

**Columbia World Projects**  
**First Forum on Inequality:**  
*Unequal Opportunity*

**November 8, 2018**

*Columbia World Projects First Forum Report on Inequality: Unequal Opportunity*

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## Foreword

November 8, 2018

Dear Reader:

The attached report is the second in a series to be issued by Columbia World Projects (CWP) on the results of Fora held to identify possible solutions to fundamental challenges facing humanity.

For as long as we have organized into societies, we have been willing to accept different levels of wealth within them. Yet there are certain levels of inequality so profound that they deprive individuals of fundamental opportunities that all people, rich and poor, should have. That is because such severe inequality often results in a lack of access to basic resources such as education, health, labor, or housing, without which people have little chance of realizing their full potential. The consequences of this loss in opportunity can endure over the course of a lifetime or even generations, and impacts not just individuals, but families and entire communities. And at its core, not having access to these resources and the pathways they open can deprive people of their basic dignity.

It is for all of these reasons that we decided to make unacceptable, unequal access to opportunity the focus of our second forum, and the first in a series of convenings specifically on inequality by CWP. On June 19, 2018, more than 30 experts from inside and outside of Columbia, representing a range of substantive and institutional perspectives, came together in the City of New York for a Forum aimed not only at deepening our understanding of this problem, but also at identifying promising projects in which Columbia professors and researchers can partner with outside practitioners to help address inequality and its lasting consequences. The attached report represents the work that took place at that Forum.

While a list of the experts who participated in the Forum and helped draft the report is included at the end of the report, the ideas and views it contains are not attributed to individual participants or organizations, as was agreed in advance of the meeting. Yet the report does try, where possible, to specify the relative support for an idea or point of view, ranging from an individual observation to a consensus view.

Even as identifying project ideas to be developed by CWP and its partners is the primary objective of this and future Fora, it is also our hope that these gatherings will deepen the understanding of complex challenges, inspire even the most advanced experts to see such problems in new ways, and encourage partnerships that might lead to breakthroughs that improve lives. Thus, in sharing the innovative ideas and insights of experts who have generously given their time and intellectual capital to our effort, we hope others will benefit from them and share their own thoughts on these matters with CWP, as we continue to seek ways to effectively tackle inequality. We know that challenges like this one cannot be solved by any organization or institution alone, and that it will take many efforts to make meaningful progress.



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## I. Executive Summary

This report is the first in a series of inequality reports to be issued by Columbia World Projects (CWP), summarizing expert discussions held on different aspects of economic inequality, in an effort to identify concrete, implementable ideas for how academics and practitioners might partner to better understand and address the challenge. CWP intends to hold a number of convenings on this subject over the next several years, given the complex and critical nature of the problems associated with inequality in the world today.

This first expert discussion or “Forum” on the subject was focused on the relationship between inequality and unequal opportunity. There are certain levels of economic inequality that are so severe that they deprive people not only of a path to greater mobility, but also of a range of basic resources – such as housing, education, labor, and health – that can close off opportunities all people should have, regardless of their level of wealth or income. Such unequal access may begin to limit an individual’s opportunities as early as when she is still in the womb and has the capacity to produce negative outcomes that last a lifetime, or even across generations. Thus, on June 19, 2018, more than 30 experts from government, multilateral institutions, nongovernmental and philanthropic organizations, the private sector, the media, and academia, among other fields, came together to discuss concrete ideas for how to make headway against unacceptable, unequal access, how to scale such solutions more broadly, and how to provide a foundation for shifts in government policy where results are proven.

The structure of this report follows the sequence of the Forum itself: It begins by summarizing the main insights on the challenge that emerged in the opening discussion (Section III); then it provides an overview of the project ideas that were discussed when the Forum’s participants broke out into thematic working groups (Section IV); and it concludes with the closing plenary, in which participants expressed their views on which ideas were most promising (Section V).

There were five thematic working groups at the Forum. Four working groups focused on a fundamental resource where poverty can lead to unacceptable lack of access: education, health, housing, and labor. The fifth working group – on public policy and the economics of inequality – focused more broadly on the role that government can play in tackling this challenge, given its unique capacity and responsibility to address unacceptable, unequal access to opportunity. When participants reconvened in a plenary session, the working group moderators reported out on the project ideas discussed in their respective groups, including how each project would purport to open critical pathways to opportunity. In the closing discussion, participants expressed significant support for CWP focusing on projects related to three themes: water infrastructure, neonatal and early childhood education, and the future of work.

