to good jobs and ensuring that public dollars are building a more inclusive economy.<sup>34</sup> High-road contracting policies, for example, ensure that federal contracts go to companies that invest in their workers by providing family-supporting wages, benefits, opportunities to advance, and more, as opposed to “low-road” companies that egregiously violate the law, damage the environment, and treat their workforce poorly.<sup>35</sup> These contracting policies can create a new yardstick by which companies are measured, thereby raising the quality of jobs not only in the contracting companies but also in the companies that aspire to become federal contractors. The federal government can learn from local innovations. More than 140 cities and one

state—Maryland—have adopted “living-wage” laws that require public contractors to pay their employees a nonpoverty wage (about \$10 to \$15 per hour).<sup>36</sup> Other states have enacted laws that require companies contracting for public-sector work to pay at least the prevailing regional- industry wage for the type of job being performed, which has helped improve wage standards in service industries.<sup>37</sup> Such laws have long been used to protect contracted construction workers, who are disproportionately workers of color.

Policies for government contractors are also a crucial tool to combat employment discrimination, which would force otherwise qualified candidates out of a job or prevent them from getting a job in the first place. In its most current form, for example, Executive Order 11246 bars businesses that discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin from receiving federal contracts. These and other laws and policies have been critical to making sure people of color aren’t senselessly denied good jobs because of bias in the workplace. As of yet, however, these existing contractor policies still do not prevent federal contractors from discriminating against LGBT workers, who currently can be fired in a majority of states based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>38</sup>

### Policy recommendations

Achieving real economic security for all will require shrinking persistent gaps in income and wealth between whites and communities of color. While policymakers cannot accomplish this overnight,

they can take sensible steps right now that can make a real difference in the economic security of communities of color. CAP and PolicyLink suggest a set of five policy priorities around inclusive job creation, job quality, work supports, asset building, and housing.

### Foster inclusive job creation

Unless we maintain and accelerate job growth, communities of color will continue to have diminished benefits from the nation's economic and labor market recoveries. Given that job creation is especially important to communities of color because of their disproportionately high unemployment rates, policies must be targeted toward these communities to generate substantial gains.

- Congress should support the Build America Bonds program, which was created in 2009 but was allowed to expire in 2010. These federally subsidized bonds were a breakthrough innovation in municipal finance and helped states and cities fund thousands of job-creating infrastructure projects at lower costs than traditional tax-exempt municipal bonds. The U.S. Treasury should implement project criteria that ensure that the jobs created will pay good wages, offer benefits and career opportunities, and reach under-represented groups—for example, women, people of color, and people with disabilities—and neighborhoods with high unemployment and poverty.

- Congress should pass the Pathways Back to Work Act, part of the American Jobs Act of 2011. This proposal will help hundreds of thousands of low-income youth and adults prepare for quality jobs in high-growth industries by supporting targeted employment and training programs with an additional \$5 billion in funding. It would also support summer and year-round jobs for youth, support subsidized employment opportunities for low-income individuals who are unemployed, and support promising and innovative local work-based job and training initiatives to help place low-income individuals in work quickly.

- The White House Office of Management and Budget should require the government agencies that run economic development programs to develop plans for ensuring their investments are well-targeted to communities based on their levels of unemployment and poverty.

### Raise job quality

We don't simply need more jobs—we need more good jobs. The creation of more low-wage jobs will do nothing to close the economic security gaps between communities of color and whites because these jobs usually fail to provide important benefits that provide economic stability and/or pathways to higher-paying jobs that provide economic opportunity. Strengthening labor rights is also important since the union premium (increased



Justin Lee unlocks his restaurant's front door in Philadelphia, Friday, March 6, 2009.

AP PHOTO/MATT ROURKE

wages and benefits due to union membership) is higher for African Americans and Latinos than for whites, specifically \$2.60 per hour more for black union members than black nonunion members, and \$3.44 per hour more for Latino union members than Latino nonunion members.<sup>39</sup>

- Congress should raise the minimum wage by passing the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2013.<sup>40</sup> The minimum wage should be set and indexed to one-half of the average wage, or approximately \$10 an hour today.

- The National Labor Relations Board should make it easier for workers to join a union, modernizing the union election process by enacting regulations that reduce unnecessary litigation, streamline pre- and postelection procedures, and facilitate communications via digital communications that workers now depend on.
- Congress should pass labor law reform that establishes a fair process for workers to decide on union representation, expands coverage so that more workers are provided the right

to organize, establishes meaningful penalties and remedies for workers who are fired or discriminated against for exercising their right to organize, and includes measures to promote productive collective bargaining for first contracts, so that workers can negotiate for improved wages and benefits.

- Congress should introduce and pass both the Social Security Cares Act to increase workers' access to paid family and medical leave and the Healthy Families Act to provide workers with paid sick leave. Both pieces of legislation would promote gender equity and help close the wage gap, which in turn would help promote greater labor-force participation of women. This would especially help women of color who are more likely to be part-time and lower-wage workers and are less likely to have access to paid leave.

### Strengthen work-support benefits

Work-support benefits help low-wage workers close the gap between low earnings and the cost of basic necessities in their households, and ease workers' worries about their income falling short or affording proper care for their children.

- Congress should continue support for the earned income tax credit. As a refundable tax credit for low-income workers, studies have shown that it increases work and lifts families out of poverty. Unfortunately, the credit is largely unavailable to

adults who do not have qualifying children; many of these individuals are fathers and mothers living apart from their children or young adults who have the highest rates of unemployment due to their relative lack of work experience. Increasing the qualifying income levels for this group may produce the same impact that has been demonstrated for single mothers: increased work and reduced poverty. Also, in recent years, there have been a series of earned income tax credit expansions for families with qualifying children; those changes should be made permanent.

- Congress should expand access and affordability to child care for children 0–3 years old to more low-income families and make high-quality preschool universally accessible to all 3- and 4-year-old children. Studies have demonstrated that parents with reliable child care are better able to get and maintain jobs, work longer hours, and make more money, while quality programs also help close achievement gaps between low-income children and their high-income peers. Additionally, historical data suggest that the availability of child care could save employers billions of dollars from increased worker productivity and decreased worker absence.<sup>41</sup>

### Create opportunities to save and build assets

Building wealth is critical for economic prosperity for all, and especially urgent for low- and

moderate-income people and people of color who saw tremendous losses of wealth and assets in the Great Recession. Federal policymakers should help all households realize a more economically secure future.

- Congress should turn tax deductions into refundable tax credits, such that the tax benefits depend solely on the amount of money saved, not on the saver's income level.<sup>42</sup> Each saver would get the same share of their savings as a tax benefit with a refundable tax credit. All households are further hampered in saving for their future by the complexity of the existing system. Households can save for a range of reasons in a variety of different accounts that all come with their own rules and thus their own tax advantages. Congress should offer just a one savings tax credit that savers can use to save for a range of purposes, such as retirement, health care, and education. This would streamline savings incentives, making it easier for people to figure out which tax incentives are available to them.<sup>43</sup>
- The federal government should maintain states' flexibility to remove asset limits for public benefits. Asset limits can discourage individuals considering or receiving public benefits from saving for the future, because many public benefits limit eligibility to those with few or no assets. While states currently determine many policies related to public benefit eligibility, and many have already made the important move to remove asset limit tests, there has been recent federal movement to

eliminate the ability for states to use broad-based categorical eligibility, which allows them to avoid such asset limits.

### Strengthen housing policies to get people into homes and keep them in their homes

The housing and foreclosure crisis touched nearly every community, but it hit unevenly and has added up to the greatest loss of wealth for people of color in U.S. history. Given the disproportionate impacts of the crisis, public investments in foreclosure recovery and affordable housing should deliver significant benefits to the low-income communities and communities of color that have suffered most. Stabilizing the hardest-hit neighborhoods will also have a positive effect on regional economic health and national competitiveness.

- **Promote principal reductions.** As the foreclosure crisis continues to wind down, keeping homeowners in their homes must be a priority, and principal reduction—when a bank lowers the outstanding balance of an underwater loan to reflect current market value as part of a loan modification—is a key method to do that. While many investors are already forgiving principal balances, mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are still not permitted to do so by their regulator, the Federal Housing Finance Agency, or FHFA, and the agency should reverse this position immediately.<sup>44</sup>

■ **Support loan modifications.** Federal housing agencies should also support “shared appreciation” loan modifications, where they write down some principal now in exchange for a portion of the future appreciation on the home later. In addition, the attorney general must ensure that the country’s five largest mortgage servicers are meeting the principal-reduction mandate included in the 2012 Joint State-Federal Mortgage Servicing Settlement.<sup>45</sup>

■ **Extend the Home Affordable Modification Program.** The Department of the Treasury and the Federal Housing Finance Agency should extend the Home Affordable Modification Program through 2015. This program, which provides incentives for servicers to modify the loans of troubled borrowers, is scheduled to expire at the end of 2013.

■ **Give borrowers more refinancing opportunities.** Refinancing mortgages into rates that are now at historical lows is a great way to help families avoid default and put more money into their pockets that can be spent elsewhere in the economy. But families with little or no equity in their homes due to the steep declines in the housing market are often unable to obtain refinancing. Additional steps should be taken to improve the Home Affordable Refinance Program, which helps homeowners whose mortgages are owned by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac, to help families with private mortgages refinance, and to use its

Hardest Hit Fund foreclosure-prevention program to promote refinancing.

■ **Remove barriers to sustainable homeownership.** Although the housing market has improved, millions of creditworthy families cannot access credit to purchase a home. High down-payment requirements, for example, are a major barrier for lower-wealth families who may have the income to support mortgage payments but would have to save for many years to amass the down payment. Federal housing policies should ensure access to affordable credit, including down-payment assistance, housing counseling, tax-filing assistance,<sup>46</sup> shared-equity land trusts, safe mortgage products, and other supports to ensure successful homeownership among creditworthy, low-wealth households. Additionally, the mortgage interest deduction should be restructured as a flat-rate tax credit. This would allow low- and moderate-income homeowners, who are less likely to itemize their income tax returns, to still receive the tax benefit, and would ensure that all households earn the same tax benefit for each dollar of mortgage interest they pay.

■ **Capitalize the National Housing Trust Fund.** More than 100 million households live in rental housing, and one in four of these renters spend more than half of their income on rent.<sup>47</sup> Congress established the National Housing Trust Fund in 2008 as a way to provide resources for production, preservation, rehabilitation, or



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FILE YOUR CLAIM AS ABOVE**

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Mary Brooks, 65, center, greets delivery man Gerard Wickham, left, with items for her new bedroom set at her new home Friday, March 29, 2013, in Eatontown, N.J.  
AP PHOTO/JULIO CORTEZ

operation of rental housing that is affordable to low-income families. Unfortunately, the trust fund is not yet providing relief to renters because it is not yet capitalized. Congress should prioritize finding additional funding sources for the trust fund since the designated source of funding, the Federal Housing Finance Agency, has not yet contributed to the trust fund.

## Conclusion

As the economy continues to recover from the Great Recession, we must pay special attention to those people and communities that were hurt first and

worst by the downturn. We must ensure that all American workers—regardless of race, income, gender, or disability—can feel economically secure. In a country that was built on the ideals of opportunity and fairness, every individual should have access to a good, quality job. They should also have the ability to save for the future and weather setbacks, whether they come in the form of economic adversity, natural disasters, or family health failures.

Certainly, a long road lies ahead of us, but if we make the right investments now, we can make sure that the recovery is an inclusive one that ensures a future economy that works for all Americans, not just a select few. ■



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- 45 "National Mortgage Settlement," available at <http://www.nationalmortgagesettlement.com>.
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## QUICK VIEW

# Jobs, Income, and Assets: Economic Security for All

**A**s the economy recovers from the Great Recession, income inequality and economic insecurity have emerged as critical challenges. Many American households are experiencing major economic hardship because they face limited opportunities to build wealth or secure a job with a family-supporting wage. This is especially the case for people of color, who are more likely to be

unemployed or in the low-wage workforce and lost significant wealth in the foreclosure crisis. As the demographics of our nation shift, we must create an inclusive economy that enables everyone to contribute to and benefit from economic growth. Such an approach must increase the number of good jobs, offer pathways to build assets, and foster entrepreneurship for everyone, including people of color. ■

## Facts at a glance

- **50 percent:** The share of jobs paying less than \$34,000 a year; 25 percent of jobs pay below poverty-level wages (\$23,000 annually for a family of four)<sup>1</sup>
- **4 in 10:** The number of households of color lacking enough emergency savings to go without income for three months compared to 2 in 10 white households.<sup>2</sup>
- **\$500,000+:** The average wealth gap between white families (\$632,000) compared to black and Latino families (\$98,000 and \$110,000, respectively)<sup>3</sup>
- **140,000:** The number of new jobs that would be created if the federal minimum wage was increased from \$7.25 to \$10.10 per hour<sup>4</sup>
- **\$2.1 trillion:** Additional gross domestic product in 2011 if racial income gaps were closed<sup>5</sup>
- **\$687 billion:** Additional earnings in 2011 if racial income gaps were closed<sup>6</sup>

## Call to action

Congress and the administration should take several steps to promote economic opportunities that enable all Americans to secure quality employment and build wealth.

- **Foster inclusive job creation.** Congress should pass the Pathways Back to Work Act, which would help low-income youth and adults prepare for quality jobs in high-growth industries, and recommit to the Build America Bonds program to create thousands of good jobs rebuilding the nation's infrastructure
- **Raise job quality.** Congress should pass the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2013, the Social Security Cares Act, and the Healthy Families Act. These three policies would raise the minimum wage and expand access to family and medical leave and paid sick days. Congress should also strengthen labor rights by passing labor law reform
- **Strengthen work-support benefits.** Congress should expand the earned income tax credit

to support young adults and adults without children, and increase access to affordable child care for low-income families

- **Increase opportunities to save and build assets.** The federal government should incentivize savings among low-income households by turning tax deductions into refundable tax credits and maintaining states' flexibility to remove asset limits for public benefits
- **Strengthen housing policies to help people to own and keep their homes.** Federal agencies should help prevent additional foreclosures by supporting principal reductions and shared appreciation loan modifications, refinancing opportunities, and expansion of the Home Affordable Modification Program. Federal housing policies should also prioritize supporting sustainable homeownership among low-wealth households via down-payment assistance and other programs. Lastly, Congress should capitalize the National Housing Trust Fund to develop, preserve, and operate affordable rental housing

## Endnotes

- 1 Peter Edelman, "Poverty in America: Why Can't We End It?," *The New York Times*, July 28, 2012, available at [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/29/opinion/sunday/why-cant-we-end-poverty-in-america.html?\\_r=4&pagewanted=all&](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/29/opinion/sunday/why-cant-we-end-poverty-in-america.html?_r=4&pagewanted=all&).
- 2 Center for Enterprise Development, "Assets & Opportunity Scorecard: Asset Poverty by Race," available at <http://scorecard.assetsandopportunity.org/2012/measure/asset-poverty-by-race> (last accessed November 2012).
- 3 Signe-Mary McKernan and others, "Less Than Equal: Racial Disparities in Wealth Accumulation" (Washington: The Urban Institute, 2013), available at <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412802-Less-Than-Equal-Racial-Disparities-in-Wealth-Accumulation.pdf>.
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# We Are All in This Together

BY AI-JEN POO

Portions of this essay appeared in the “Room for Debate” discussion on immigration reform at [NYTimes.com](http://NYTimes.com).



*I am 19 years old, and I was born in Los Angeles. I want you to hear my story, and I want this story to help you understand why immigration laws need to change now. In 2008, when I was 14, my mother was stopped at an immigration checkpoint while she was driving to pick me up at school. While I waited, and she didn't come, I imagined she was working late or might've been caught in traffic due to a rainy afternoon. I finally went home and waited and worried. Two days passed by with no sign of her and then I finally got call from my mother. She was in Tijuana, and she told me she had gotten deported. There is no feeling that can compare to what I felt that night besides death. I felt totally empty and alone.”*

— Eliza Morales, Congressional Briefing, Washington, D.C., December 12, 2012

Like so many other teenagers, Eliza struggled to keep her grades up, to fit in, to find the things in life that could affirm her sense of her potential and worth. A typical 14-year-old, she sometimes felt alone and isolated. But all of that was nothing compared to having her mother deported. Five years later, she longs to be reconnected with her mother, who is still in Tijuana, Mexico, without a way to return.

Eleven million people in the United States live in constant fear of deportation. These are hardworking people who love and care about their kids. Yet in the past two years, close to 205,000 parents of citizen children like Eliza were deported. As a result, many parents and children have been permanently separated.

Don't think that they are the only people hurt by this. Among the 11 million are many people on whom we—U.S. citizens—count on every day to take care of our families. A recent study on domestic

work in the United States, “Home Economics: The Invisible and Unregulated World of Domestic Work,” found that most of the nannies, housekeepers, and caregivers for the elderly—people who keep modern American families functioning—are foreign born. What’s more, about half of them are undocumented. The study also found that 85 percent of abused domestic workers without documents endure these abusive situations specifically because they fear that their immigration status will be used against them.

But even those domestic workers who are lucky enough to find good employers are often still trapped in a life of poverty and fear. Consider Carmen, a live-in senior caregiver in California. Originally from the Philippines, she always believed that caregiving was her calling. For a mere \$50 per day, Carmen helps to ensure that the elderly couple she cares for receives the support they need to live in the familiar surroundings of their home, with dignity. The couple treats Carmen like a daughter. Their children even call her for regular updates, counting on Carmen to manage a complex web of prescriptions and doctors. Women like Carmen provide critical support to millions of American families, and yet they live in constant fear of deportation and cannot support their own families under such conditions. Without a road map to citizenship, they are trapped in a state of vulnerability and poverty. And that poverty creates a downward gravitational pull on wages and business growth across our entire economy.

Today’s American family includes people from all different nationalities and traditions. We are already

deeply connected across lines of race, class, and generation. We are interdependent, not only economically but also through our caring relationships, and this interdependence grows every year. As people live longer, we will only become more dependent on one another to ensure that our loved ones receive the care, support, and services they need. This growing interdependence is happening as we speak: The Baby Boomer generation is turning 65 at a rate of one person every eight seconds. Our nation is in serious need of people who are willing to provide the difficult and intimate labor of care. Currently, the



direct care workforce—which includes home health aides, personal care aides, certified nurse aides, and domestic workers, among others—is larger than any other occupational group in the country, and it is also the fastest-growing sector. That demand for care workers is growing faster than the number of individuals who are able and willing to fill these jobs. It is physically and emotionally exhausting labor with long hours and low pay—even if it was at least minimum wage, which it is currently not.

More and more this tremendous need is being met by immigrant workers from all over the world, including Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Their care work is crucial for ensuring the productivity of millions of women and men who have to leave their children and aging parents at home while they go to work. If that caring labor were not available, the ripple effects would hurt families and businesses alike. The Child Care Action Campaign found that companies in the United States lose more than \$3 billion every year due to child-care-related absences alone. We simply cannot afford to leave our care workers behind. Even the proponents of anti-immigrant state legislation in Texas created an exception for domestic workers for fear of losing their caregivers and housekeepers to deportation.

No one who is responsible for caring for the most precious elements of our lives—our families and our homes—should be at risk of being torn from

their own homes and families. To support these immigrant workers who provide the most important kind of support for our families, we need a road map to citizenship for undocumented people. All 11 million undocumented immigrants who live in the United States should have access to legal residency and a path to full citizenship. And we cannot close the door on the future; we need a proactive method for welcoming new immigrants who come to United States to improve the lives of their families *and* ultimately ours as well. We also need to raise workforce standards in the care industries and other industries populated by immigrant workers; this will, in turn, raise the quality of life for all Americans.

A broad and inclusive road map to citizenship for all is the cornerstone of a healthy, 21st-century American democracy and economy. We are fundamentally a multiracial society and as such we need immigration policies that reject “us versus them” approaches that treat immigrants as “foreigners” while seeing the rest of us as the “true” Americans. That kind of oppositional approach can never work because it is not how our lives and families operate in this day and age. We are all in this together. Instead, we need to support integration and connection between all Americans, including aspiring Americans. Our country is stronger when we include all people as full citizens. It’s not only demographic destiny; it’s the only way our families and our economy can thrive going forward. ■



**CHAPTER EIGHT**

# **Americans in Waiting: Immigration Reform for a Stronger Nation**

**BY VANESSA CÁRDENAS AND JEANNE BUTTERFIELD**



Among people who come to the United States today — whether they come from privileged backgrounds or humble backgrounds — is our next Einstein, is our next Nobel laureate, but [whom] we just have failed to identify.

**DR. ALFREDO QUINONES-HINOJOSA<sup>7</sup>**



Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa began working when he was 5 years old. Born to a poor family in Mexico, he came to the United States in 1987 as an undocumented immigrant at the age of 19. Once in the United States, he worked in a number of backbreaking jobs picking tomatoes and loading sulfur and fish lard onto railroad freight cars, but he decided that this was not what he wanted to do for the rest of his life. Eventually, Alfredo enrolled in community college to learn English, found mentors who supported him, and earned a scholarship to attend the University of California, Berkeley, where he pursued the natural sciences. After graduation, Alfredo was recruited by Harvard Medical School, and today Dr. Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa is a brain surgeon who directs the brain tumor program at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center in Baltimore.

Immigrants like Dr. Quiñones-Hinojosa have been an enduring hallmark of the American experience. From the first English settlers in the 1600s to the subsequent waves of Polish, Germans, Italians, Chinese, and Mexicans, immigrants have always come to America to build a better life for themselves and their families. In the process they have contributed their talents and aspirations, and America has become better because of it.

Today's immigrants hailing from Latin America, Asia, and Africa continue that rich legacy. As Congress considers granting a road map to citizenship

# Economic benefits of legalizing undocumented immigrants

- Research from the Center for American Progress found that legalizing the United States' undocumented immigrant population would add a cumulative \$1.5 trillion to U.S. GDP over the next decade.<sup>1</sup>
- Undocumented immigrants who earn legal status and citizenship produce and earn significantly more—25 percent more—than they do when they lack work authorization.<sup>2</sup>
- If undocumented immigrants are granted legal status in 2013 and gain citizenship five years thereafter, their increased earnings will lead them to contribute an additional \$144 billion to the economy in taxes over 10 years—\$91 billion to the federal government and \$53 billion to state and local governments.<sup>3</sup>
- Legalization and citizenship will also add a cumulative \$1.1 trillion to U.S. GDP over 10 years. The resulting productivity and wage gains ripple through the economy because immigrants are not just workers, they are also consumers and taxpayers.<sup>4</sup>
- Immigrant workers will spend their increased earnings on food, clothing, housing, cars, and computers, which helps stimulate demand, and will support an average of 159,000 new U.S. jobs every year.<sup>5</sup>
- Just passing the DREAM Act, to give undocumented youth a chance to gain legal status, would add \$329 billion to the U.S. economy by 2030.<sup>6</sup>

for the 11 million undocumented immigrants among us, it would do well to recognize the vast potential that this new generation of Americans in waiting offers, and embrace the key role they play in continuing our unique American story, building our economy, and moving our communities forward.

## Immigrants are key to the future economy

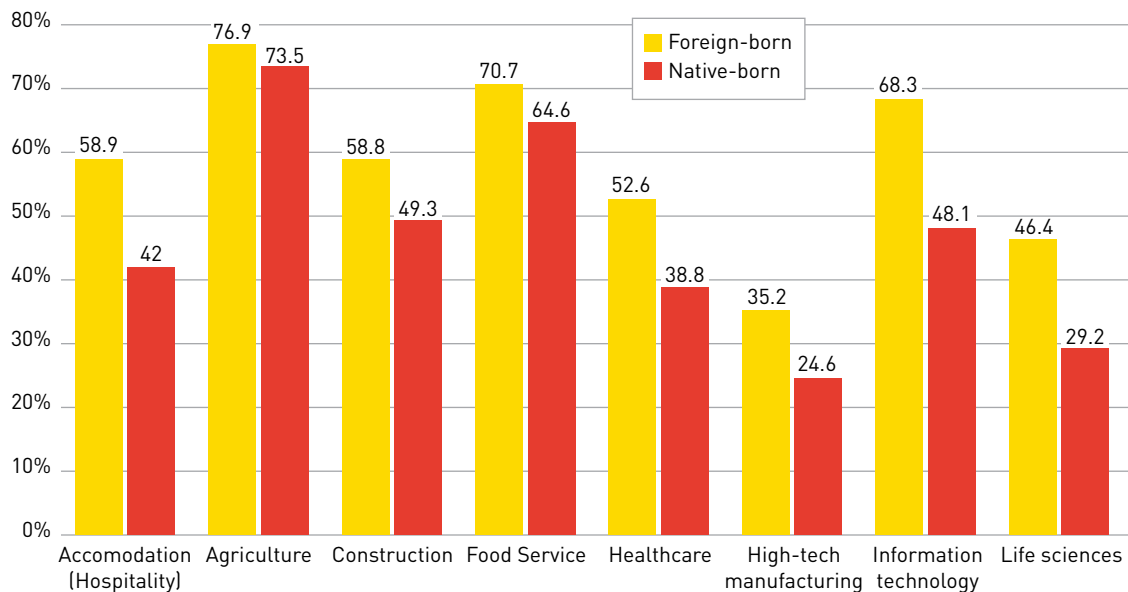
Immigrants are key to our economic future and serve as dynamic engines of economic vitality in communities large and small across the United

States. Numerous studies show that immigrants open up new businesses at a higher rate than the native-born population, comprise sizable portions of the workforce in various industries, and revitalize the cities and regions where they choose to settle.

Immigrants can be found in all sectors of the U.S. economy and fill vital roles in both highly skilled and lesser skilled occupations. They have a significant presence in the information-technology and high-tech-manufacturing industries, where they make up 23 percent of all workers.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, recent

research suggests that undocumented immigrants comprise at least half of all agricultural workers.<sup>9</sup> High shares of immigrant workers are also found in private households (49 percent of all workers) and in the accommodation industry (31 percent of all workers), where they work as maids, nannies, personal caregivers, housekeepers, clerks, and more.<sup>10</sup> Immigrant labor is also an increasingly important component of the agribusiness.<sup>11</sup> Nearly half of all U.S. meat-processing industry employees are foreign born, and a similar proportion of crop-production workers are estimated to be foreign born. And

**Figure 1**  
**Selected industries of foreign vs. native born employment**



Source: [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2012/3/15%20immigrant%20workers%20singer/0315\\_immigrant\\_workers\\_appendix.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2012/3/15%20immigrant%20workers%20singer/0315_immigrant_workers_appendix.pdf).

41 percent of U.S. dairy workers are immigrants, according to a 2009 national survey sponsored by the National Milk Producers Federation.

Yet immigrants are not just laborers; these men and women are also the drivers of innovation and some of our country's most active job creators. In 2011 one of every four new businesses was created by an immigrant entrepreneur.<sup>12</sup> A 2012 Kauffman Foundation study found that immigrant business founders—individuals who are most likely to start companies in the innovation and manufacturing-related services field (45 percent of new startups) and in the software industry (22 percent of startups)—employed about 560,000 workers as of 2006, and generated an estimated \$63 billion in sales from 2006 to 2012.<sup>13</sup> The same report found that 24.3 percent of engineering and technology companies founded in the United States between 2006 and 2012 had at least one foreign-born founder.

According to the Partnership for a New American Economy, more than 40 percent of the companies on the Fortune 500 list in 2010 were founded by immigrants or their children—businesses employing more than 10 million people worldwide.<sup>14</sup> For every high-skilled (H-1B) nonimmigrant visa issued to a foreign professional, five additional jobs are created.<sup>15</sup> That's because foreign workers often work in areas that promote job growth, such as the technology industry.<sup>16</sup> The labor-intensive agricultural industry also creates economic prosperity, supporting three upstream jobs for every farm job in the sector.<sup>17</sup> That is to say, when products are grown, harvested, transported, and

processed, all jobs associated with these functions are exported through upstream jobs that support and are created by the growing of agricultural products. Immigrants at both the high-skilled and low-skilled end of the labor market simultaneously create and support jobs that generate significant growth to our economy and our labor force.

Moreover, several state studies show that immigrants are a net positive to their economies:

- In New Jersey, for example, immigrants are a substantial part of the overall workforce (28 percent) and bring in almost one-quarter of all earnings statewide—about \$47 billion in revenue in 2006.<sup>18</sup>
- Immigrants in Massachusetts are more likely to participate in the labor force, at almost 72 percent as opposed to 67 percent of native-born participants, filling jobs in the highly skilled technology and medical research fields, as well as in the health care and social assistance sector, such as home health aides and nursing assistants.<sup>19</sup>
- In California immigrants make up 27.2 percent of the population yet start 44.6 percent of all new businesses in the state.<sup>20</sup>
- In Virginia immigrants comprise 11 percent of the population, but are responsible for 17 percent of all entrepreneurial activity in the commonwealth.<sup>21</sup>



Students Irvis Orozco, left, and Jorge Gutierrez hug outside the US Citizenship and Immigration Services at the Federal Building in Los Angeles Wednesday, Aug. 15, 2012.

AP PHOTO/DAMIAN DOVARGANES

- Between 1990 and 2006 the U.S. metropolitan areas that experienced the fastest economic growth were those that also saw the largest increases in their immigrant labor force.<sup>22</sup> Cities such as Phoenix, Arizona, and Dallas and Houston in Texas experienced high levels of economic growth due in large part to the contributions of immigrants in the workforce.<sup>23</sup>

## Family visas are key to our economic future as well

The United States derives the greatest economic and social benefits from immigration when the employment-based and family-based visa systems are functioning together in a well-balanced fashion. The United States needs workers to fill jobs but our laws must also ensure that there are pathways for U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents to reunite with their loved ones.

Coming to the United States to work is not the only way immigrants contribute to our economy. Family-based immigrants—those sponsored by family members who are citizens or permanent residents of the United States—make vital contributions to the U.S. economy as productive workers and entrepreneurs. What’s more, immigrants who come to the country on a family-based visa tend to move up the socioeconomic ladder faster than other groups. It has been shown that nonemployment-based immigration is associated with lower entry earnings, but higher earnings growth than employment-based immigration.<sup>24</sup>

These contributions account for a significant portion of domestic economic growth, contribute to the well-being of the current and future labor force, and play a key role in business development and community improvement as immigrants are among the most upwardly mobile segments of the labor force.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the founders of major companies such as Yahoo! (Jerry Yang) and eBay (Pierre Omidyar) immigrated with their families as children to the United States and have added to the collective economic growth and innovation of this country.

Due to the overall lack of explicit public policies for the integration of new immigrants, families and ethnic communities have traditionally acted as powerful integrating institutions. Ethnic communities and families operate as sources of critical resources for new immigrants, including providing opportunities for employment, access to credit, and different kinds of support. In other words, when newcomers arrive in this country on a family-based visa, they have resources readily available to help them navigate the system and become employed or start their own businesses. In addition, family-based migrants are more likely to include a higher percentage of female migrants and are more likely to come from a more diverse set of countries than employment-based migrants.<sup>26</sup>

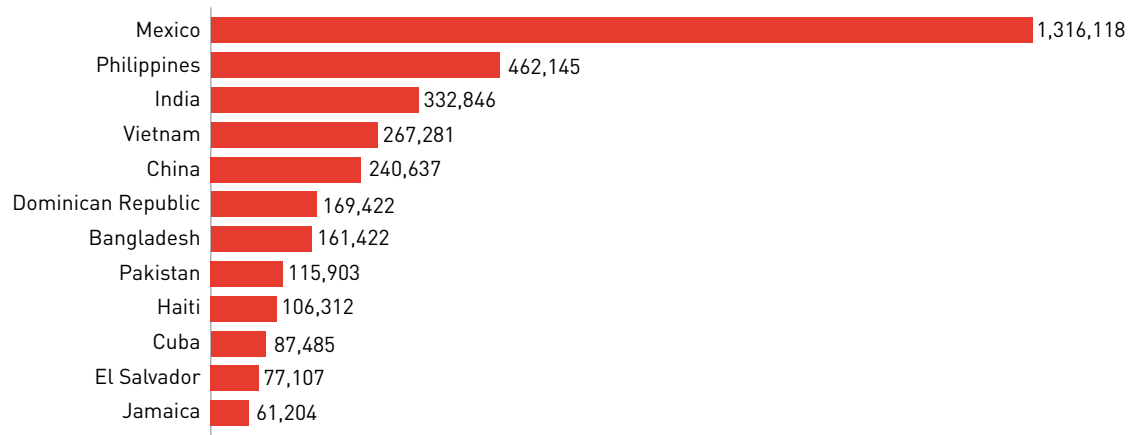
## Immigrants and their children are central to our future workforce

Immigrants are central not just in today’s economy but also in the future because of yet another

Figure 2

### Family visas

In 2012 the 12 countries with the highest number of people on the waiting list were:



Source: Annual Report of Immigrant Visa Applicants in the Family-Sponsored and Employment-based preferences Registered at the National Visa Center as of November 1, 2012; <http://www.scribd.com/doc/124925174/Immigrant-Visa-Waiting-Lists-Nov-2012>.

demographic trend that is upon us: our increasingly aging population. In the next few decades, 58.6 million job openings will be available because of workers retiring, dying, or changing occupations.<sup>27</sup> It is estimated that between 2010 and 2030, more than 14 million Baby Boomers—those born between 1946 and 1964—are expected to retire. As these Baby Boomers, who are primarily native-born whites, leave the workforce, they will create a tidal wave of change in the composition of the labor force and the age distribution of the U.S. population when they die.<sup>28</sup> As more Baby Boomers exit the workforce, there is a greater need to address the impending worker shortage once older workers decide to retire.

Immigrants will be key to filling the coming worker shortage. As it stands now, immigrants are fueling more than two-fifths of U.S. population growth. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, by the year 2050, immigrants and their U.S.-born children will make up virtually all (93 percent) of the growth of the working-age population in the United States.<sup>29</sup> As native birth rates continue to decline<sup>30</sup> and as the Baby Boom generation continues to retire, immigrants and their children—as workers, taxpayers, consumers, and entrepreneurs—will become even more critical to the economic vitality and global competitiveness of the United States for decades to come.



## Immigrants today integrate at the same rate as past waves of immigrants

Just as they are making significant economic contributions, immigrants are also achieving societal and economic success. Research shows that today's immigrants are integrating at the same pace or faster than did past generations and are doing as well as previous groups of immigrants. In terms of language proficiency, political participation, socioeconomic attainment, and social interaction, today's U.S. immigrants are integrating faster now than in the last wave of mass immigration at the beginning of the 20th century.<sup>31</sup> According to a recent Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data, second-generation Americans are substantially better off than the first generation on key measures of socioeconomic attainment, including having higher income levels and higher rates of college achievement.<sup>32</sup> The children of immigrants, regardless of their ethno-racial group, tend to outperform their parents in educational attainment, occupational status, and wealth, thereby narrowing the gap in these areas with U.S.-born non-Hispanic whites.

A Center for American Progress report by leading demographers Dowell Myers and John Pitkin of the University of Southern California shows similar trends in other important socioeconomic areas. Myers' study looked at census data from 1990 to 2012 and found that the longer immigrants live in the United States, the more they advance and the better they are

integrated into our society on key indicators such as citizenship, homeownership, English language proficiency, job status, and earnings.<sup>33</sup> According to his research, integration is occurring fastest in the areas of citizenship and homeownership as the rates of high school completion and earnings rise for immigrants. These data illustrate the extent to which immigrants are on track to achieve success in the future.

## Challenges in the current immigration system

Even though immigrants are making significant economic contributions and integrating into American society, the U.S. immigration system is badly broken. Currently, there is a large segment of the population that lacks legal status to live in the United States, and the failure to provide a path to citizenship undermines our economy, keeps families apart, and hampers the process to integration.

## The current immigration system undermines our economy

Failing to provide a road map to citizenship is hurting our nation's economic potential. Numerous reports have provided evidence of the economic soundness of legalizing our undocumented population. A new analysis by the Center for American Progress shows that citizenship for undocumented immigrants would bring robust economic benefits. According to a report by economist Robert Lynch,

## Welcoming Tennessee

Imagine if America rolled out the welcome mat for immigrants. That's the idea behind the Welcoming Tennessee Initiative. Like many states, Tennessee had little experience with large-scale immigration until recently. Now it has the nation's third-fastest-growing foreign-born population,<sup>34</sup> with an immigrant workforce that has nearly doubled in the past decade. Welcoming Tennessee uses homespun strategies like community dinners and billboards to spread positive messages about immigrants and spur constructive conversation among old and new residents. The positive public discourse and community engagement have helped protect the state from the wave of anti-immigrant legislation that has swept through Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina. For instance, pro-immigration voices—including business leaders, community organizers, and immigrants themselves—defeated an “English-Only” referendum in Nashville in 2009, on economic as well as moral grounds. They have gone on to defeat state legislation for English-only driver's license exams.

The initiative helped long-time residents and newcomers alike to recognize that equity and inclusion are essential for economic growth. The work inspired the 2010 documentary “Welcome to Shelbyville,” where locals initially reacted warily, and sometimes with open hostility, to the influx of Somali refugees working in a chicken processing plant. The film traces Welcoming Tennessee's progress in fostering honest, respectful conversation starting in the town of 16,000. Even more, the success of the project has inspired a national movement. Welcoming America has 21 state affiliates and engaged 18,000 people in welcoming events in 2012.<sup>35</sup>

if undocumented immigrants were granted legal status and citizenship in 2013, total economic production in the United States would increase by \$1.4 trillion cumulatively over the next 10 years.<sup>36</sup>

Contrary to common fears, immigrants are not frequently in direct competition with native-born American workers, in part because they tend to have different skill sets. Native-born American workers,

for example, are likely to have much greater English-language skills than new immigrants, allowing native-born workers to access more skill-intensive jobs. Studies of the last large-scale legalization effort in 1986 found that legalization did not reduce wages for native-born American workers, and in some cases actually raised wages.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, recent research on the effect of increases in immigration over the past few decades find little to no wage or



Jonadad Luque, originally from Honduras, reads to his daughter, Jarlin, 5, in their home in Nashville, Tenn.

AP PHOTO/MARK HUMPHREY

employment effects.<sup>38</sup> This analysis is consistent with a large and growing body of research on immigration and wages. An emerging consensus in the academic literature concludes that the wages of native-born workers, even low-skilled workers, are not significantly decreased by increases in immigration. In fact, immigration may very well increase their wages; the research suggests that the complementary effect may outweigh any impact from an increase in competition.