Specifically, as outlined in Section IV, participants expressed considerable support for a wastewater treatment and clean drinking water project, an early childhood education project, and a labor project that might be pursued in partnership with a U.S. state – though in each case

participants stressed the importance of integrating cross-sectoral expertise during the development of these projects, prior to implementation.

All three projects are ones that would, at least initially, be implemented in the United States. Indeed, the vast majority of ideas discussed at the Forum proposed interventions in the United States, which to some extent reflects the acute and growing inequality problem in the country. However, it is worth noting that the solutions proffered in each of these projects are ones that could be applied with some adaptations in other parts of the world, if they are successful.

CWP will now work with the relevant project leads to develop the three projects identified, drawing upon the critical feedback received during the Forum. In the Fall of 2018, these three project proposals will be presented to the CWP Advisory Committee, which will advise on whether they meet our criteria and merit further development as CWP projects. Projects that are determined to merit further development will receive an initial tranche of funding to undergo a rigorous project design phase of approximately three months, during which the project leads will work with CWP staff to define the major deliverables, a precise timeline for implementation, a funding plan, a set of performance indicators for monitoring and evaluation, and the key implementing partners. All of this information will be synthesized in a project design plan. CWP staff will then prepare an evaluation of this report, which identifies potential impact and strengths and weaknesses, and recommends whether the project should be funded. This evaluation, the project design plan, and earlier feedback from the Advisory Committee will be key factors in deciding whether these projects are implemented by CWP.

## II. Introduction

Two fundamental trends have marked recent decades. On the one hand, we are in the midst of a period of sustained global economic growth. Over the last several decades millions of people have been lifted out of extreme poverty, gaining access to greater resources and opportunities, and the gap between rich and poor countries has been shrinking. On the other hand, despite the growth of the global economy, the concentration of wealth at the top of the income distribution is skyrocketing – a trend that is particularly pronounced in the United States, along with all of the negative consequences that implies. This report reflects the discussion of a wide range of experts who were kind enough to assist us in thinking through the implications of this latter trend, the challenges it poses, and projects we might embark on to help address it.

Since 1990, income inequality has risen in the vast majority of advanced economies and in most emerging economies. Across the globe, there has been a steady and dramatic increase in concentration of wealth among the top 10 percent of the world's population, and an even larger increase among the top 1 percent. Indeed, since 1980, the global top 1 percent earners have captured twice as much of the global economic growth as the bottom 50 percent of poorest

individuals.<sup>1</sup> Even in those countries where the gap between rich and poor has narrowed, there are still large segments of the population whose economic status has remained stagnant or declined, and who, as a result, continue to face unacceptable barriers to basic opportunities.

Given the enormity of the challenge, it is easy to believe that solutions can only come from large-scale structural changes, mostly driven by government, which has unique redistributive powers and capacities to tackle this problem at scale. It is true there are certain levers that only the government – often at the federal level – can pull, such as the ability to change federal tax policy, or to provide or expand certain services across the entirety of the country. Indeed, we have seen examples of how governments can use these levers to make significant inroads towards reducing inequality, such as Brazil’s efforts beginning in the 1990s to provide free public education and health care, targeted transfers to the poor, and minimum wage increases, among other reforms.<sup>2</sup> It is also true that the problem of inequality is so complex, and so deeply ingrained in our societies, that no actor – not even government – can solve it alone. Nevertheless, by attacking certain, specific areas of inequality, we may be able to change the way this fundamental challenge is understood and addressed, providing a foundation for shifts in government policy where results are proven. To this end, participants focused on unacceptable, unequal access to critical resources as a result of socioeconomic status, such as housing, health, labor, and education – which all people should have, regardless of their level of wealth or income, and in doing so sought to better understand the ways in which unequal access can result in a loss of opportunity and mobility that can persist across lifetimes and even generations.