The American public is cognizant of the role that immigrants play in our economy. This is why when asked how the substantial population of undocumented people should be treated, the vast majority of Americans say that undocumented immigrants should be given a chance to get right with the law and earn their way to full legal status and citizenship.<sup>39</sup> The majority of Americans—regardless of political affiliation—want a road map pointing the way to earned citizenship for our undocumented population.<sup>40</sup>

What's more, this consensus bridges all divides of race, religious preference, age, and political opinion. In further evidence of this broad support, traditional civil- and human-rights organizations such as the NAACP have joined with other national immigrant-rights organizations to call on Congress to advance federal immigration reform.<sup>41</sup> When speaking about immigration policy during his 2013 State of Indian Nations address, National Congress of American Indians President Jefferson Keel said, "We firmly believe that the arc of justice must stretch from the First Americans, to the newest

Americans."<sup>42</sup> It is a consensus that says that our nation of immigrants cannot close its doors to newcomers—no matter their path here—but must instead embrace policies that serve our economic needs for decades to come.

## The current immigration system undermines families

The dysfunction that exists in having such a large unauthorized population also has a detrimental impact on families and communities. In the past five years, the United States has deported more than 1.5 million immigrants and several states have enacted policies that promote what restrictionists like to call "attrition through enforcement"—forcing people to "self-deport." Self-deportation has been a resounding failure—as immigrants are not leaving the country even in the face of harsh laws<sup>43</sup>—and is shattering families and driving undocumented immigrants further underground, undermining things like community policing efforts.<sup>44</sup>

Most disheartening, though, is the number of U.S.-born children who have been left behind because their undocumented parents have been deported. Between July 1, 2010, and September 31, 2012, 204,810 deportations—nearly 23 percent of all deportations—were issued for parents with citizen children.<sup>45</sup> According to the Applied Research Center, there are an estimated 5,100 citizen children of undocumented parents currently living in foster care because of their parents being detained or deported.<sup>46</sup>

On top of separating families through deportation and detention, our family-visa system also contributes to family separations. Currently, spouses and minor children of lawful permanent residents must wait at least two-and-a-half years to join their loved ones in the United States. What's more, waiting times are much longer for other family members: Unmarried adult children must wait more than seven years to join their parent, and brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens from countries such as the Philippines could face waiting times that are decades long.<sup>47</sup> Asian Americans are the most likely to have family members caught up in the visa backlogs. Although Asian Americans comprise almost 6 percent of the U.S. population, they sponsor more than a third of all family-based immigrants, and nearly half of the family members in the visa backlogs are relatives of Asian Americans.<sup>48</sup>

### **Lack of access to language and civics programs prevents successful integration**

Our country's identity is shaped by the core values of equality, freedom, and opportunity.

Immigration and the process of integration constantly test and ultimately strengthen and deepen our commitment to those values. Instead of making it harder for our immigrants to be fully contributing members of our society, Americans must work toward ensuring that newcomers have access to programs—language and civic education—that

facilitate their integration into our social and cultural fabric. Naturalization is the cornerstone of integration and the first formal step in democratic participation for new citizens, and it must be accessible and encouraged.

Yet there are a number of barriers to naturalization. Many immigrants are unaware of the benefits of naturalization, eligibility requirements, or how the naturalization process works. For those who wish to naturalize, accurate information can be hard to come by. While the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, or USCIS, provides helpful information, many low-income immigrants either do not know about this information or how to access it. In addition, the high costs associated with naturalization—\$595 per application—test requirements, and the lengthy process for naturalizations are all deterrents.<sup>49</sup> In 2010, according to the Department of Homeland Security, about 8 million legal permanent residents were eligible to apply but had not done so.<sup>50</sup>

By the same token, the demand for English-language instruction by newcomers vastly outstrips the supply of teachers.<sup>51</sup> Programs that were robust in the past have been decimated in the face of state fiscal crises. A Migration Policy Institute study from 2007 concluded that, “the need for English language and literacy instruction by the nation's [legal permanent residents] and unauthorized immigrants dwarfs the scale and abilities of the current service system.” As programs are further scaled back, the ability to address the need for English instruction will depend on creative and bold public-private partnerships.



Haitian immigrant Jean Emy Pierre, center, head chef at Colors, a restaurant co-owned by a multinational immigrant staff, with his kitchen staff as they prepare for dinner customers in New York, Tuesday May 22, 2007.

AP PHOTOS/BEBETO MATTHEWS

Naturalization and English acquisition are important milestones along the road in immigrants' journey toward full political and economic membership in their host society. As such, the U.S. government should actively promote and support integration efforts that will smooth the way for people who have been and will continue to be vitally crucial to America's future growth and prosperity.

### **Immigration reform for a stronger nation**

The current immigration system is badly broken and undermines our economy, family unity, and hampers the process of integration. Congress can and should enact policies that allow the United States to benefit from the creation of a road map to citizenship for the current population of undocumented immigrants living and working in our country. An immigration policy attuned to America's 21st-century social and economic needs and realities will be one that welcomes immigrants, helps them become fully American, and by doing so strengthens both our families and our economy.

Common-sense solutions to solving our nation's immigration problems are needed, and they include the following key policy reforms:



Research shows that undocumented immigrants who earn legal status and citizenship produce and earn significantly more—24 percent more—than they do when they lack work authorization.<sup>52</sup>

## Legalize the status of the 11 million undocumented “Americans in waiting” currently living and working in the United States by crafting a viable path to citizenship

Designing and implementing a legalization program leading to eventual U.S. citizenship is essential to bringing our immigration system into the 21st century. The social and economic benefits that come with granting a road map to full citizenship will go a long way in fixing our nation’s deeply flawed immigration system. A path to citizenship leads to higher wages for naturalized immigrants both immediately and over the long term, and it raises the wages of the native born as well, because immigrants tend to be complementary workers who help make Americans more productive, which in turn expands the economy.<sup>53</sup>

## Enact visa reforms that replace unauthorized immigration and excessive backlogs with a flexible framework that advances the nation’s dual interest in economic growth and family unity

The demands of global competitiveness and a highly interconnected world require smarter channels for legal immigration into this country. Immigrants serve important roles, and family-based immigration has created the foundation for strong, entrepreneurial communities across the country. Employment-based immigration levels must not

be pitted against family-based immigration. Target immigration levels should be adjusted to acknowledge that both family- and employment-based immigration are engines of economic dynamism. Creating a process to aggressively clear the multi-year backlogs in the family- and employment-based visa systems will preserve family unity and revise outdated numeric limitations.

## Ensure smart immigration enforcement that respects the rule of law and due process

Establishing smart enforcement policies and safeguards will provide meaningful reform. Restoring the rule of law will enhance smart workplace and border-enforcement initiatives with legal reforms that embrace 21st-century economic and social imperatives. Immigration reform must restore the integrity of our borders and the legality of our workforce. Smart immigration enforcement must also create a tough but realistic program to register undocumented immigrants, creating legal channels that are flexible, serve the U.S. interest, and curtail illegal immigration. We must develop a system that treats immigration as a national resource to be managed and embraced. Developing a smart border-technology design to disrupt the drug and human trafficking networks on both sides of our borders will be smart enforcement policy. This requires that we develop strong enforcement mechanisms at both the border and worksite that will expose employers who seek to hire undocumented workers. It also requires implementation of a secure





Maria Fernanda Medina, 7, wraps herself in a United States flag as she marches with her father, Jorge, during a May Day demonstration in San Francisco, Wednesday, May 1, 2013.

AP PHOTO/MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ

employment-verification system in conjunction with legalization of the current undocumented population.

### Promote and ensure an inclusive American identity

The integration of large numbers of immigrants constantly tests and ultimately strengthens and deepens our national commitment to equality, freedom, and opportunity. The success of immigration reform over the long haul will therefore hinge on our ability to integrate current and future immigrants into the

nation's social and cultural fabric by effectively promoting English-language learning, civic education, and volunteerism. Providing additional resources to establish and coordinate integration programs throughout the country—in federal, state, and local entities—will promote the national interest in a civically engaged citizenry. Cultivating public-private partnerships and expanding the process of integration beyond arrival to the education and workplace arenas will allow us to reinforce our commitment to shared national values. The aggressive promotion of civic education will be critical to the success of comprehensive immigration reform efforts over the long

haul. The large numbers of immigrants settling in states and communities beyond traditional receiving regions means that the importance of a well-coordinated effort cannot be overstated.<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusion

Immigration touches every person in America in some way. Everyone except Native Americans and those forcibly brought to the United States on slave ships has an immigrant story in their family history. Immigrants have played a significant role in building our nation and will continue to do so for years to come. The United States must embrace and harness the talents and contributions immigrants

are poised to offer for the sake of our economy and our future competitiveness.

That is why it is imperative that Congress overhauls our antiquated and poorly functioning immigration system so that it serves the needs of a 21st-century economy while promoting an inclusive American identity. Immigrants are not strangers among us but are just like the generations of immigrants from earlier times. They are people like Dr. Quiñones-Hinojosa, individuals who are seeking the American Dream and are ready to offer us their talents and commitment to the American ideals and values we all hold dear. As we move into an increasingly competitive global economy, we cannot afford to decline the gifts they offer. Surely, America needs them just as much as they need her. ■

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## QUICK VIEW

# Americans in Waiting: Immigration Reform for a Stronger Nation

**T**hroughout our nation's history, America has been enriched socially and economically by the presence and participation of immigrants. But today, numerous barriers relegate millions of immigrants into a social and economic underclass. Many immigrant communities lack programs and services that facilitate their integration into

American society. Even more, the failure of immigration policy to offer a clear pathway to citizenship has resulted in a system that undermines the economy and family stability. Congress and the administration must work toward comprehensive immigration reform that meets the needs of the American economy while supporting the inclusion of all. ■

### Facts at a glance

- **11 million:** The estimated number of undocumented immigrants in the United States<sup>1</sup>
- **93 percent:** The share of growth of the U.S. working-age population by 2050 that will come from immigrants and their native-born children<sup>2</sup>
- **24.3 percent:** The share of new engineering and technology companies from 2006 to 2012 that were created by U.S. immigrants<sup>3</sup>
  - These businesses employed 560,000 workers and generated an estimated \$63 billion in sales from 2006 to 2012<sup>4</sup>
- **72 percent:** The share of Americans who favor a pathway to citizenship for the undocumented, including 60 percent of Republicans<sup>5</sup>
- **\$1.4 trillion:** How much higher gross domestic product in the United States would be if undocumented immigrants in the United States enjoyed all of the rights, privileges, and protections of native-born Americans through legal status and citizenship
  - Average U.S. income would grow an additional \$791 billion, and federal, state, and local tax revenues would increase by \$184 billion<sup>6</sup>
- **\$11.2 billion:** The amount that undocumented immigrants paid in state and local taxes alone in 2010, according to the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy<sup>7</sup>

## Call to action

To meet the social and economic needs of the 21st century, our nation must develop an immigration policy that welcomes immigrants, supports families, and strengthens our economy. Specifically, federal policymakers must take the following actions:

- Legalize the status of and offer a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants
- Enact visa reforms that replace unauthorized immigration and excessive backlogs with a flexible framework that advances the nation's dual interest in economic growth and family unity
- Ensure smart immigration enforcement that respects the rule of law and due process
- Promote and ensure an inclusive American identity

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# What Will America Be? Mass Incarceration and the Threat to the American Experiment

BY MICHELLE ALEXANDER



Fifteen years ago, a young black man walked into my office and forever changed the way I viewed not only our criminal justice system but also how I viewed myself as a civil rights lawyer and advocate. I wish I had known then what I know now.

At the time, I was the director of the Racial Justice Project of the ACLU of Northern California. We had launched a major campaign against racial profiling by law enforcement, known as the “Driving While Black or Brown Campaign.” We were planning to sue a number of police departments that were employing discriminatory stop-and-search tactics. I was looking for the perfect plaintiff—the poster boy for

our litigation challenging racial profiling by the Oakland Police Department.

One day, this young man walked into my office carrying a stack of papers about three inches thick and almost immediately I realized that he might be the one. The papers he was carrying included detailed notes of his encounters with the police over a nine-month period of time. It was an extraordinary amount of documentation and detail. But as we were poring over his notes, he said something that made me pause. I interrupted him and said, “What did you just say? Did you just say that you’re a drug felon?”

We had been screening people with prior criminal records. We believed we could not represent



someone with a felony record as a named plaintiff in a racial profiling case, because we knew he would be cross-examined about his prior criminal history, thus undermining his credibility and distracting the jury's attention away from the discriminatory police conduct.

Finally, this young man said, "Yeah, yeah, I'm a felon—a drug felon—but the police planted drugs on me and then they beat up me and my friend. I can tell you all about it. I got names, I got..."

I cut him off. I tried to explain why I couldn't represent him and he kept trying to give me more details. I cut him off again and explained once more that there was nothing I could do for him. He kept begging and pleading, and then he snapped: "You're no better than the police! The minute I tell you I'm a felon, you just stop listening. What's to become of me? What am I supposed to do? I can't get a job anywhere because of my felony record—*anywhere*. I can't even get into public housing because of my record. I have to sleep in my grandmother's basement at night, because nowhere else will take me in. How am I supposed to feed myself? I can't even get food stamps—not even food—because of my drug felony. What's to become of me? How am I supposed to take care of myself as a man?"

As he shouted, he was ripping up his notes. All of the notes he had taken over the past nine months were torn into bits. As he walked out, he said over his shoulder, "You're no better than the police. I can't believe I trusted you."

Several months later, I learned he was telling the truth. I opened my newspaper and the Oakland Riders police scandal was front-page news. A gang of Oakland police officers, otherwise known as a drug task force, had been stopping, frisking, searching, and planting drugs on people—often while beating them up. It was only then that the light bulb finally went on for me.

In that moment, I realized that he was right about me. I was no better than the Oakland police. The minute that young man told me that he was a felon, I stopped listening. That moment of realization was the beginning of asking myself and others a lot of hard questions. I began to do an enormous amount of research, and what I learned through that process blew my mind.



I learned there are more African American adults under correctional control today—in prison or jail, on probation or parole—than were enslaved in 1850. In many large urban areas, more than half of working-age African American men now have criminal records and are thus subject to legalized discrimination for the rest of their lives in employment, housing, access to education, and public benefits. The rate of Latino imprisonment is astronomical as well. Women of color are now the fastest-growing segment of the prison system.

I also learned that who is behind bars is only part of the story. Of the 7.3 million people who are under correctional control, fewer than 2 million are in prison. The rest are in jail or on probation or parole, and millions more are trapped in a parallel social universe—a permanent second-class status that strips people of the very rights supposedly won in the civil rights movement. The War on Drugs and the “get tough on crime” movement gave birth to this vast, new racial undercaste and both political parties are responsible.

Above all, though, I learned that I made a tragic mistake during my encounter with that young man years ago. My error was not simply failing to represent an innocent man. My crime was imagining there was some path to racial and social justice that did not include those we view as *guilty*.

We stand at a critical moment in our history. Given the momentous demographic shifts that our country is experiencing, we cannot continue to travel

this road. If diversity is to be our strength, we cannot write off entire communities defined by race and class. Our workforce needs all hands on deck; our families need parents who can provide both economic and emotional support. It was always immoral and indefensible to write off the incarcerated population—now it is not only wrong, but it also endangers the future and promise of America.

Research suggests that the most punitive nations in the world are the most diverse, while the most homogeneous nations are the most compassionate. It seems that human beings reflexively condemn and punish those who seem different. Given our nation’s racial history, mass incarceration may present the ultimate test of whether the American experiment can succeed. Can we—despite long odds—become a nation where “liberty and justice for all” is more than a slogan, but a genuine expression of the American creed? Can we learn to overcome the punitive impulse toward “others” and extend care and concern to all of us, even the millions we’ve labeled as guilty—the so-called criminals?

I believe the answer is yes. The road that leads to that higher ground is not well traveled, but the direction we must go is no mystery. If we are serious about ending mass incarceration in America, we must commit ourselves to building a movement for racial and social justice. Mere tinkering with the machine through piecemeal policy reform is not enough. This system of mass incarceration is now so deeply entrenched in our social, political, and economic structure that is not going to just fade away.

Its dismantling is going to require a major shift in public consciousness.

But this need not overwhelm us. What is required is clear. We must end the War on Drugs once and for all. The time has come to shift to a public health model for dealing with drug addiction and drug abuse. We must also end legal discrimination against people released from prison—discrimination that denies them basic human rights to work, shelter, education, and food. Last but not least, we must shift from a purely punitive approach to dealing with all forms of crime—including violent crime—to a more restorative and rehabilitative approach, one that takes

seriously the experience of the victim, the offender, and the community as a whole.

We have a lot of work to do. We need a human rights movement for quality education, not cycles of incarceration. We need jobs not jails, compassion not contempt. People must be afforded health care and drug treatment on demand, rather than being sentenced to hard time. We need a movement that resists the punitive impulse, a movement that is fully committed to justice for each and every one of us—justice for all. Then, and only then, to borrow the great poet Langston Hughes’s words, “will America be what it must become.” ■

# Dismantle the Cradle to Prison Pipeline—Our Future Depends on It

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

**I**n 1968, the day after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was shot and killed, I went into riot-torn Washington, D.C., neighborhoods and schools urging children not to loot, get arrested, and ruin their futures. A young black boy about 12 years old looked me squarely in the eyes and said, “Lady, what future? I ain’t got no future. I ain’t got nothing to lose.” I’ve spent my life working to prove that boy’s truth wrong. I had no idea it would be so hard.

Today a toxic cocktail of violence, poverty, racial disparities in child-serving systems, poor education, and racially unjust zero-tolerance policies are fueling a Cradle to Prison Pipeline® crisis that is funneling millions of poor children and adults into dead-end, powerless, and hopeless lives.

A black boy born in 2001 has a one-in-three chance of going to prison in his lifetime, and a Latino boy has a one-in-six chance of the same fate. The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world: 7.1 million adults are under some form of correctional supervision including prison, jail, probation, or parole. Black males have an imprisonment rate that is nearly seven times higher than white males, and Hispanic males have a rate more than twice that of their white counterparts. This epidemic of mass incarceration has created one of the most dangerous crises for the black community since slavery and it affects everyone in our nation.

Federal spending on prisons totaled \$6.6 billion in 2012 and annual state spending on corrections tops \$51 billion. This federal and state spending spree to warehouse prisoners has perverted our nation’s

priorities. States spend on average two and half times more per prisoner than they spend per public school student, this at a time when a majority of children of all racial and income backgrounds cannot read or compute at grade level in fourth- or eighth-grade and huge numbers of youth drop out of schools. The privatization of juvenile and adult prisons is yet another added danger. The world's largest for-profit, private prison corporation, the Corrections Corporation of America, recently offered to run the prison systems in 48 states for 20 years if the states would guarantee a 90 percent occupancy rate.

The greatest threat to America's democracy and economic security comes from no enemy, but rather from our failure to dismantle this Cradle to Prison Pipeline and to invest in and prepare all our children for the future. Tomorrow is today. Children of color, who already are a majority of babies being born in the United States and who will be a majority of our child population within this decade, face bleak futures without high-quality early childhood programs and high-quality, equitable public schools that would prepare them for college and our workforce.

Closing the income and racial achievement gaps between poor and non-poor children and between white and nonwhite children is an urgent national priority. Today, every 1.5 seconds during the school year, a public school student is suspended; every 8 seconds during the school year, a public high school student drops out; every 19 seconds a child is arrested; and every 3 hours and 15 minutes, a child or teen is killed by a gun.

As soon as a child gets in trouble, too often the first thing schools do is kick them out of class or out of school, despite the fact that most suspensions punish nonviolent offenses. Zero-tolerance school discipline policies push children out of school at the first sign of disobedience using widely subjective catchall offenses like being “disrespectful” or being “disruptive.” It should be of little surprise when so many of the children who are punished by being pushed out of school go on to become high school dropouts and stay away from school for good. And it should be



even less surprising when many of the young people who drop out of school are the same ones whose behavior we continue to complain about, the same ones we fear, and the same ones we pay to build costly prison cells for later.

Here again the racial disparities are clear: New data show that one in five black boys and more than 1 in 10 black girls received an out-of-school suspension during the 2009-10 school year. Black students were more than three-and-a-half times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their white peers for the same offenses. The findings are even more troubling for the most serious forms of discipline: More than 70 percent of students involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement are Hispanic or black. We need to get to the root of these disparities and rid our schools of this dual standard of discipline.

We must dismantle the Cradle to Prison Pipeline and replace it with a pipeline that leads all children to college and productive work. We must invest in prevention and early intervention. We must help children in their earliest years, so they can all start school ready to learn. We need teachers who recognize and value the ability of each child to learn. We need to replace zero-tolerance policies with real alternatives to keep students engaged and learning in safe schools and out of the juvenile and criminal justice systems. And we must confront the violence that saturates our culture and threatens our children and us.

We know what works. Let's close the gap between what we know and what we do. The future of our children and of our nation depends on it. ■

**CHAPTER NINE**

**Locked-Up  
Potential:  
A Blueprint for  
Ensuring Justice  
for All**

**BY JULIE AJINKYA**



Salacia Johnson was just 6 years old when she was arrested last year for throwing a temper tantrum in her kindergarten classroom in Milledgeville, Georgia. Salecia was tossing books and toys when she pushed over a shelf that hit her principal in the leg. A zero-tolerance discipline policy allowed a school official to call the police. When the officers arrived at the school, they handcuffed the kindergartener, put her in a squad car, and took her to the police station where she was later released to her mother. Salecia now wakes in the night screaming, “They’re coming to get me!”<sup>5</sup>

Clarence Aaron is an African American male who in 1993, at the age of 24, was sentenced to three life terms for his tangential role in a cocaine deal with a relative, where he introduced a supplier to a dealer and was simply present during the transaction. Despite the fact that this was his first criminal offense, and he was not the buyer, seller, or supplier, Clarence received the longest sentence of all those involved.<sup>6</sup> Although federal law adjusted sentencing guidelines in 2010 so that someone convicted of the same crime today would receive a much less severe sentence, they fail to apply to Clarence, and he continues to sit in a federal prison in Alabama.

## Economic benefits of reducing disparities in the criminal justice system

- The National Council on Crime and Delinquency estimates that if 80 percent of people who have been incarcerated for nonviolent offenses were sentenced to effective programming such as an alternative to prison, states and localities could save at least \$7.2 billion annually.<sup>1</sup>
- Making the recent reforms to penalties for crack cocaine possession in the Fair Sentencing Act retroactive would save \$2 billion over the next three decades.<sup>2</sup>
- Studies suggest that using probation and alternative sentences for low-level, nonviolent offenses would save \$22,250 annually for each incarcerated individual.<sup>3</sup>
- The use of specialty courts—for example, drug courts—could save on average \$14,000 to \$23,000 every year per incarcerated individual.<sup>4</sup>



A 42-year-old African American father applied for public housing for himself and his three children, who were living with him at the time. But an earlier drug possession charge, for which he pleaded guilty and served 30 days in jail, allowed housing officials to deny his application. Because he subsequently found himself homeless, he lost custody of his children. The collateral consequences of a minor drug offense tore his family apart.<sup>7</sup>

All three of these individuals' stories share one thing in common: our country's broken criminal-justice system. The rate of incarceration in the United States has spiraled out of control—with nearly 2.3 million people in prison or jail, the rate is now about 240 percent higher than it was in 1980, and 60 percent of this population is comprised of nonviolent offenders.<sup>8</sup> Another 4.8 million individuals<sup>9</sup> are on probation or parole, also mostly for nonviolent offenses. This tragic scenario generates a much larger inmate population than that of the 27 nations of the European Union combined and means we, alone, incarcerate nearly a *quarter* of the prisoners in the entire world. And while cash-strapped states are shutting down institutions that provide important public services such as hospitals and universities, prison expansion is eating up higher percentages of state budgets.

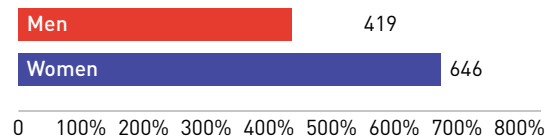
It does not need to be this way. Continued prison expansion has not been a response to an increase in actual crime. In fact, research shows that if incarceration rates tracked violent crime rates, the incarceration rate would have peaked in 1992 and then by 2008



The current criminal justice system not only wastes important state dollars that could be spent on vital services, but it also fails to keep the public safe because the system emphasizes punishment rather than rehabilitation.

**Figure 1**  
**Rise in incarceration**

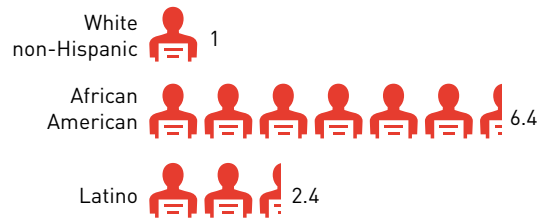
*From 1980 to 2010*



Source: Sentencing Project; [http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/cc\\_Incarcerated\\_Incarcerated\\_Women\\_Factsheet\\_Sep24sp.pdf](http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/cc_Incarcerated_Incarcerated_Women_Factsheet_Sep24sp.pdf)

**Figure 2**  
**Racial disparities**

*Men of color were incarcerated in state and federal prison at higher rates than non-Hispanic white men*



Source: Sentencing Project; [http://sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/rd\\_Changing%20Racial%20Dynamics%202013.pdf](http://sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/rd_Changing%20Racial%20Dynamics%202013.pdf)

would have fallen back to about the same level it was in 1980.<sup>10</sup> And while it is true that many states have seen decreases in their prison populations, there has still been a rise in the number of immigrant detention facilities, in addition to private prisons, county jails, and gender-specific facilities.<sup>11</sup> The current criminal justice system not only wastes important state dollars that could be spent on vital services, but it also fails to keep the public safe because the system emphasizes punishment rather than rehabilitation.

What's more, racial disparities in the current criminal justice system are outrageous, leading to a system of racial disenfranchisement and inequality that some argue we have not seen since slavery or its aftermath of codified segregation, Jim Crow.<sup>12</sup> African Americans account for roughly 40 percent of the nation's inmate population (while comprising only 13 percent of the total population) and Latinos account for slightly less, representing 21 percent of inmates (while being only 16 percent of the population). Even after offenders are released, they still face a lifetime of exclusion—often insurmountable job discrimination and disqualification from any public benefits that would help them get back on their feet as productive citizens such as food stamps, public housing, and even student loans.<sup>13</sup>

The rampant and disproportionate imprisonment of people of color is a national tragedy. Not only is the justice system horrifically unfair to those it locks up and undermines its very name, but it also fails to serve the nation's interests and jeopardizes our economic security. State spending on corrections reached more than \$52 billion in 2011, which research shows makes corrections spending the second-fastest-growing budget item for states.<sup>14</sup> While our nation is still trying to recover from the Great Recession, we should be spending these much-needed dollars on employment, education, health care, and a host of other programs that help Americans re-establish their economic security and sense of well-being. The cost-savings arguments are clear: By making short-term investments in bipartisan reform measures, such as diverting people charged

with lower-level drug offenses into treatment instead of incarceration, some states have been able to reduce corrections budgets and save precious public funds without compromising public safety.<sup>15</sup>

But the economic imperative of criminal justice reform goes beyond cost savings. Securing American prosperity in a hypercompetitive global economy going forward will require leveraging all of the people power we can muster. America cannot afford to let millions of people languish in prisons and then release them without useful skills and unprepared to be productive members of society. In locking up such significant numbers of our able-bodied, working-age men (and increasingly women), we are also inhibiting our nation's collective human potential and denying the reality of our future workforce needs.

The hopeful news is that smart criminal justice reform has already begun in numerous states across the country. This makes sense given the fact that the state prison population comprises the vast majority of the nation's incarcerated population: In 2011 inmates in state prisons comprised 87.1 percent of sentenced prisoners nationwide.<sup>16</sup> Yet as encouraging as these opportunities offered by states are, the scale of incarceration should not be forgotten. Most states continue to employ a range of mandatory sentencing policies, make drug arrests in record numbers, and frequently enact practices that extend the length of time that individuals spend in prison. Moreover, there are overly punitive practices in place that put youth on the track to incarceration

earlier—criminalizing temper tantrums for children as young as age 4 and warehousing children instead of educating them.

This is why the federal government also has a crucial role to play as the steward to our future—a future where the communities hurt the most by this broken system—communities of color—will soon be the country's majority population. We simply cannot afford to make these mistakes any longer. In this difficult economic climate, criminal justice reforms are popular with both parties because elected officials are finally starting to realize that their communities are being deprived of important resources when state budgets are all but decimated by incarceration costs.

Public safety is paramount, but rigorous research has demonstrated that we can reduce spending without jeopardizing that safety by supporting policies that:

- Help youth to stay in school and on the path toward employment
- Modify sentencing and release policies
- Encourage a focus on rehabilitation instead of punishment
- Reinforce transition back into society after release
- Reduce recidivism after release

## Keeping youth on track

Our broken criminal justice system does not just impact adults. Some of the most vulnerable youth—behaviorally troubled, low-income, and youth of color—are often referred to juvenile courts, which, instead of helping youth get back on track by focusing on interventions that have proven to prevent further disruptive behavior, serve as a feeder into the adult criminal-justice system. African American youth are 4.5 times more likely and Latino youth are 2.5 times more likely than their white peers to be detained for the very same crime.<sup>17</sup> Native American youth are disproportionately incarcerated in state correctional facilities and waived into the criminal-justice adult system. Native American youth are 1.5 times more likely than white youth to both be placed in state prisons and waived into the adult criminal-justice system.<sup>18</sup>

Even more troubling, the juvenile justice system has reached deeply into our country's public education system and is fueled by an increase in zero-tolerance school policies that emerged in the 1990s and that disproportionately discipline and criminalize youth of color in our schools. Increased police presence in schools also makes youth feel like criminals under constant surveillance and leads to an adversarial environment that pushes students, particularly at-risk students, out of school. These overly punitive policies generate what is often called the “school-to-prison pipeline.”

One of the greatest failures of these policies is that they ignore individual circumstances and lack

common-sense discretion. A 6-year-old child should be allowed to throw a tantrum without being led out of a classroom in handcuffs. A student should be allowed to lend another student Midol, an over-the-counter pain reliever, without being expelled.<sup>19</sup> These are just two instances that have been reported under such policies.

While school safety should certainly be of utmost concern, there is no evidence that such policies actually make schools safer for children or improve student behavior. Zero-tolerance policies were initially meant to remove students from school for the possession of a weapon. While these policies still make sense when applied to the presence of guns in schools, they have since led to mandatory expulsions for a wide variety of behaviors—the majority of which involve no violence or threat of violence whatsoever.

Increased police presence has also been shown to have no impact on improved school safety.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, research shows that schools with on-site law enforcement end up criminalizing behaviors traditionally resolved through standard school discipline policies.<sup>21</sup> Because school resource officers, receive little to no training before being deployed in schools, they often do not have a clear understanding of their role within the larger educational context and needs of children they are meant to protect. This only hurts the reputation of noble law-enforcement agencies and does nothing to improve the educational achievement of students.<sup>22</sup>

Students of color are at particular risk for these types of suspensions and expulsions, which puts



In this Thursday, Jan. 31, 2013 file photo, Douglas County Sheriff Department Lt. Brian Murphy plays with students on the playground during recess at Buffalo Ridge Elementary School in Castle Pines, Colo.

AP PHOTO/BRENNAN LINSLEY

them at greater risk for incarceration. In 2012 the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights released new data revealing that African American students are more than three-and-a-half times more likely to be suspended or expelled *for the same conduct* than their white peers.<sup>23</sup> And more than 70 percent of students who are involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement are Hispanic or African American. What's more, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, or LGBT, youth—particularly gender-nonconforming girls—are up to three times more likely to experience harsh disciplinary treatment by school administrators than their

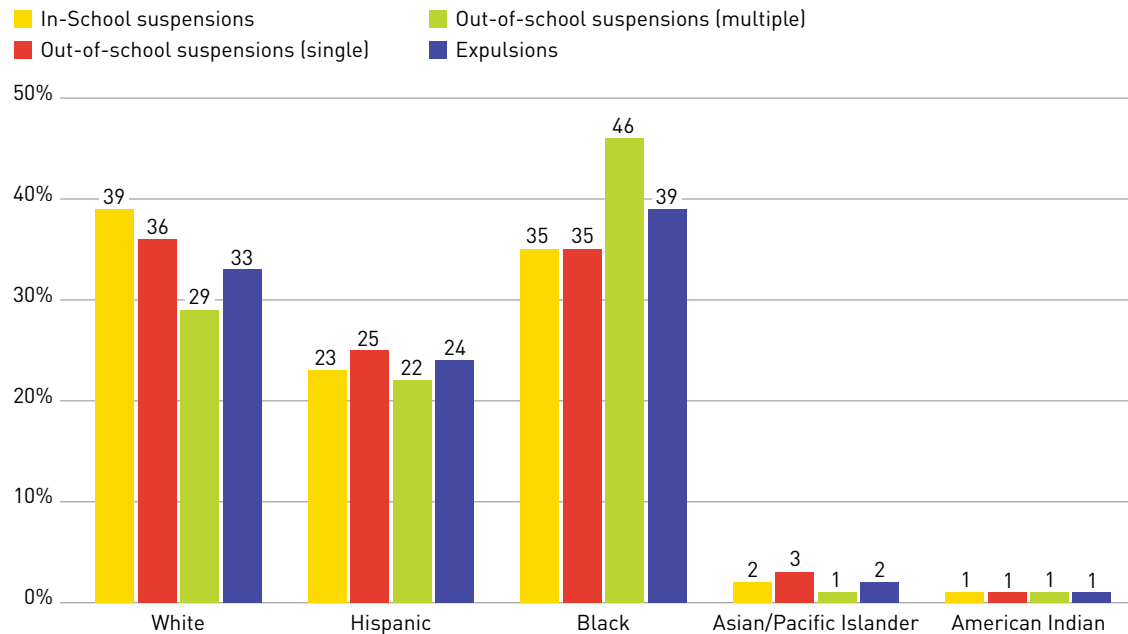
heterosexual counterparts. Of these LGBT youth, 60 percent are black or Latino.<sup>24</sup>

School suspensions are linked to a host of negative outcomes. Not only are suspended students more likely to underperform academically and eventually drop out of school, but they are also more likely to commit a crime down the road and end up incarcerated as adults.<sup>25</sup> Youth of color are also more likely to have their cases formally processed and to be transferred to adult facilities. African American youth are more likely than white youth to be formally charged in juvenile court, even when referred

Figure 3

### School discipline rates by race

Disparate Discipline Rates, March 2012 (in percentages)



Source: Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights; <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-2012-data-summary.pdf>.

for the same type of offense. Though just more than half of drug cases involving white youth result in formal processing, more than three-quarters of drug cases involving African American youth result in formal processing, and African American youth are somewhat more likely to be waived to adult criminal court than white youth. In 2002 more than 4,100 youth under age 18 were sent to adult prisons, and three out of four individuals were youth of color.<sup>26</sup>

And just as indigent defense is a serious problem in the adult justice system, in many regions of the country, indigent juveniles are also receiving inadequate counsel. This clearly demonstrates that youth of color are systematically and disproportionately being tracked into our nation's prisons.

Another troubling trend is the criminalization of truancy. Instead of focusing on the causes of

truancy—which are often linked to economic hardship at home—school administrators, elected officials, and prosecutors are tackling the problem of student absence through the criminal-justice system.<sup>27</sup> Schools are increasingly policed while students and parents are slapped with large fines. If that weren't enough, families who cannot afford to pay these fines are threatened with jail time. Some states order that children are held or detained for truancy, which effectively criminalizes and warehouses children for school absence regardless of individual circumstances.

That said, there are some local campaigns fighting to decriminalize truancy that have gained traction and accomplished changes in policy that previously disproportionately targeted black, Hispanic, and low-income youth. The Community Rights Campaign in Los Angeles, for instance, spent five years fighting the city's daytime curfew policy, which led to the rampant ticketing and criminalization of its public school student population, which is overwhelmingly black, Latino, and low income.<sup>28</sup> After organizing community forums and students against such policies, the campaign won a major victory in 2011 when city councilmembers introduced an amendment to the law that established a three-tier system that only fined a student after his third truancy and reduced fines from \$250 to \$20 after a maximum of 20 hours community service.<sup>29</sup>

There are also community-led initiatives that are seeing great results in improving public safety such as “intelligence-led policing,” which encourages

more collaboration between law enforcement and the communities they serve.<sup>30</sup> Cities suffering from high rates of violent crime have seen significant reductions in gun homicide, for instance, after implementing a strategy that not only asks law enforcement to gather sophisticated data on the worst offenders, but to also partner with social-service providers and community representatives to meet with offenders and explain how their actions hurt their community and offer assistance to find gainful employment that does not involve illegal activity.<sup>31</sup> Given the success of this alternative approach on not only reducing incarceration costs but also improving public safety, it would be wise to incentivize law enforcement to invest more federal funds in such community-led approaches.

Given that the majority of births today are already children of color and that the under-18 population will be majority communities of color before the end of this decade, it's absolutely imperative that we stop criminalizing our young people in the precise institutions—schools—where we are supposed to be investing in their success.

## Adult incarceration

There are a number of problems with today's criminal-justice system. Longer sentences, increased convictions for property offenses, and drug offenses are some of the most significant causes of the explosion in incarceration rates. Those convicted of drug offenses comprise half of the federal prison



Robert Lee Stinson, second right, hugs a family friend after he walked out of the New Lisbon, Wis., Correctional Institution. He was freed after 23 years behind bars for a murder he didn't commit.