### III. Framing the Challenge

In order to provide a foundation for the discussion of specific projects in which academic research and scholarship might be applied in partnership with non-academic entities to address inequality and unequal opportunity, at the beginning of the Forum, a handful of participants were asked to make short presentations touching on key facets of the challenge, after which there was a free-ranging discussion. Certain key observations and themes discussed at the Forum are reflected below:

**While economic inequality is generally increasing globally, the rate at which it is growing and the level and type of inequality it is yielding vary widely, depending on a range of factors – including how it is measured.**

The measures of growing economic inequality around the globe are myriad, but to cite a few: According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), while in the 1980s, the richest 10 percent of the world’s population earned seven times more than the

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank. *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016: Taking on Inequality*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2016. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/25078/9781464809583.pdf>, 108.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, at 103-107.

poorest 10 percent, today, they earn almost ten times more.<sup>3</sup> In emerging economies, the level of income inequality is even greater. Whereas the average Gini coefficient of OECD countries – a measure whereby zero would mean a perfectly even distribution (everyone has the same income), and one would mean the most uneven distribution (one individual has all of the income) – is .32, Gini coefficients in developing countries often exceed levels of .5.<sup>4</sup> There is significant variation in income inequality by region. In Europe, the least unequal region, the top 10 percent of earners account for 37 percent of the total national income. In the Middle East, the most unequal region, the top 10 percent account for 61 percent of national income.<sup>5</sup> Yet while the rates may vary, the overall trajectory does not: since the 1980s, income inequality has increased in most countries.<sup>6</sup>

In absolute numbers, more people worldwide have moved from the lower class to the middle class than in the other direction. Indeed, according to one recent study, the middle class is in the midst of its most rapid expansion in human history, though disproportionately in emerging countries, and is projected to grow by an average of 160 million people per year through 2030.<sup>7</sup> Yet, such middle class growth notwithstanding, even emerging economies such as China, India, and South Africa have seen income inequality increase rapidly since 1980.<sup>8</sup> Developed countries have also seen a rise in income inequality, though unlike in emerging economies, their middle class has mostly remained stagnant or declined.

The growth of the middle class in developing countries might play a role in the decline of the middle class in advanced economies, through, for example, the outsourcing of manufacturing to parts of the world where the cost of labor is cheaper. But the variation among developed

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<sup>3</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. *In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2015. <http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/OECD2015-In-It-Together-Chapter1-Overview-Inequality.pdf>, 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Facundo Alvaredo, Lucas Chancel, Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, and Gabriel Zucman, “World Inequality Report 2018,” *World Inequality Lab*, Executive Summary (2017): 5, <http://wir2018.wid.world/files/download/wir2018-summary-english.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Though it is worth noting that a recent World Bank report found that, inequality within a number of countries declined from 2008 to 2013. In a survey of 81 countries, the World Bank concluded: “[F]or every country in which inequality widened by more than 1 Gini point (19 of 81 countries) in recent years, it narrowed in more than two countries by over 1 point (41 out of 81 countries).” The Bank noted there “should be no presumption that these favorable and exceptional recent trends will continue.” World Bank, *supra* note 1 at 88.

<sup>7</sup> Homi Kharas, “The Unprecedented Expansion of the Global Middle Class,” *The Brookings Institution*, Global Economy and Development Working Paper 100 (February 2017): 13, [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/global\\_20170228\\_global-middle-class.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/global_20170228_global-middle-class.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Consider China and India, the two countries that have seen the highest number of people move out of extreme poverty in recent years. In China, the top 1 percent’s share of wealth doubled between 1995 and 2015, from 15 percent of wealth to 30 percent. In India, the share of wealth earned by the top 1 percent more than tripled between the 1980s and 2015, from 6 percent to 22 percent. Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty, “Indian Income Inequality, 1922-2015: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj?,” *World Inequality Database*, Working Paper No. 11/2017 (July 2017), <https://wid.world/document/chancelpiketty2017widworld/>.

countries – for example, the fact that the middle class has stayed roughly the same size or declined only slightly in Western Europe, compared to its precipitous decline in the United States – suggests that the rising middle class in emerging economies cannot be the sole driver, as is sometimes assumed.<sup>9</sup>

**The United States faces a particularly acute inequality problem, and it is getting worse.**

While the United States is one of the richest countries in the world, it is also one of the most unequal. Not only does the United States have the highest levels of income inequality among the world's 30 most advanced economies, it also ranks 28<sup>th</sup> out of those same 30 countries in what the World Economic Forum (WEF) calls the inclusion category, which measures the distribution of income and wealth, and the level of poverty.<sup>10</sup> Although relative poverty rates in the United States have been falling, they still remain among the highest in advanced economies at 16.3 percent, surpassed only by Israel (19.3 percent).<sup>11</sup> The United States joins Brazil, Japan, Nigeria and South Africa as countries with inclusive development rankings that fall below their GDP per capita rankings, a sign that their economic growth is not translating into shared socioeconomic progress, the WEF indicates.