AP PHOTO/ANDY MANIS



population, and the number of drug offenders in state prisons has increased 13-fold since 1980.<sup>32</sup> Arrests for marijuana possession in particular—most often a nonviolent minor offense—surpassed arrests for violent crime in 2011.<sup>33</sup> In that year, there were 757,969 total marijuana arrests, compared to 534,704 violent crime arrests.<sup>34</sup>

The War on Drugs, which began under President Richard Nixon in the 1970s and intensified under President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, ushered in a series of laws that created financial incentives for local law enforcement to prioritize capturing nonviolent drug offenders. From huge federal cash grants awarded to law enforcement agencies that were willing to make drug-law enforcement a priority to asset forfeiture laws, which allowed state and local law enforcement agencies to keep the majority of cash and assets seized in drug busts for their own use, made waging the drug war a money maker.<sup>35</sup>

These law enforcement methods have been waged almost exclusively in communities of color, and this is why the racial disparities are glaring in the criminal justice system. More than 60 percent of people in prison are people of color and, though studies show that the majority of illegal drug users and dealers in the United States are white, two-thirds of people imprisoned in state prison for drug offenses are African American or Hispanic.<sup>36</sup>

While ultimate discretion is handed to law enforcement in waging the War on Drugs, the same discretion is often stripped from judges through

mandatory minimum legislation. Mandatory minimums apply the faulty one-size-fits-all approach to sentencing and prevent judges from fitting the punishment to the individual and applying proven alternatives to detention. These laws punish nonviolent offenders the worst and incentivize defendants to pursue plea bargains, since one of the ways to reduce your sentence is to give prosecutors information on other offenders.<sup>37</sup> Mandatory minimums are also exorbitantly expensive for taxpayers because they fill prisons to the brim with people who do not need to be there.

Again, states are leading the way in sentencing reforms. As early as 2004 Connecticut repealed its crack and powder cocaine sentencing disparities. In 2009, New York reformed the infamous Rockefeller Drug Laws, which created mandatory minimum sentences that almost immediately led to a surge in drug convictions for nonviolent, low-level drug possession and sales, yet no measurable decrease in overall crime.<sup>38</sup> One way states are encouraged to reduce racial disparities in sentencing is through the use of racial impact statements. Similar to fiscal and environmental impact statements, these statements force policymakers to assess the unintended potential racial impact of proposed legislation prior to enactment. In 2008 Iowa became the first state in the nation to require policymakers to prepare racial impact statements for proposed legislation that affects sentencing, probation, or parole policies, after a study revealed that the state topped the nation in racial disparity in its prison population.<sup>39</sup>

In 2010, as the result of years of hard work from those seeking to highlight the racial injustice of mandatory minimums, the Fair Sentencing Act was passed at the federal level to reduce the disparity between the mandatory minimums for crack cocaine offenses versus powder cocaine offenses. Prior to the new law, it took 500 grams of powder cocaine to trigger the same minimum sentence as 5 grams of crack cocaine; given that most people charged with crack cocaine offenses are black and most powder cocaine defendants are white or Latino, this led to huge racial disparities.<sup>40</sup> At the time African Americans made up 80 percent of people convicted for a federal crack cocaine offense. The new law reduced the sentencing quantity from 100-to-1 to 18-to-1.<sup>41</sup>

While the racial disparities have been reduced, they have not been eliminated because mandatory minimums continue to significantly contribute to increasing state and federal prison populations. And individuals who were convicted and sentenced prior to 2010 were not covered by the change in the law. So there is still work to be done, but here too states are leading the way. In the 2012 election, for instance, Californians voted overwhelmingly to reform the state's infamous "three strikes" law, by requiring that life sentences could only be imposed when the third conviction was for a "serious or violent" offense.<sup>42</sup> This is projected to save the state \$70 million to \$100 million annually from a reduction in parole hearings and a lower prison population.<sup>43</sup> California has also successfully passed criminal justice realignment legislation, which aims to decrease the number of

people incarcerated and shifts the responsibility and resources from the state to counties for the custody, treatment, and supervision of individuals convicted of specified nonviolent, nonsex crimes.

Once individuals are sentenced, however, there are a host of other issues regarding their treatment while in jail and prison custody, including but not limited to prison overcrowding, a widening staff-to-inmate ratio, exploitative prison labor practices, and the disruption to important family connectivity. For instance, while we know that an inmate's ability to stay in contact with his or her family dramatically reduces recidivism rates, phone company monopolies are allowed to charge exorbitant rates, which can be as high as \$20 for a 15-minute call to relatives.<sup>44</sup> These phone charges are billed to the inmate's loved ones and the commission rates that families are forced to pay vary from state to state but can be as high as 65 percent. A commission rate of 61.5 percent in Alabama, for instance, translates into families having to pay 89 cents a minute on top of a \$3.95 connection fee every time an inmate simply wants to pick up a phone and talk to his or her family.<sup>45</sup>

Further, despite evidence that inmates often suffer from drug addiction and a disproportionate number of individuals exhibit symptoms of mental disorders, substance-abuse treatment and mental-health services are hard to come by. There are often waiting lists for prisoners to receive such treatment, or there are eligibility requirements that make it nearly impossible for inmates to qualify.

In addition to expanding access to treatment and services, prisons should also provide incentives for good behavior and motivate the completion of such programs, the combination of which has shown to not only cut prison costs but to also reduce recidivism rates.<sup>46</sup> Earned credit programs that provide sentence reductions for exemplary time served in prison would encourage a cascade of positive results: inmates would be motivated to complete treatment, educational, and vocational programs; decreased sentences would shrink prison populations; and smaller prison populations would save taxpayers money.

Again, states are leading the way. They're doing so because state lawmakers realize that criminal justice reform receives strong bipartisan support, saves millions of dollars, and is popular with the public because it improves public safety. Mississippi, for example, saved \$31.4 million in 2004 by expanding its earned credit program. After a host of other reforms implemented between 2004 and 2010, Mississippi's crime rate has now fallen to its lowest level since 1984.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, in 2011, Texas expanded earned credit programs for individuals in prison for up to 20 percent of their sentences for completing treatment, educational, and vocational programs; this reform is projected to save Texas \$49 million by 2013.<sup>48</sup>

Justice reinvestment strategies have also become popular. This approach aims to reduce correction costs and improve public safety by focusing on comprehensive data analysis to figure out the root cause of each state's prison growth, engaging various



Savings that state agencies realize from lowered incarceration rates can also be funneled back to the agencies that helped lower the incarceration rate, thereby incentivizing and rewarding their performance.



Ex-offender Heber Nixon Jr. is seen at work in Philadelphia, May 1, 2008. Philadelphia is making a concerted new effort to spur the hiring of ex-convicts amid a renewed interest across the United States in dealing with the problems of high recidivism and exploding prison populations.

AP PHOTO/MATT ROURKE

stakeholders in the community, focusing resources on the individuals who are most likely to reoffend, strengthening community supervision, and reinvesting savings in high-performing programs such as substance-abuse treatment, mental-health programs, and programs aimed at reducing recidivism. Savings that state agencies realize from lowered incarceration rates can also be funneled back to the agencies that helped lower the incarceration rate, thereby incentivizing and rewarding their performance. After Texas became the first state to complete this process in 2007, generating \$443 million in upfront savings, 15 other states have designed similar strategies.<sup>49</sup>

Instead of wasting billions of taxpayer dollars on a system that is spiraling out of control, we should make sure that our prisons aren't overcrowded with inmates who should no longer be locked up—non-violent offenders, “good behavior” inmates, and the elderly to name just a few. We should invest in programs that are well documented to keep us all safe by reducing recidivism rates.

## Successful reintegration

We know that 95 percent of state prisoners will be released at some point, yet we do little to prepare them to be productive members of society.<sup>50</sup> In fact, obstacle after obstacle is put in their path.

Despite numerous studies that demonstrate post-secondary education has an enormous effect on

reducing recidivism and the substantial savings to society that this generates, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act banned prisoners from using Pell Grants from 1994 onward. This policy change is in direct contradiction to the education funds' late namesake, former Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-RI), who believed that education was our “primary hope for rehabilitating prisoners.”<sup>51</sup>

When inmates are released they are disenfranchised in ways that go beyond the loss of their voting rights. They are also deprived of power and stability in very basic ways—from fighting job discrimination to trying to simply qualify for affordable housing. Often inmates are released back into society without any transition assistance, and this is a strong predictor of whether they will reoffend and have to return to prison.<sup>52</sup>

Once again, we see local campaigns leading the way in reforms. The Fortune Society, a re-entry service organization in New York City, participated in a campaign to ensure that employers could not discriminate against job applicants solely because of their criminal record.<sup>53</sup> In response, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission approved updated enforcement guidance in 2012 that warns employers they might be in danger of violating Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act if their employment policies have a disproportionately adverse impact based on race or other protected categories. This type of change helps to build a more level playing field for formerly incarcerated people seeking work and helps broaden the pool of qualified applications for employers.<sup>54</sup>

The lack of standardized procedures for parole and probation assessment also leads to disparate treatment. Parole violators account for about a third of all prison admissions and about half of all African Americans admitted to prison are admitted for one of these technical violations.<sup>55</sup>

After inmates have served their time, we should do everything in our power to make sure that they have the right tools to become productive members of our society. We should do this because it is the right thing to do. We should do this because it doesn't make sense and it is unfair to punish people twice for the same offense. We should do this because we're going to need all hands on deck as we move into our shared future.

## Policy recommendations

Our current criminal justice system is clearly broken, but it doesn't have to stay this way. There is strong evidence at the state and local level of policies that work, including programs that help find alternatives to the policing of our children's schools and make sure that children aren't tracked into prison for the rest of their lives; programs that reform harsh sentencing laws; programs that make sure the indigent receive proper legal representation; programs that ensure inmates have access to treatment, services, and education in prison to help them become productive members of our society; and programs that help the formerly incarcerated with the difficult transition to jobs, affordable

housing, and overall stability. The federal government should learn from these state innovations and establish a policy framework that encourages our criminal-justice system to promote rehabilitation instead of punishment, productivity instead of decline, and equity instead of the racial and income-based disparities that now run rampant.

CAP and PolicyLink suggest a set of five policy priorities that will ensure that communities of color are not left behind. While these policies by themselves will not fix the entire system, they are pragmatic first measures that we can take right now to make sure that everyone in our society will be able to contribute to making our collective future bright and just.

## Improve data collection

Without access to comprehensive data at all stages of the juvenile and adult justice systems, we will be unable to determine the root causes of prison growth and suggest appropriate solutions. This data collection should seek to better gather information on groups currently disproportionately represented in the justice system, such as LGBT youth, as well as individual-level data, such as the educational attainment of offenders, so we can better understand how education policy can also play a role in reducing our incarcerated population.

- The Department of Justice should expand the budget for its Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Corrections Reporting Program, or

NCRP. Currently funded at less than \$1 million, this program tracks episodes of prison admissions and releases and provides detailed correctional statistics that are crucial for public policy deliberations, but are otherwise difficult to gather since they are typically maintained separately by each of the states and the federal government. Expanding the NCRP's budget would allow the program to address a fundamental limitation—the fact that it currently does not have the capacity to identify offenders who enter and leave probation. This is a project for which a fairly small investment could have a demonstrably large impact. Furthermore, the earmark could stimulate cost savings. The Bureau of Justice Statistics currently fields several overlapping surveys and data-assembly projects that could be eliminated with an expanded National Corrections Reporting Program.

### Ensure that youth are not criminalized and warehoused

We need to make sure that our policies turn our youth into the promising young leaders, voters, and workers they could and should be, instead of criminalizing and warehousing entire populations, which sets them on a one-way track to enter the adult justice system.

- Congress should pass the Youth Promise Act, which provides important resources to communities that want to engage in comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies to decrease

juvenile delinquency and criminal street gang activity. These approaches involve various stakeholders in the community, from law enforcement and court services to schools and social-service agencies to health and mental-health providers and community-based organizations, including faith-based organizations.

- Congress should modify the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act to require states to take concrete steps to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system. Congress should also eliminate the exception that allows states to detain youth for status offenses—for example, truancy, running away, violating curfew laws—with a valid court order, as this provision has effectively led to the continued warehousing of youth of color for minor offenses.
- The Department of Justice should provide a funding pool, similar to the Bureau of Justice Assistance's Justice Assistance Grant, or JAG program, to support innovative approaches that offer productive alternatives to detention for youth.

### Encourage fairness in sentencing

Prisons should be reserved for individuals who commit the most serious offenses, instead of being overcrowded with people who need not be there. We should stop sentencing policies that do not allow judges discretion to consider individual circumstances and that perpetuate rampant racial disparities.

- The president should sign an executive order establishing a Fair Sentencing Act 2010 review board to consider relief for those individuals who are currently serving sentences for crack cocaine offenses that are now discredited. The U.S. Sentencing Commission has already applied retroactive reductions in the federal sentencing guidelines for those offenders, but has no authority to reduce the mandatory penalties. The Bureau of Prisons estimates that retroactivity could result in a savings of more than \$200 million within the first five years after retroactivity takes effect.
- Congress should expand the federal “Sentencing Safety Valve,” which applies to low-level drug cases, permitting judges to avoid having to impose unnecessarily punitive mandatory minimum terms. Federal judges use the safety valve in about a quarter of all drug cases, an indication of their perception that mandatory penalties are frequently excessive. This criteria for use of the safety valve could be expanded to allow judges to use their discretion to sentence less-serious offenders according to guidelines that don’t require imposition of restrictive and rigid minimums.

### Focus on rehabilitation and treatment, not punishment

Our justice system should shift from its overly punitive focus that does not improve our public safety to a framework that emphasizes

rehabilitation and treatment. Knowing full well that most offenders are eventually released, we need to make sure that they are able to complete programming in facilities that would aid their successful transition back into society. We should incentivize the completion of such beneficial programs and treatment with early release credits that reward good behavior.

- The Federal Bureau of Prisons should expand the Residential Drug Abuse Program, or RDAP. This is seen as a largely administrative but also budgetary fix and in accordance with the Obama administration’s focus on shifting from punishment to treatment and education. It has been proven to reduce recidivism and reduce prison costs, but rigid eligibility requirements mean only a small percentage of inmates who could benefit from such a program are allowed to enroll.
- Congress should restore Pell Grant eligibility to the incarcerated. The grant program was established almost 40 years ago to promote access to higher education by providing low-income students with assistance. In 1994 the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act banned prisoners from using these funds, despite the fact that research demonstrates education can contribute to reducing recidivism and even the namesake behind the law, the late Sen. Claiborne Pell, believed that education was the primary hope for rehabilitating prisoners.





Tamar Kraft-Stolar, director of the Women in Prison Project, left, hugs former inmate Rusti Miller-Hill during a rally of the Coalition for Women Prisoners in Albany, N.Y. Tuesday, March 4, 2008. The coalition is advocating to reform the criminal justice system as it affects women in prison.

AP PHOTO/TIM ROSKE

### Connect the formerly incarcerated to good jobs

The pathway to meaningful work at a family-supporting wage can be especially challenging for formerly incarcerated individuals. This population is often among the chronically unemployed. Additionally, the formerly incarcerated often face stigma associated with having a criminal record. To ensure that this population is able to reach its full potential, our nation should make target investments that connect the formerly incarcerated to good jobs and eliminate barriers to employment.

- Congress should establish a competitive grant program with dedicated federal funds to support the employment needs of individuals with barriers to employment through Transitional Jobs Programs.<sup>56</sup>
- Congress should continue funding for the Second Chance Act, which creates incentives for people in prison to engage in re-entry training. The reauthorization of this act should include a formal definition of transitional jobs<sup>57</sup> and make transitional jobs programs an allowed use of Second Chance Act funding, to encourage widespread adoption of



In this July 27, 2011 photo, Michael Frasier transports bags of ice at his job in New Haven, Conn. Frasier, who has been in and out of prison most of his adult life, found employment with help of a prison re-entry program in New Haven.

AP PHOTO/JESSICA HILL

transitional jobs as a holistic approach for the formerly incarcerated. The legislation would improve the coordination of family-centered programs, addiction treatment, employment, mentoring, and other re-entry services that help reduce recidivism and enable the formerly incarcerated to become productive members of society.

- Congress should pass “Ban the Box” legislation, which would prohibit an employer from inquiring into an applicant’s criminal history until the final steps of a job application process.<sup>58</sup> This legislation should provide that agencies may inquire about an applicant’s criminal history only after their job qualifications have been screened and the agency determines the applicant’s qualifications meet the requirements for the position.<sup>59</sup>

### Support re-entry into society

America cannot afford to continue losing the tremendous amount of human capital our society sheds by making it difficult for formerly incarcerated people to successfully reintegrate into society after their release. In order to recapture such potential, our nation must adopt the approach of beginning re-entry on the first day of incarceration. Moreover, once they have served their time, we should do everything possible to guarantee they transition into productive members of our society.

- The Department of Justice should create a task force that would initiate statutory changes to

make it easier for formerly incarcerated people to re-enter society. The task force would base these changes on the results of the American Bar Association project, with funding from the Department of Justice, which is in the process of producing a thorough database of federal and state laws that hinder people with criminal records from the basic things that allow them to re-enter society successfully—like finding a job or obtaining housing. Utilizing these data, the task force should make statutory changes that would prevent people convicted at the federal level from experiencing federal consequences, thereby opening up eligibility to benefits, including veteran benefits and federal housing among others.

- The Department of Housing and Urban Development should expand the eligibility of those who qualify for affordable housing by expanding its definition of homelessness. Right now, many individuals who are released from prison or jail are not considered homeless, because of the current definition of the term of homelessness, despite the research that tells us that the first 24 hours to 48 hours after release are important in relation to recidivism rates. HUD should also stipulate that companies receiving low-income housing tax credits not simply exclude people with prior criminal records.
- Congress should pass the Democracy Restoration Act, which would restore voting rights in federal elections to millions of Americans

who are living, working, and paying taxes in our communities, yet have had their right to vote taken away because of a past criminal conviction. Thirty-five states continue to deny voting rights to Americans after their release from prison, and 12 even after completion of sentence. The United States is the only democracy that denies voting rights to persons no longer under criminal justice supervision. One of every 13 African

Americans is ineligible to vote due to this restriction, four times the national average.

The United States must decide if it wants to remain a country focused on punishment, one that systematically creates second-class citizens from huge swaths of our population—particularly those of color—or whether it will aspire to be a country centered on opportunity, one where everyone can contribute, regardless of race or creed or sexual orientation. ■

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## QUICK VIEW

# Locked-Up Potential



he United States incarcerates more individuals than any other country in the world. What's more, the overwhelming majority of those incarcerated are people of color. The "school-to-prison pipeline" disproportionately disciplines and criminalizes youth of color, tracking them into a broken criminal justice system. Most prisons do very little to prepare the incarcerated for re-entry into society. And many of our nation's education, employment, and housing policies shut

formerly incarcerated individuals out of opportunity. As a result, our nation is losing out on opportunities to leverage human potential for economic growth.

Policy reforms aimed at increasing rehabilitation, improving services, cutting prison costs, and reducing recidivism are emerging in several states. Federal action is needed to eliminate disparities and reduce the negative impact of imprisonment on communities. ■

## Facts at a glance

- **\$ 70 million to \$100 million:** How much California is projected to save each year by simply eliminating its "three strikes" law<sup>1</sup>
- **2.3 million:** The number of people in U.S. prisons<sup>2</sup>
- **4.5 times:** How much more likely African American youth are than white youth to be detained for the same crimes<sup>3</sup>
- **2.5 times:** How much more likely Latino youth are than white youth to be detained for the same crimes<sup>4</sup>
- **At least 70 percent:** The number of youth involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement that are African American or Hispanic<sup>5</sup>
- **60 percent:** The share of those incarcerated in the United States that are people of color<sup>6</sup>



## Call to action

America cannot realize sustainable economic prosperity absent a reformed criminal justice system. To that end, Congress and the administration must act together to collect and analyze data effectively. As a first step, funding for the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Corrections Reporting Program should be increased. Furthermore, Congress and the administration should take the following actions:

- **Ensure that youth are not criminalized and warehoused.** Enact the Youth Promise and Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Acts
- **Foster sentencing fairness.** Expand the provisions of the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 to offer relief to those currently serving discredited sentences for certain drug offenses
- **Focus on rehabilitation and treatment.**
- **Improve access to healthy food access for disadvantaged communities.** As a first step, include the Healthy Food Financing Initiative in the next Farm Bill
- **Support re-entry into society.** Congress should restore Pell Grant eligibility to the incarcerated and continue funding for the Second Chance Act

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# Engaged and Plugged In: Strengthening Civic Participation in America

BY AMERICA FERRERA



On November 6, 2012, just hours before the election results would begin to come in, a trip to a neighborhood bodega put me in a state of panic.

Two young women about my age were going about their shop-keeping routine when one asked the other her thoughts on that day's election. "Who cares," she replied. "Same old s\*\*\* either way."

The young woman's response wasn't shocking for its content—I've lived in New York City long enough to be unfazed by such passing expletives. No, what upset and disheartened me was that, with just minutes left before the polls closed, I didn't have enough time to change this young woman's mind. And that broke my heart.

Now that the 2012 election has come and gone—an election marked by the overwhelming turnout of young voters and voters of color—I believe the roots of civic participation in America are strong. Despite this, it is the future of civic participation—one having new branches that will reach out into new and uncertain places—that must be strengthened, and strengthened now.

Through my work with Voto Latino, I had a front-row seat to the most dynamic and engaged political class of young voters and voters of color that our country has ever enjoyed. And this year I've been blessed to work on "Chavez," a film that celebrates the life and works of Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and the many unnamed organizers who changed the course of civic participation in America. Wherever I went working with Voto Latino or filming, I met

people who were engaged and plugged in. I saw the America of my dreams playing out in real life.

As I traveled across the country with Voto Latino organizers, we met so many people who were taking brave steps to represent for themselves, for their friends, and for their family members who might not yet have a voice in our politics. Every conversation on a college campus, every media appearance with a local news outlet, we all brimmed with pride and optimism for the result we knew we would see: a record turnout on Election Day and proof that generations of organizing that focused on building the social infrastructure of participation had indeed borne fruit.

It was easy to get swept up in the excitement, but that isn't to say this work has been easy. To help affect record voter registration and turnout, groups like Voto Latino put everything they had into empowering our communities to claim their own voice and their own future, through civic participation and engagement.

We thought that 2012 would be a vindication of a strategy put in place long before us, delivering on a promise made by generations of policy and civic pioneers and organizers who had laid out the path we were now following. Our parents and families had done right by their future by investing not just in all of us, but by investing in a nation where we could build our own dreams and doggedly pursue them. And powered more than ever by social media platforms and digital connection technologies, we

expected young voters and voters of color to harness these networked bonds into a greater and more perfect participation.

At a time when the stakes for young people couldn't have been any higher, we saw record participation—but it was far from complete participation. Having been snapped back into reality by the conversation of those two young women in my neighborhood bodega, I realize now that we don't just need louder megaphones to get our messages out. We need



stronger messages—and more messengers—messages that reach deeper into our communities and spread the word that civic participation doesn't just mean action, it means results. And most of all, we need to honor our rich legacy of commitment and continue building the infrastructure to enable civic participation at all strata of American life.

As a society, we make these promises to young people: Your most basic needs are attainable; you will have a path to improve your life; and the world around you can be changed through your action and determination.

If any one of these promises is broken, we put our country's well-being at risk. And while as a nation we work to fully deliver on the important ideas and services that have been unequally distributed in our recent history—access to the Internet, strong public

education, affordable housing—we must also work to ensure that the infrastructure for civic participation reaches everywhere and everyone.

In the 2012 election I saw the efforts and sacrifices of previous generations bear fruit. But if we allow the broad disparity gap between communities to widen, how can we guarantee against future political apathy and disenfranchisement? If we don't fight for the infrastructure required to increase participation in the world around them, how can we expect our future generations—all of them—to get involved?

I'm more optimistic than ever that we—my generation—will keep this promise and preserve and build upon this rich infrastructure of civic participation. But my experience on Election Day will stay with me forever, and I'll never take our promise for granted again. ■

**CHAPTER TEN**

**Democratic  
Participation and  
Civic Leadership  
in a Diverse  
Nation**

**BY VANESSA CÁRDENAS**



Democratic participation—the active involvement of a diverse array of citizens contributing in meaningful ways to the decision-making process—is critical to our democracy. It is the fundamental principle on which our government is based, going back to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and it is the most cherished and long-lasting feature of our democracy. It is key for political representation and essential for transparency and accountability. It is also needed to advance an All-In policy agenda that ensures broadly shared prosperity.

While most people think only of voting when discussing democratic participation, it goes well beyond the ballot box. Volunteering, running for office, being informed about public issues, attending school and community meetings, and being active members of nongovernmental organizations are all important examples of participation. Americans not only strengthen our democracy by engaging with formal law making or policy development; participation in local and community structures is equally important to ensure that institutions are responsive to the people's needs.

Yet throughout our nation's history, the reality of democratic participation has not lived up to the ideal. Government institutions at every level have regularly erected barriers to the participation of certain groups of people. During the latter part of the 19th century and through a good portion of the 20th century, African Americans and poor people were kept from voting through a series of poll taxes,

literacy tests, and outright intimidation. Though not as egregious as in years past, voter barriers and disenfranchisement efforts still occur at unacceptable levels today. The 2012 elections saw an unprecedented wave of voter-suppression efforts across the nation in the form of stringent ID requirements, the dissemination of misleading information meant to confuse voters, and outright challenges of voter eligibility, just to name a few of the schemes and practices employed to discourage and undermine democratic participation. In addition to these barriers to voting, poor people and people of color have often been blocked from fully participating in society's democratic institutions due to other obstacles such as poverty, lack of information, racial discrimination, weak social networks, and lack of English-language proficiency.

Furthermore, earlier this year, the Supreme Court gutted Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act,<sup>1</sup> which required that certain states and localities with a history of discrimination submit all of their election laws to the Justice Department for approval. Section 4 was a vital tool to ensure the right to vote of all Americans, particularly people of color.

In spite of these barriers, communities of color are poised to reinvigorate our democracy and reaffirm the bedrock governing principles of our nation—a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. In the past two elections, these communities came together with women, youth, and other allies to elect and then re-elect the nation's first African American president. These voters of color were

driven largely by the need to defend a policy agenda that is more in line with their economic and social needs and by the excellent organizing of social-justice groups around key issues—such as immigrants’ rights, voting rights, and women’s rights. These movements have re-energized and reconnected people of color to the basic tenets of our democracy in profound ways.

### **Communities of color significantly increased their voting participation in 2012**

Despite the attacks on voting and efforts to disenfranchise voters, particularly in the 2012 presidential election, communities of color turned out in unprecedented numbers. In fact, blacks voted at a higher rate in 2012 than other groups, and for the first time in history voted at a higher rate than whites.<sup>2</sup> As for Hispanics, 12.5 million cast ballots in 2012<sup>3</sup>—a historic turnout by this community. And while Asian Americans comprised only 3 percent of voters in 2012, that number represents a 1 percentage point increase from 2008.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the number of Asian American voters increased by 128 percent since 1996.<sup>5</sup> Native Americans comprise about 1 percent of the electorate and have had a historically low turnout,<sup>6</sup> but massive efforts to turn out Native American voters in 2012 made their vote crucial in key Senate races. Sens. Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) and John Tester (D-MT), for example, both won by narrow margins by reaching out to and engaging with local Native American communities.<sup>7</sup>



While roughly 12.5 million Latinos voted in 2012, an estimated 2.5 million Latinos were registered to vote but did not cast a ballot, and an additional 8.6 million Latinos were eligible to register to vote (18 years old or older and U.S. citizens) but did not register. In other words, there are almost as many potential Latino voters (11.1 million) as there are actual Latino voters (12.2 million).

## There are even more voters of color waiting in the wings

Although the turnout of people of color in 2008 and 2012 was impressive, there are even more voters out there. In the case of Latinos, they are far from realizing their full voting potential. While roughly 12.2 million Latinos voted in 2012, an estimated 2.5 million Latinos were registered to vote but did not cast a ballot, and an additional 8.6 million Latinos were eligible to register to vote (18 years old or older and U.S. citizens) but did not register, according to analysis by the polling firm LatinoDecisions.<sup>8</sup> In other words, there are almost as many potential Latino voters (11.1 million) as there are actual Latino voters (12.2 million).

For their part, Asian Americans, the fastest-growing racial group in the United States, are poised to have a significant impact on the electorate as well. While their share of voters is relatively low—3 percent in 2012—the Asian American electorate has been steadily growing with each presidential election from 1.6 percent in 1996, 1.8 percent in 2000, 2.3 percent in 2004, to nearly 2.5 percent in 2008. In 2008 about 600,000 new Asian Americans entered the electorate.<sup>9</sup> Yet while in 2012 there was a significant increase in voter-mobilization efforts by community organizations, most Asian American voters (65 percent) report that they received no contact about the election.<sup>10</sup>

Looking at American Indians and Alaska Natives, only three out of five individuals in these two groups who are eligible to vote are registered to vote.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, turnout rates among registered American

Indians and Alaska Natives are between 5 percentage points to 14 percentage points lower than other racial and ethnic groups.<sup>12</sup>

## Immigrants ready to integrate, learn English, and naturalize

Another significant segment of the population ready to engage in America's civic life are immigrants. Immigrants have re-energized and reconnected their respective communities to the political process through their struggle for immigrants' rights and social inclusion. Examples abound: Immigrants are now organizing to raise the minimum wage in Florida; immigrant women in Virginia are coming together to advocate for better schools and facilities for their children; and across the country, immigrants in conjunction with already established communities are organizing to improve their housing conditions. All of these stories show us that immigrants are learning to navigate and manage structures of power in their adopted land to improve the lives of their families and communities. Meanwhile, as Congress considers legislation to provide undocumented immigrants a road map to citizenship, it should also consider ways to ensure that immigrants are better prepared to participate in our democracy.

English-language acquisition and citizenship are key to this process. Increased English proficiency is highly correlated with economic and social well-being. It can lead to increased income for immigrant wage earners, greater school readiness for their





Members of the mariachi band "Gallos de Jalisco" serenade California citizens to get out and cast their vote on Tuesday, Nov. 6, 2012 in the Sun Valley district of Los Angeles.

AP PHOTO/DAMIAN DOVARGANES

children, and improved intergenerational communications within their families, not to mention the ability to communicate with the broader community in which they live. By the same token, citizenship is an important milestone toward full political and economic membership. Immigrants, when naturalized not only gain the right to vote but also earn more than their noncitizen counterparts,<sup>13</sup> are less likely to be unemployed, and are better represented in highly skilled jobs. Immigrants also show a strong desire to become citizens. Surveys demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of the 8.5 million legal permanent residents who are eligible to naturalize would like to become citizens.<sup>14</sup>

### These growing communities are progressive and support an equity agenda

In the 2012 election voters of color overwhelmingly supported a progressive vision moving forward. Their mandate was clear: America needs a policy agenda to help restore the American Dream of social and economic mobility for all and support a progressive vision grounded in the notion that our economy should work for everyone, not just for the wealthy few.

People of color—Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans—overwhelmingly

support a policy agenda focused on key investments to grow and strengthen the middle class, a fair tax plan, affordable health care coverage, and ensuring outstanding public education for all. Their level of concern about the economy is not surprising given the challenges they face on both economic and social fronts. What made the 2012 election different and what it underscored is that the changing face of our nation makes it imperative to act on solutions to promote the economic well-being of all our citizens. It so happens that this equity policy agenda benefits all Americans.

Communities of color are poised to reinvigorate our American democracy if we are able to capitalize on their growth and adopt strategies to maximize their involvement in civic life. These communities have an inclusive and positive vision of where our country should be moving toward that is fully consistent with the American values of working hard and playing by the rules. Yet this vision can only become a reality if the barriers to their civic participation are removed.

### **Barriers to democratic participation among underrepresented communities**

To harness the enormous potential of our communities of color, obstacles must be removed on the democratic participation front. Today these obstacles include barriers to voting, lack of representation, and lower levels of volunteerism.

**FIGURE 1**

### **Election Day waiting times by race/ethnicity (in minutes)**



Source: New York Times, [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/02/05/us/politics/how-long-it-took-groups-to-vote.html?\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/02/05/us/politics/how-long-it-took-groups-to-vote.html?_r=1&)

### **Voter suppression and disenfranchisement**

Currently states set their own electoral policies and procedures, which leads to confusing and sometimes contradictory policies and has created an electoral system of 13,000 voting districts spanning more than 3,000 counties in 50 states. This system produces inequalities across districts and in every person's ability to participate in the democratic process.<sup>15</sup>

The 2012 election was an extreme example of the barriers communities of color face as a result of this labyrinth of electoral policies. During that election Americans saw an unprecedented wave of voter suppression and disenfranchisement efforts in a significant number of states, efforts that included stringent ID requirements, misleading information, challenges of voter eligibility in communities of color, and longer wait lines for African American and Hispanic voters, among other obstacles to participation. These practices didn't end with the 2012 presidential contest. Since the beginning of 2013,

more than 80 laws to restrict voting have been introduced in 31 states.<sup>16</sup>

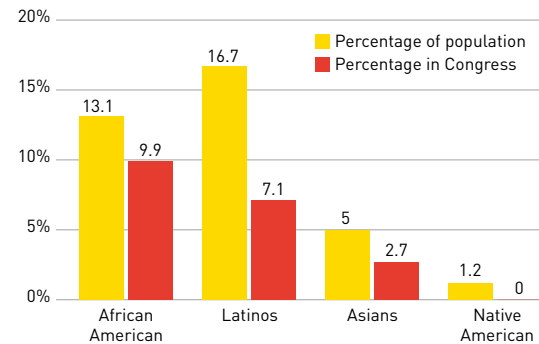
Moreover, among the most egregious forms of disenfranchisement is the shortsighted and punitive set of laws that the United States maintains—laws that deny people with felony convictions the ability to vote. According to a report by The Sentencing Project, by 2010 a record 5.85 million people were disenfranchised as a result of a felony conviction. In the states with the most draconian policies, including Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Virginia, more than 7 percent of the adult population is barred from the polls, sometimes for life. Nationally, nearly half of those affected have completed their sentences,<sup>17</sup> including those on parole or probation.

### Lack of representation in leadership positions

Another significant barrier that hinders participation is the absence of people of color at the decision-making table. When examining the makeup of the leadership in all areas of our government, including the courts system, the troubling reality is that although growing in population, people of color remain significantly under-represented. Case in point: Of the 535 voting members of the 113th Congress, 375—70 percent—are white men.<sup>18</sup> This lack of representation is particularly acute in the Latino community. While Hispanics account for about 15 percent of our nation's population, they hold only 1 percent of elected or appointed offices, according to

FIGURE 2

### Lack of political leadership at the national level among communities of color



Source: MSNBC

the U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, according to a 2008 analysis by the National Conference of State Legislatures, of the nation's 7,382 state lawmakers, only 245—3.3 percent—are Hispanic.

Another example of the leadership disparity is the racial and ethnic makeup of governors in the United States and of jurists on federal court benches. According to a 2012 report by National Urban Fellows, 92 percent of American governors are non-Hispanic white.<sup>20</sup> The same report cites the fact that while the total U.S. population includes 36 percent people of color, 90 percent of our federal judges are of white, non-Hispanic heritage.

The lack of diversity among judges is also profoundly problematic. The effective administration of justice and the legitimacy of the courts require judges who reflect the nation's diversity.

Yet according to the Brennan Center for Justice, white males are over-represented on state appellate benches by a margin of nearly 2-to-1. Almost every other demographic group is underrepresented when compared to their share of the nation's population, and there is also evidence that the number of black male judges is actually decreasing. Even Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito acknowledged the importance of having people in the bench who have diverse experiences:

*[W]hen a case comes before me involving, let's say, someone who is an immigrant—and we get an awful lot of immigration cases and naturalization cases—I can't help but think of my own ancestors, because it wasn't that long ago when they were in that position. ... When I get a case about discrimination, I have to think about people in my own family who suffered discrimination because of their ethnic*

*background or because of religion or because of gender. And I do take that into account.*<sup>21</sup>

By virtue of not having a seat at the table, the concerns and voices of communities of color are not represented in the decision-making processes in our nation. Numerous studies demonstrate that racial and ethnic diversity can result in very significant policy changes on behalf of people of color.<sup>22</sup> African American state legislators are more likely to introduce measures to combat racial discrimination as well as measures generally aimed at improving education, health care, and social well-being. Similarly, Latino legislators are key on issues related to immigration, language learning, and opportunities for immigrants. Women of color, in particular, are powerful agents of change.<sup>23</sup> When women of color assume powerful leadership positions, the prospects improve for legislation to expand access to programs that provide a path to opportunity for low-income

## Building capacity among leaders of color

Leadership-development programs are important for building the skills needed to reach across traditional boundaries. Urban Habitat's Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute<sup>24</sup> trains equity advocates in the San Francisco Bay Area to step into policy positions. The 80-hour, six-month-long program aims to build power by training diverse community leaders to effectively serve on the local and regional boards and commissions that set transportation, land-use, housing, jobs, and climate-change policies. When equity leaders come to the table, they not only bring important new expertise; they also begin to bridge the racial gap that exists between these institutions and the communities they represent.

Americans and increase benefit levels to those who need these programs the most.

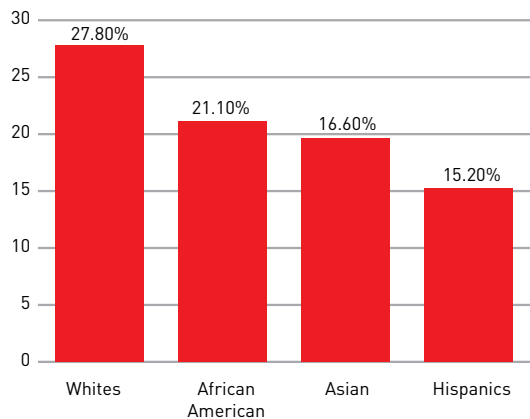
### Obstacles to engaging in community service and community development

Volunteerism and participating in the process of community development are also important forms of civic participation. By working together and talking to each other, Americans help solve problems and make communities better places to live and work. According to research conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service, people who volunteer are more likely to choose a career in public service that offers them an advantage in the job

market and increases their life-long involvement in civic affairs.<sup>25</sup> This is particularly true for people of color as volunteer opportunities and/or participation in national service give them needed skills and serve as stepping stones to good jobs that lead to the middle class. Yet communities of color have lower levels of volunteerism than whites.

In 2012 whites continued to volunteer at a higher rate (27.8 percent) than did African Americans (21.1 percent), Asians (19.6 percent), and Hispanics (15.2 percent). Of these groups, the volunteer rate for whites fell 0.4 percent in 2012, which was driven by a decline in the volunteer rate of white women. Among blacks, the rate of volunteerism edged up 0.8 percentage points during the same period.