In addition, recent research by economists has demonstrated that the degree of absolute income mobility in the United States has been declining since 1940. One study measured absolute income mobility (also known as intergenerational income mobility) by comparing children's household incomes at age 30 with their parents' household incomes at the same age and estimating the fraction of children that earned more than their parents. The study found that rates of absolute mobility had fallen across the entire income distribution, from approximately 90 percent for children born in 1940, to 50 percent for children born in the 1980s, with the largest declines for families in the middle class.<sup>12</sup> Equally important, absolute income mobility in the United States has been found to be lower than that of most wealthy countries – not only those like Norway and Denmark with very different national circumstances, but also those with which

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<sup>9</sup> Facundo Alvaredo, Lucas Chancel, Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, and Gabriel Zucman, "The Elephant Curve of Global Inequality and Growth," *World Inequality Database*, Working Paper No. 20/2017 (December 2017), <https://wid.world/document/elephant-curve-global-inequality-growth-wid-world-working-paper-2017-20/>.

<sup>10</sup> World Economic Forum. *The Inclusive Development Index 2018*. Cologny/Geneva: WEF, 2018. <http://reports.weforum.org/the-inclusive-development-index-2018/>, 2.

<sup>11</sup> For advanced economies, the WEF defines relative income poverty as, "less than half of the respective median national income (after taxes and transfers, and adjusted for size of household). For emerging economies, it is defined as the percentage of the population living on less than \$3.20 a day at 2011 international prices." So, for example, a 16.3 percent poverty rate in the United States – an advanced economy – would mean that 16.3 percent of the U.S. population earns less than half of the country's median national income. *Id.*, at 24.

<sup>12</sup> Raj Chetty, David Grusky, Maximilian Hell, Nathaniel Hendren, Robert Manduca, and Jimmy Narang, "The Fading American Dream: Trends in Absolute Income Mobility Since 1940," *National Bureau of Economic Research*, NBER Working Paper Series (December 2016): 2, <https://inequality.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/fading-american-dream.pdf>.

the United States has more in common, such as Canada and Australia.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, recent research suggests that relative income mobility in the United States – the ability of individuals to move up the income ladder relative to their peers – has been relatively flat for decades.<sup>14</sup>

The widespread conclusion of the economists engaged in this work is that absolute mobility has declined over the past half century primarily because of the growth in inequality. And research suggests that, unless there is a change in public policy, the drivers of this decades-long decline are likely to lead to a further drop in intergenerational income mobility for the next generation of Americans.<sup>15</sup>

Several participants made the case that it is impossible to understand rising inequality in the United States without taking into account the decades-long trend of greater concentration of wealth within a smaller and smaller part of the population. From 1979 to 2007, the top 1 percent of Americans saw their household income grow by 275 percent, compared with just an 18 percent growth among the poorest quintile of Americans.<sup>16</sup> The top one-tenth of 1 percent saw its incomes rise by 480 percent between 1979 and 2004.<sup>17</sup> Another study found that whereas in the 1980s, the top 1 percent in the United States earned 27 times more than the bottom 50 percent, in 2016 they earned 81 times more.<sup>18</sup> The increase in the gap is almost entirely due to the growth of income for those in the upper rungs, whereas the economic growth for those in the bottom half of the income distribution in the United States has essentially stalled since the 1980s.<sup>19</sup> Finally,

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<sup>13</sup> Miles Corak, “Economic Mobility,” in *State of the Union Report 2016*, ed. David Grusky, Charles Varner, and Marybeth Mattingly, (Stanford: Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, 2016): 51-57, <https://inequality.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Pathways-SOTU-2016-2.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, as authors of the study note, “the increase in inequality has also magnified the difference in expected incomes between children born to low (e.g., bottom-quintile) vs. high (top-quintile) income families. In this sense, mobility has fallen because a child’s income depends more heavily on her parents’ position in the income distribution today than in the past.” Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, Patrick Kline, Emmanuel Saez, and Nicholas Turner, “Is the United States Still a Land of Opportunity? Recent Trends in Intergenerational Mobility,” *National Bureau of Economic Research*, NBER Working Paper No. 19844, and Jimmy Narang (January 2014): 3, [http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/assets/documents/mobility\\_trends.pdf](http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/assets/documents/mobility_trends.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Miles Corak, “Income Inequality, Equality of Opportunity, and Intergenerational Mobility,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27, No. 3 (2013), <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles.php?doi=10.1257/jep.27.3.79>.