**FIGURE 3**  
**Volunteerism in the United States by race, 2012**



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, available at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm>

One reason for this racial disparity in volunteerism may be unequal access to youth-service programs for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. It has been shown that many adults begin their tradition of volunteering as youth. But research documents that disadvantaged young people are less likely to have opportunities to serve others. According to an analysis by the Corporation for National and Community Service, only 43 percent of youth from disadvantaged circumstances volunteer, compared to 59 percent of other youth.<sup>26</sup> In addition, schools serving youth in disadvantaged circumstances are less likely to provide service-learning opportunities than schools in economically better off communities.<sup>27</sup> Only 29 percent of high-poverty schools offered service-learning opportunities in 2004, versus 36 percent of other schools, and only 26 percent of students in



California's Online Voter Registration program dramatically boosted voter rolls and also engaged low-propensity voters. Of the more than 800,000 Californians that used the new registration system, 23 percent were Hispanic, 11 percent Asian, and 60 percent white, reflecting the ethnic makeup of the state's electorate.

low-income schools participated in service activities, versus 32 percent of students in high-income schools.

A similar gap is evident in community-based organizations. Fully, 7 percent of youth from disadvantaged circumstances volunteer through a community-based youth program, compared to 12 percent of other youth. Another factor is that disadvantaged youth are less likely to be asked to serve than youth from other circumstances.<sup>28</sup>

### **Strategies to promote civic participation among communities of color**

Communities across the nation are devising innovative strategies to promote the civic engagement of communities of color. Investments in strategies and programs that lead to volunteerism and leadership development along with greater utilization of technology and media can play a key role in increasing the democratic participation of people of color. Here are several examples that can be scaled up to increase democratic participation.

#### **Using technology to increase democratic participation**

Technology is a powerful tool for community engagement at the local and national level, particularly for communities of color who use cell phones, mobile Internet access, and social media at higher rates than

## Increasing voter turnout in Native American communities

One strategy to increase turnout in the Native American community is promoting voter registration in the Indian Health Service. Staff of the Indian Health Service, or IHS, is predominantly American Indian or Alaska Native,<sup>34</sup> which avoids or eliminates any real or perceived cultural barriers. The reach of the IHS is broad: It provides services to 1.9 million American Indians and Alaska Natives, representing 566 tribes in 35 states.<sup>35</sup> In these communities, a trip to see a medical care professional could not only yield improved health, but also lead to increased participation in our nation's democracy.

whites.<sup>29</sup> Technology's power can be leveraged to encourage, facilitate, and increase citizen-centered dialogue, organizing, and action on a wide variety of issues. With more than 70 percent of Americans online,<sup>30</sup> virtual micro-communities are making it easier for people to create relationships with those that share similar interests, opinions, and backgrounds. Americans can now pick and choose their online destinations and the preferred format to communicate their opinions, whether through blogs, videos, podcasts, or tweets. Before the Internet, people came together physically to mobilize around issues; now, thanks to technology, they have the option of accessing information and organizing online.

Unfortunately, unequal access to the Internet affects civic engagement when groups are under-represented. According to the Federal Communications Commission, 24 percent of people with less than a high school degree and 40 percent of those households in America with incomes under \$20,000 are

less likely to adopt broadband.<sup>31</sup> While differences in Internet access have slowly narrowed between whites, blacks, and Hispanics, income and educational attainment still define who benefits from the latest technological advances.

Some states are beginning to use technology to make it easier to register to vote and get information about where, when, and how to cast a ballot. By way of illustration, California's Online Voter Registration program dramatically boosted voter rolls and also engaged low-propensity voters. Of the more than 800,000 Californians that used the new registration system, 23 percent were Hispanic, 11 percent Asian, and 60 percent white, reflecting the ethnic makeup of the state's electorate. Latinos as well as individuals under 35 years old were more likely to register online than other groups.<sup>32</sup>

Using technology to promote democratic participation goes well beyond voting. For example, the



AmeriCorps volunteers hand out cups of ice during a Food on the Move mobile lunch program for low income children Monday, July 18, 2011, in Dallas.

AP PHOTO/LM OTERO



Textizen model being implemented in some cities, which is helping bring the voices from a large cross section of communities to inform the decision-making process by asking policy questions in public places—billboards, advertisement on public transportation—and collecting feedback via text messages.<sup>33</sup>

### Engaging community members in service and place-based community-development efforts

Federal government programs that provide social services and help rebuild economically distressed communities rely upon community participation, and are important places for more robust participation of communities of color.

The AmeriCorps program has demonstrated that it is an effective strategy to promote the participation of young people of color in America's civic life. AmeriCorps alums are significantly more civically engaged and more likely to pursue public service careers in the government and the nonprofit sector than their counterparts. It even has a greater relative impact on the career choices of people of color and individuals from disadvantaged circumstances. People of color who participate in AmeriCorps at both the state and national level are significantly more likely to choose a career in public service—44 percent compared to 26 percent of white AmeriCorps alums.<sup>36</sup>

Likewise, Youth Corps—full-time programs funded by AmeriCorps that provide young people with a

combination of work experience and education within the framework of community service—has proven to be a promising strategy for disadvantaged youth's volunteer involvement, especially for African American males. According to a study sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service, African American males in Youth Corps were more likely to have voted in the last election, experienced more employment, had higher earnings, were more likely to have earned an associate's degree, and had higher educational aspirations.<sup>37</sup>

YouthBuild, a Youth Corps program funded by both the Department of Labor and AmeriCorps, has similarly strong outcomes for youth. Research done to evaluate the program for the Knight Foundation tells the story of the transformation of a substantial group of young people from disconnected youth to exemplary civic leaders. A significant number of YouthBuild alumni hold public office or are church leaders; more than one-third are professional educators or youth workers.<sup>38</sup> Given the lack of opportunities for civic engagement and leadership for disconnected youth, YouthBuild stands as a rare example of a program that helps poor and working-class young adults develop into active and engaged citizens.<sup>39</sup>

### An affirmative democratic-participation policy agenda

As we move rapidly toward a nation where the majority of people will be people of color, Congress and the administration can do more to ensure that an

infrastructure is in place to encourage civic involvement among future generations. This can be accomplished by pursuing the following policy innovations.

### Ensure the right to vote

Every American should have easy access to the ballot box and their vote should be counted regardless of whom they choose to vote for. The Center for American Progress has published a report with 11 ideas that allow state legislators to strengthen voting rights in their individual states such as online voter registration, requiring public schools to help register voters, expanding early voting, restoring voting rights to the formerly incarcerated, and enacting constitutional language affirming an equal right to vote, among others.<sup>40</sup> These ideas can go a long way in ensuring the suffrage of all voters in states. But ensuring this most basic of democratic rights can't be accomplished by states alone—Congress must act to protect Americans' right to vote, particularly in light of the Supreme Court's decision on the Voting Rights Act.

- Pass the Voter Empowerment Act of 2013 (H.R. 12): The Voter Empowerment Act seeks to modernize the American electoral system by providing improved access to the ballot, enhanced integrity in our voting systems, and greater accountability for the administration of our elections.<sup>41</sup> The bill also restores voting rights to people with criminal convictions in federal

elections, incorporating the provisions of the Democracy Restoration Act.<sup>42</sup>

- Congress must move swiftly to craft a new coverage formula for the Voting Rights Act.<sup>43</sup> Hours after the Supreme Court struck down Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, six of the nine states that had been covered in their entirety under the law's "preclearance" formula took steps toward restricting voting. This is why Congress should move swiftly and decisively to work in a bipartisan fashion to come up with a new formula that determines which states and localities will be subject to preclearance requirements under the still-valid sections of the Voting Rights Act. Until Congress acts, states and local governments can now pass voter suppression laws that harm the voting rights of all Americans, especially people of color.

### Make it easier for immigrants to learn English and naturalize

As Congress debates immigration reform, it should remember that English acquisition and citizenship are key to social cohesion and civic participation. Several surveys by the National Council of La Raza,<sup>44</sup> the Pew Hispanic Center,<sup>45</sup> and the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration<sup>46</sup> have shown that lack of English proficiency and the cost of naturalization are key reasons why legal permanent residents do not pursue citizenship. To address these barriers to citizenship, the following policies should be implemented:

■ Address the needs of those with limited English skills as part of a Workforce Investment Act, or WIA, reauthorization. Title II of the WIA is the main federal funding source for English as a second language instruction for adults in the United States, and as such represents one of the most important immigrant-integration programs at the federal level.<sup>47</sup> WIA reauthorization should:

- Place limited-English-proficient, or LEP, individuals on the list of hard-to-serve populations. Although more than 18 million working-age Americans are less-than-proficient English speakers, only 4.9 percent of individuals served by WIA have limited English proficiency. Without explicit inclusion of those with limited English skills as a priority population, workforce investment boards have little incentive to reach out to and serve those in need of customized and time-intensive language instruction.
- Enforce and strengthen provisions to encourage workforce investment boards to contract with community-based organizations. Many workforce investment boards and one-stop career centers have found significantly improved results through contracts with community-based organizations, which can offer customized, accessible, and culturally and linguistically appropriate services to populations with barriers to employment. Many workforce investment boards, however, have

been reluctant to contract with community groups, leaving many Latino and other communities virtually ignored by their one-stop centers. Incentives to encourage the use of community-based organizations as service providers would ensure that more workforce investment boards offer services that reach underserved communities.

- Make naturalization more affordable. Becoming a U.S. citizen is expensive—currently it costs \$680 to file a citizenship application, not to mention all the fees that legal permanent residents have to pay on their way to becoming citizens. While it is not possible to point to a specific amount that would be affordable for all eligible immigrants, Congress should consider options such as reducing fees or basing fees on income so that legal permanent residents can afford to become U.S. citizens.

### Promote democratic participation in society and government

Given the research that shows the importance of providing volunteer and national service opportunities for youth to encourage democratic participation, Congress should do more to provide these types of opportunities by:

- Funding a CivicCorps program modeled after AmeriCorps. The CivicCorps program would recruit volunteers to work full time for about a

year, focusing their work on promoting citizenship and democratic participation. They would teach English, register voters, and build awareness of our democratic process. Like AmeriCorps, CivicCorps would work with public and private organizations, including nonprofits and schools, in the communities it serves.

- Creating an innovation fund to promote democratic participation. Innovation funds can play a critical role in helping government invest in evidence-based programs that promote democratic participation by identifying promising programs that are working at the local level and funding their scale and spread, if appropriate. Presidential Innovation Fellows, or PIF, should work to develop ideas and ways to foster citizen engagement in key aspects of government agencies.
- Supporting funding for school- and community-based service programs for youth. Target schools and community organizations that serve disadvantaged youth. In 2011 Congress defunded Learn and Serve America, the only federal program targeted at service learning.
- Funding the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act to expand AmeriCorps. Although the act, which passed in 2009, called for AmeriCorps to expand to 250,000 positions by 2017, to date, only 80,000 positions have been funded.
- Increasing the use of national service as a strategy by federal agencies other than the

Corporation for National and Community Service. In recent years the Federal Emergency Management Administration, the Department of Education, and the National Guard have directed funding to AmeriCorps to address specific agency goals. National service offers a cost-effective strategy for these agencies and could be a valuable tool for other agencies as well.

- Funding YouthBuild to enable this effective program to go to scale. YouthBuild has demonstrated the positive impact it has on helping steer young people toward national service and good jobs, and the solid return on these investments. As such, it should receive increased funding to serve more young people of color.
- Launching a 21st Century Conservation Service Corps. Following the example of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s, lawmakers under provisions of the WIA should establish a similar program that will work through public-private and nonprofit partnerships to engage citizens in hands-on service and job-training experiences on public lands, waterways, cultural heritage sites, and community green spaces.

### Use technology to innovate democratic participation

Technology is opening up exciting possibilities to promote civic participation among all Americans.



Alabama 7th District Democratic congressional candidate Terri Sewell campaigns outside historic Legion Field in Birmingham, Ala., Tuesday, Nov. 2, 2010.

AP PHOTO/DAVE MARTIN

Congress and the administration should implement the following actions to promote innovation in technology and civic participation:

- Accelerate access to high-speed broadband for underrepresented groups. Given that the online world is becoming the central destination for sharing, exchanging, and formulating opinions on issues to improve the nation, all people need to be involved in the conversation. Yet people living in rural areas and people of color have lower Internet adoption rates and lower rates of access.
- Accelerating the adoption of social media technologies by agencies. Agencies should view social media as central to their missions and take advantage of the possibilities it offers to communicate and engage with our citizenry. Some agencies and the White House are doing this already. An example of an innovative way to use technology is the White House Council on Women and Girls' Equal Futures App Challenge to create an app that promotes civic education and/or inspires girls to serve as leaders in our democracy.<sup>48</sup>

## Increase public policy capacity and promote diverse leadership

Today, there are a limited number of programs that effectively build public capacity among people of color. Given the lack of representation in decision-making bodies at the local and national level, more needs to be done to foster public service leaders who are representative of the next America. Policy-makers at the federal level should:

- Dedicate federal funding for public policy training and leadership-development programs targeting low-income communities and communities of color. Using the White House Fellows as a model,<sup>49</sup> Congress should work with the administration to fund public policy training programs throughout key agencies to cultivate leaders who understand the challenges of national government and are committed to leadership in their communities.
- Promote diverse representation and leadership in federally funded place-based programs. Individuals from low-income backgrounds or communities of color are under-represented among those elected or hired to work for local and regional decision-making bodies. This disconnect often results in infrastructure-investment plans that fail to meet the needs of these populations.<sup>50</sup> Federal policy can help ensure more representation and engagement by requiring the participation of under-represented groups in implementing federally

funded community-development efforts. One federal grant program, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Sustainable Communities Initiative, has an innovative two-pronged approach for addressing this challenge. First, would-be grantees are required to describe how they will engage traditionally marginalized communities, including limited-English-proficient populations. Second, grantees are required to set aside 10 percent of their project budget for community-engagement activities and to develop a plan on how they will engage communities of color in their planning and decision-making processes.

## Conclusion

Democratic participation is at the core of our democracy. The voices, inputs, insights, and talents of all Americans are needed to make decisions about the quality of our lives, how communities function, the allocation of resources, and who gets to represent America's citizenry at all levels of government. As communities of color continue to grow, the need to have their voices and their presence at the decision-making table is an imperative we can no longer ignore or postpone. By implementing strategies that educate all Americans about their rights and responsibilities, that make it easier to vote, and that promote volunteerism and national service, our democratic process will be strengthened and our democracy will remain true to its tenets of a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. ■



Aida Castillo places a sticker on her blouse indicating that she had voted during the early voting period, Saturday, Oct. 20, 2012, in Las Vegas.

AP PHOTO/JULIE JACOBSON

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## QUICK VIEW

# Democratic Participation and Leadership in a Diverse Nation

**C**ommunities of color are already playing an increasingly important role in shaping the future of the United States. In the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections, people of color turned out in unprecedented numbers, significantly altering the electoral map. Yet communities of color still face several barriers to participation: voter suppression and disenfranchisement, political leadership that is inconsistent with our nation's

diversity, and unequal access to service and volunteer opportunities. There are a number of strategies being employed to overcome these barriers, including the use of technology, national service programs, and encouraging the integration of immigrants. It is critical that we promote the democratic participation of communities of color so that they are adequately represented in community and government institutions. ■

## Facts at a glance

- **12.2 million:** The record number of Latinos who voted in the 2012 election, although there were nearly as many potential Latino voters (11.1 million) who did not cast a ballot<sup>1</sup>
- **69 percent:** The share of Asian Americans who reported receiving no contact about the 2012 election, despite the fact that Asian Americans are the fastest-growing racial group<sup>2</sup>
- **1 percent:** The share of Hispanics holding elected or appointed office in the United States of the 535 voting members of the 113th Congress, 359 are white non-Hispanic men. Of the nation's 50 governors, 92 percent are white. And 90 percent of the federal bench is white non-Hispanic<sup>3</sup>
- **20 percent:** How much more likely AmeriCorps alumni of color are than white alumni to be employed in the public service field<sup>4</sup>

## Call to action

This chapter presents six policy priorities as steps that can be taken today to promote democratic participation to communities who will soon comprise the majority. To this end, Congress and the administration should work together to take the following actions:

- **Congress must move swiftly to craft a new Section 4 for the Voting Rights Act.** Congress should move swiftly and decisively to work in a bipartisan fashion to come up with a new formula that determines which states and localities will be subject to preclearance requirements under the still-valid sections of the Voting Rights Act
- **Ensure the right to vote for all.** Enact the Voter Empowerment Act of 2013 to improve accountability and access to the ballot
- **Make it easier for immigrants to naturalize and integrate.** Increase funding for English as a second language, or ESL, and citizenship classes and lower citizenship fees
- **Provide more opportunities for national service and volunteerism.** As an important first step, fully fund the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act to create 250,000 new AmeriCorps positions
- **Develop a CivicCorps program to specifically address democratic participation.**
- **Expand access to technology and leverage it for increased civic participation.** Accelerate access to high-speed broadband for under-represented groups and encourage partnerships between policymakers and web developers to empower and engage communities of color
- **Expand public policy capacity at the local level.** Increase funding for public policy training and leadership-development programs.
- **Incentivize civic participation in regional planning efforts.** Dedicate 10 percent of federal regional planning grants for community-engagement activities

## Endnotes

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# Conclusion

BY CARL CHANCELLOR



America is, has always been, and will always be a work in progress. From the beginnings of this great and unprecedented experiment in democracy, our founders, despite the contradictions in their own lives and the flawed realities of the day, let their aspirations soar, imagining into being a nation of boundless opportunity. They set forth a vision of a country where liberty and equality reign supreme, an America characterized by shared prosperity and guided by the principle *e pluri bus unum*—“out of many, one.”

Yet while diversity is at the bedrock of our nation, the embrace of this notion has been a constant struggle. One hundred and fifty years ago with the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves in the rebelling states, America took its first halting steps toward fulfilling the promise of an All-In Nation. Since then the road to that destination has been twisting and rocky, with mile markers both painful and glorious.

Today we find ourselves again at a crossroads facing a demographic shift that challenges us anew to live up to the nation’s founding principles. America is rocketing toward a new reality where the majority of its people will be of color. We must choose which path to take. We can give into fears, prejudices, and petty self-interests. We can shut our eyes and close our minds to this change—though doing so will do nothing to halt the inevitable. Or we can see this change for what it is—a rare and precious gift—and

recognize this diversity as our greatest and most enduring strength.

In the preceding pages the case has been made that America’s future vitality and preeminence in the world rests entirely on our ability to become an All-In Nation. In this land of many races, cultures, religious traditions, ages, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations, coming together in the pursuit of a shared destiny is an imperative. Allowing any segment of our population to be left out and left behind is simply not an option.

Achieving an All-In Nation means pursuing an equity agenda—just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can fully participate and prosper. It means advancing equity in our education and justice systems so that all children can realize their dreams and fulfill their potential, and where the color of one’s skin doesn’t fate them to a life of lack on society’s fringes. It means creating places where people can get healthy and stay healthy. It means crafting equity in immigration and civic participation that provides a path to citizenship and eliminates obstacles to full democratic involvement. It means building an equitable economy with good, family-supporting jobs, wealth-building opportunities, and pathways to entrepreneurship.

At the 1964 Democratic National Convention, civil rights champion Fannie Lou Hamer shined a spotlight on the nation’s efforts to suppress the voting rights of millions of African Americans, saying

“I question America—is this America? The land of the free and the home of the brave?” Despite undeniable progress in the nation, this question remains an urgent call today.

As we seek to form a more perfect union, we must recognize that we are all in this together. The challenges our nation faces today—significant disparities, diminishing global economic status, and inequality—are great. The agenda described in this book to create an All-In Nation is robust, ambitious, and completely achievable, if we work together to advance an equity agenda. Now more than ever, in the words of Ms. Hamer, “It’s time for America to get right.” Let us be inspired by those words and commit to moving forward together to achieve an America that works for all. ■

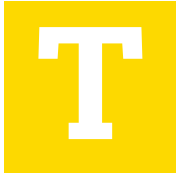


I question  
America—is this  
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and the home of  
the brave?





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# About the Contributors

## Angela Glover Blackwell, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, PolicyLink

Blackwell founded PolicyLink in 1999 and continues to drive its mission of advancing economic and social equity. Under her leadership, PolicyLink has become a leading voice in the movement to use public policy to improve access and opportunity for all low-income people and communities of color, particularly in the areas of health, housing, transportation, education, and infrastructure. Prior to founding PolicyLink, Blackwell served as Senior Vice President at the Rockefeller Foundation, where she oversaw the foundation's Domestic and Cultural divisions. A lawyer by training, she gained national recognition as founder of the Oakland (CA) Urban Strategies Council, where she pioneered new approaches to neighborhood revitalization. From 1977 to 1987 Blackwell was a partner at Public Advocates, a nationally known public-interest law firm. She is the co-author of *Uncommon Common Ground: Race and America's Future* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), and contributed to *Ending Poverty in America: How to Restore the American Dream* (The New Press, 2007) and *The Covenant with Black America* (Third World Press, 2006).

## Neera Tanden, President of the Center for American Progress, Counselor to the Center for American Progress Action Fund

Tanden has served in both the Obama and Clinton administrations, as well as presidential campaigns and think tanks. Most recently, Tanden served as the Chief Operating Officer for CAP, leading strategic planning of the organization, managing all operations, including all of the organization's finance and fundraising efforts, and serving as a key member of its executive team. Tanden focused the organization on measuring the impact of CAP's work. Before the 2008 presidential campaign, Tanden was Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at CAP. She was one of CAP's first senior staff members, joining as Senior Vice President for Domestic Policy when CAP first opened its doors. In between, Tanden was legislative director for Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY), where she oversaw all policy in the Senate office. She received her bachelor of science degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, and her law degree from Yale Law School.

## Julie Ajinkya, former Policy Analyst, Progress 2050, Center for American Progress

Ajinkya's work at the Center for American Progress focused on race, ethnicity, and gender, with particular attention to the changing demographics of multicultural societies such as the United States and Western Europe. Prior to her tenure

at American Progress, she was an instructor and teaching assistant at Cornell University while completing a doctoral program in political science. Her past work has also focused on researching global and local women's movements and the gendered impacts of international financial institution investments in the developing world. Ajinkya earned her master's and doctorate in government from Cornell University, where her doctoral dissertation examined the political behavior of children of Muslim immigrants and their campaigns for gender-justice activism in Europe and North America. She also earned a bachelor of arts degree in political science from Amherst College.

#### **Michelle Alexander, Legal Scholar and Author**

Alexander is the author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, which the New York Review of Books described as "a book... that might in time touch the public and educate social commentators, policymakers, and politicians about a glaring wrong that we have been living with that we also somehow don't know how to face." Alexander is also a highly acclaimed civil rights lawyer, advocate, and legal scholar. In recent years, she has taught at a number of universities, including Stanford Law School, where she was an associate professor of law and directed the Civil Rights Clinics. In 2005, she won a Soros Justice Fellowship, which supported the writing of *The New Jim Crow*, and that same year she accepted a joint appointment at the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity and the Moritz College of Law at The Ohio State University. Since its first publication, *The*

*New Jim Crow* has been featured in national radio and television media outlets, including MSNBC, NPR, *Bill Moyers Journal*, *Tavis Smiley*, C-SPAN, and *Washington Journal*, among others. The book won the 2011 NAACP Image Award for best nonfiction.

#### **Stephanie Boarden, Senior Associate, PolicyLink**

Boarden is a member of the PolicyLink health team, where she works to promote social and economic equity through environmental and policy change, particularly in low-income communities and communities of color. Focusing on food systems, transportation, community development, and multifield partnerships, her work involves technical assistance, research, and writing. Prior to joining PolicyLink, Boarden worked at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, coordinating community-based research and programmatic evaluation activities related to health inequities, food access, active transportation, and obesity. She holds a master's degree in public health from the University of California, Berkeley, and a bachelor's degree in physiology from the University of California, Los Angeles.

#### **Jeanne Butterfield, Special Counsel, The Raben Group**

Butterfield brings a broad and deep knowledge of immigration law and policy to her work at the Raben Group, as well as significant experience managing nonprofit organizations and building collaborative relationships with volunteer leaders. Prior to joining The Raben Group, Butterfield led legislative advocacy and agency liaison work in support of needed

reforms to U.S. immigration laws. She worked for more than 15 years as Advocacy Director and then Executive Director of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the nation's preeminent voluntary bar association. Prior to coming to Washington, D.C., Butterfield served as an executive director and legal director at a number of community-based nonprofits in Massachusetts that provided pro bono legal services to refugees seeking asylum in the United States. She managed teams of volunteer lawyers, paralegals, and translators, and represented clients in immigration court. Butterfield completed her law degree at Northeastern University School of Law in Boston, Massachusetts, and her undergraduate degree at Michigan State University.

**Geoffrey Canada, President and CEO, Harlem Children's Zone, Inc.**

Canada leads the Harlem Children's Zone, Inc., or HCZ, which *The New York Times Magazine* called "one of the most ambitious social experiments of our time." In his 20-plus years with the agency, Canada has become nationally recognized for his pioneering work helping children and families in Harlem and as a passionate advocate for education reform. In October 2005, he was named one of "America's Best Leaders" by *U.S. News and World Report*. In 1997 the agency launched the Harlem Children's Zone Project, which targets a specific geographic area in Central Harlem with a comprehensive range of services. The Zone Project today covers 100 blocks and aims to serve over 10,000 children. The work of Canada and HCZ has become

a national model and has been the subject of many profiles in the media. Their work has been featured on "60 Minutes," "The Oprah Winfrey Show," "The Today Show," "Good Morning America," "Nightline," "CBS This Morning," "The Charlie Rose Show," National Public Radio's "On Point," as well in articles in *The New York Times*, *The New York Daily News*, *USA Today* and *Newsday*.

**Vanessa Cárdenas, Vice President, Progress 2050, Center for American Progress**

Cárdenas leads Progress 2050, which focuses on researching the implications of the demographic change the United States is undergoing. Her work examines the intersection of race, policy, and demographic change; immigration policy; and issues related to the Latino community. Cárdenas graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in government and politics and a master's degree in public administration from George Mason University. She is a 2010 fellow of the National Hispana Leadership Institute and alum of the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership at the University of Virginia and Leadership Arlington.

**Anthony Carnevale, Director and Research Professor, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce**

Between 1996 and 2006 Carnevale served as Vice President for Public Leadership at the Educational Testing Service, or ETS. While at ETS he was appointed by President George W. Bush to serve on the White House Commission on Technology and



Adult Education. Before joining ETS, Carnevale was Director of Human Resource and Employment Studies at the Committee for Economic Development, or CED, the nation's oldest business-sponsored policy research organization. While at CED he was appointed by President Bill Clinton to Chair the National Commission on Employment Policy. Carnevale was the founder and President of the Institute for Workplace Learning, or IWL, between 1983 and 1993. While at the IWL, he was appointed by President Ronald Reagan to chair the human resources subcommittee on the White House Commission on Productivity between 1982 and 1984. Carnevale joined the Senate Budget Committee shortly after it was established by the passage of the Budget Impoundment and Control Act of 1974. While there he was responsible for budget development and enforcement in Budget Function 500: all accounts in education, training, employment policy and social services. Carnevale received his bachelor's from Colby College and his doctorate in public finance economics from the Maxwell School at Syracuse University.

#### **Carl Chancellor, Director of Editorial, Center for American Progress**

Chancellor is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who has a passion for human rights and social justice issues. For more than 20 years he was a reporter and columnist for the Knight-Ridder news service and its flagship paper, the Akron Beacon Journal. As a reporter he covered criminal justice, social services, features, education, and national politics. In 1993 he was a lead writer on a yearlong

series focusing on race relations—"A Question of Color"—that won the 1994 Pulitzer Prize Gold Medal for Meritorious Public Service. Before coming to American Progress, he was a columnist and blogger for the online advocacy group Change.org writing about issues of race, poverty, and criminal justice. He also taught journalism at Howard University and contributes articles to a number of national publications, including *USA Today*, BlackAmericaWeb.com, and the website Civil Rights in America.

#### **Marian Wright Edelman, Founder and President, Children's Defense Fund (CDF)**

Edelman has been an advocate for disadvantaged Americans for her entire professional life. Under her leadership, CDF has become the nation's strongest voice for children and families. The Children's Defense Fund's *Leave No Child Behind*® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start*, and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. Edelman, a graduate of Spelman College and Yale Law School, began her career in the mid-60s when, as the first black woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar, she directed the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund office in Jackson, Mississippi. In 1968, she moved to Washington, D.C., as counsel for the Poor People's Campaign that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. began organizing before his death. She founded the Washington Research Project, a public interest law firm and the parent body of the Children's Defense Fund. For two years she served as the Director of

the Center for Law and Education at Harvard University and in 1973 began CDF.

#### America Ferrera, Actress and Activist

Ferrera is best known for her leading role as Betty Suarez in ABC's hit television series "Ugly Betty." For her role in "Ugly Betty," Ferrera won the 2007 Golden Globe for Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series – Comedy or Musical. As a result of the award, she was congratulated by the U.S. House of Representatives as being a role model for young Hispanics. Also in 2007, *TIME* chose Ferrera as one of the top artists and entertainers in their "Time 100: The Most Influential People In The World" issue. Ferrera is active in getting Latinos in the United States to vote through her involvement with the organization Voto Latino and for appearing on various news programs. In 2010 Ferrera partnered with Save the Children, a nongovernmental organization dedicated to improving the lives of disadvantaged children in the United States and around the world. As an artist ambassador she traveled to the village of Diassadeni, Mali, to help the organization raise funds to build a school. In 2011 Ferrera met with President Barack Obama at the White House to discuss immigration issues with prominent Latinos in the United States.

#### Erin Hagan, Policy and Government Affairs Manager, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Prior to joining the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Hagan served as a member of the PolicyLink health team working to advance health

equity by improving access to healthy living opportunities in low-income communities and communities of color. Her content expertise is childhood obesity prevention, community engagement, cultural competence, and measurement and evaluation. Hagan holds a bachelor of science degree in nutrition and fitness from the University of Missouri, an M.B.A. from Seton Hall University, and a doctorate in kinesiology from the University of Connecticut.

#### John Halpin, Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress

Halpin's work focuses on political theory, communications, and public opinion analysis. He is the co-director and creator of the Progressive Studies Program at CAP, an interdisciplinary project researching the intellectual history, foundational principles, and public understanding of progressivism. Halpin is the co-author with John Podesta of *The Power of Progress: How America's Progressives Can (Once Again) Save Our Economy, Our Climate, and Our Country*, a 2008 book about the history and future of the progressive movement. Halpin has been at CAP since 2003, previously serving as Director of Research and Executive Speechwriter. Halpin wrote the daily Talking Points newsletter for the Center for American Progress Action Fund from 2004 through 2005 and has directed numerous CAP communications projects on issues, including faith in politics, health care, consumer debt, taxes, poverty, and foreign policy. Prior to joining CAP he was a senior associate at Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, providing strategic guidance and

public-opinion research for political parties and candidates, including Al Gore's 2000 presidential campaign, the British Labor Party, the Austrian Social Democrats, and a range of congressional, state legislative, and initiative campaigns. Halpin received his undergraduate degree from Georgetown University and his master's in political science from the University of Colorado, Boulder.

**Melissa Lazarín, Director of K-12 Education Policy, Center for American Progress**

Lazarín has focused principally on school improvement and educational innovation, including expanded learning time and charter schooling, high school reform, standards, and education issues related to English-language learners and Latinos. Prior to joining CAP she served as Director of Education Policy at First Focus, a national children's advocacy organization, and Associate Director of Education Policy at the National Council of La Raza, a national Latino civil rights and advocacy organization. In both capacities Lazarín advanced federal legislation related to high school reform, educational opportunities for immigrant students, and standards-based reform. Earlier in her career she worked as a policy analyst with Social Policy Research Associates in Oakland, California, where she evaluated Job Corps, school-to-work programs, workforce-development programs, and high-school programs. She holds a bachelor's degree from Stanford University and a master's degree from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.

**Robert Lynch, Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress**

Lynch is the Everett E. Nuttle professor at Washington College. His areas of specialization include public policy, public finance, international economics, economic development, and comparative economics. He is the author of several books and papers that have analyzed the effectiveness of government economic policies in promoting economic development and creating jobs. Lynch holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Georgetown University and a master's degree and doctorate in economics from the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

**Patrick Oakford, Research Assistant, Center for American Progress**

Oakford focuses his research on the economics of immigration policy, labor migration, and the intersection of immigration and employment laws. His work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *National Journal*, and *The Hill*. He holds a master of science degree in migration studies from the University of Oxford and a bachelor's degree in industrial and labor relations from Cornell University.

**Ai-jen Poo, Director, National Domestic Workers Alliance and Co-director, Caring Across Generations Campaign**

Poo has been organizing immigrant women workers since 1996. In 2000 she co-founded Domestic Workers United, or DWU, the New York organization that spearheaded the successful passage of the state's historic Domestic Workers Bill of Rights

in 2010. In 2007 DWU helped organize the first national domestic workers convening, out of which formed the National Domestic Workers Alliance. Poo serves on the Board of Directors of Moms Rising, National Jobs with Justice, Working America, the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, and the National Council on Aging. Among Poo's numerous accolades are the Ms. Foundation Woman of Vision Award, the Independent Sector American Express NGen Leadership Award, Newsweek's 150 Fearless Women list, and *TIME*'s list of the 100 Most Influential People in the World.

#### Ed Rendell, former Governor of Pennsylvania

Rendell served two terms as Governor of Pennsylvania and oversaw a budget of \$28.3 billion as the chief executive of the nation's sixth-most-populous state. As governor, Rendell was committed to making government more responsible and responsive to the public's needs, and he successfully cut wasteful spending and improved efficiency leading to savings of more than \$1 billion. After 34 years of public service, including 24 years as an elected official, Gov. Rendell continues to pursue many of the same issues he was passionate about while serving. His commitment to making America a cleaner, more efficient place and to fostering investment in our nation's crumbling infrastructure is as strong as it ever was. Gov. Rendell has become a champion for progress in the area of alternative energy, and now serves as a consultant or board member for several green and alternative energy firms, including Own Energy,

Element Partners, and Ocean Thermal Energy. As governor, Rendell worked with New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to create an organization called "Building America's Future." The organization focuses on the need for more significant investment in American infrastructure projects to ensure that America maintains its place as a global economic power. Gov. Rendell currently serves as co-chair of the organization and travels throughout the country speaking about this issue.

#### Robert Ross, President and CEO, California Endowment

Ross leads The California Endowment one of the nation's largest foundations dedicated to advancing new avenues to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Americans. Prior to taking the Endowment's helm in 2000, Ross served as director of the Health and Human Services Agency for the County of San Diego from 1993 to 2000. He was Commissioner of Public Health for the City of Philadelphia from 1990 to 1993. He earned his undergraduate and master's degrees in Public Administration and medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania. His clinical experience includes work as medical director for the LINK School-Based Clinic Program, Camden, New Jersey; instructor of clinical medicine, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia; and faculty member at San Diego State University's

School of Public Health. He is also a Diplomate of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

**Nicole Smith, Research Professor and Senior Economist, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce**

Smith leads the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce's econometric and methodological work. Smith has developed a framework for restructuring long-term occupational and educational projections. This framework forms the underlying methodology for "Help Wanted," a report that projects education demand for occupations in the U.S. economy through 2020. She is part of a team of economists working on a project to map, forecast, and monitor human-capital development and career pathways. Smith graduated with honors in economics and mathematics from the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus and received her doctorate in economics from American University in Washington, D.C.

**Lawrence "Larry" Summers, Charles W. Eliot University Professor and President Emeritus, Harvard University**

During the past two decades, Summers has served in a series of senior policy positions in Washington, D.C., including the 71st Secretary of the Treasury for President Bill Clinton and Director of the National Economic Council for President Barack Obama. In 1987 Summers became the first social scientist to receive the annual Alan T. Waterman Award of the National Science

Foundation. In 1993 Summers was awarded the John Bates Clark Medal, given every two years to the outstanding American economist under the age of 40. On July 1, 2001, Summers took office as the 27th President of Harvard University. During his tenure as Harvard's president, Summers focused on laying the foundations for the University in the 21st century. In 2006 Summers served as one of five co-chairs to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Summers writes a regular column for *The Financial Times*, *The Washington Post* and *Reuters*. Additionally, he is a frequent commentator on CNN, CNBC, BBC, NPR, and "The Charlie Rose Show."

**Ruy Teixeira, Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress**

Teixeira is a Senior Fellow at both The Century Foundation and American Progress. He is also a guest scholar at the Brookings Institution, where he has directed projects on political demography and geography and co-authored a series of papers with William Frey on the shifting demographics of battleground states. Teixeira is the author or co-author of seven books, including *America's New Swing Region: Changing Politics and Demographics in the Mountain West*; *Red, Blue and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics*; *The Emerging Democratic Majority*; *America's Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters*; and *The Disappearing American Voter*, as well as hundreds of articles, both scholarly and popular. He blogs at TP Ideas, a project of CAP's ThinkProgress, and writes

an online column for The New Republic. Teixeira holds a doctorate in sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**Sarah Treuhaft, Deputy Director, PolicyLink**

Treuhaft collaborates with local and national partners on research and action projects that aim to build a more equitable economy and authors publications that advance the organization's equity

mission. She is currently coordinating a research partnership between PolicyLink and the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity at the University of Southern California that provides indicators of demographic change and equity to advocates and practitioners. Treuhaft holds master's degrees in city planning and international and area studies from the University of California, Berkeley and was a Peace Corps volunteer in Togo, West Africa.



## ABOUT THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS

The Center for American Progress is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to promoting a strong, just, and free America that ensures opportunity for all. We believe that Americans are bound together by a common commitment to these values and we aspire to ensure that our national policies reflect these values. We work to find progressive and pragmatic solutions to significant domestic and international problems and develop policy proposals that foster a government that is “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”

## ABOUT POLICYLINK

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by Lifting Up What Works®. Founded in 1999, PolicyLink connects the work of people on the ground to the creation of sustainable communities of opportunity that allow everyone to participate and prosper. Lifting Up What Works is our way of focusing attention on how people are working successfully to use local, state, and federal policy to create conditions that benefit everyone, especially people in low-income communities and communities of color.

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