<sup>16</sup> Congressional Budget Office. *Trends in the Distribution of Household Income Between 1979 and 2007*. Washington, D.C.: The Congress of the United States, 2011. <https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/112th-congress-2011-2012/reports/10-25-householdincome0.pdf>, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Congressional Budget Office. *Historical Effective Tax Rates, 1979 to 2005: Supplement with Additional Data on Sources of Income and High-Income Households*. Washington, D.C.: The Congress of the United States, 2008. [https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/ftpdocs/98xx/doc9884/12-23-effectivetaxrates\\_letter.pdf](https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/ftpdocs/98xx/doc9884/12-23-effectivetaxrates_letter.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> “Average pre-tax national income per adult has increased 60 percent since 1980, but we find that it has stagnated for the bottom 50 percent of the distribution at about \$16,000 a year.” Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, and Gabriel Zucman, “Distributional National Accounts: Methods and Estimates for the United States,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 133, No. 2 (1 May 2018): 553-609, <https://eml.berkeley.edu/~saez/Piketty-Saez-ZucmanNBER16.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

while the increase in the income of the upper rungs was initially due to increasing labor income at the top, since 2000 it has mostly been a capital income phenomenon.

**“Do you have to worry about the very top to fix the bottom?”**

In discussing the dramatic rise in inequality in the United States, there was some debate among participants as to whether – in order to expand opportunities for people for whom inequality resulted in unequal access to such opportunities – it is necessary to address the increasing concentration of wealth at the top of the income distribution curve. Or, as one participant put it: Do you have to worry about the very top to fix the bottom? The participant pointed to countries in Asia where income has grown at the very top as well as at the bottom of the income curve, and questioned whether the often-cited research of Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez<sup>20</sup> significantly overestimates the rising concentration of wealth among the top 1 percent of Americans, by failing to account for a shift in the way, for example, executives are paid.<sup>21</sup>

Several participants responded that narrowing the widening gap is critical, and that the remedies for growing inequality must be addressed, at least in part, through tax policies that draw upon growing concentrations of wealth in the upper tiers of society to pay for expanding access to basic resources for those at the very bottom. A participant pointed out that the way governments seek to pay for the expansion of resources can have significant implications for the distribution of wealth, as well as for the health of the middle class. The participant noted that if the burden of paying for expanding opportunities is placed mostly on the shoulders of the middle class – whose income has been stagnant or has fallen over recent decades – it may weaken the already declining middle class and stoke resentment that drives our political climate towards more divisive and populist policies.

**In the United States, inequality is perpetuated and entrenched by unequal political influence, with those at the top exerting disproportionate influence, while those at the bottom are largely disempowered.**

The wealthiest Americans are increasingly using their wealth to exert political influence, including on policies that further entrench inequality. In 1980, the top one-hundredth of 1 percent of Americans accounted for 16 percent of political donations in the United States. In 2016, the top .01 percent of Americans accounted for approximately 40 percent of all political donations.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez, “Income Inequality in the United States, 1913-1998,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118, No. 1 (February 2003): 1-39, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w8467>.

<sup>21</sup> Gerald Auten and David Splinter, “Using Tax Data to Measure Long-Term Trends in U.S. Income Inequality,” Working Paper (12 November 2017), [http://davidsplinter.com/AutenSplinter-Tax\\_Data\\_and\\_Inequality.pdf](http://davidsplinter.com/AutenSplinter-Tax_Data_and_Inequality.pdf). While Austen and Splinter found that after-tax income shares of the top 1 percent grew from 8.5 percent of the U.S. income in 1960 to around 10.1 or 10.2 percent in 2015, Piketty, Saez, and Zucman estimated that the top 1 percent held 15.7 percent of the national income in 2014. Piketty, *supra* note 20.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas B. Edsall, “Why Is It So Hard for Democracy to Deal with Inequality?” *New York Times*, February 15, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/15/opinion/democracy-inequality-thomas-piketty.html>. (Citing research

This matters, a participant noted, because research has demonstrated that when it comes to policies around taxation, economic regulation, social welfare and other areas that determine the role the government plays (or does not play) in addressing inequality and the lack of access to resources, the wealthiest Americans are, on average, less supportive of egalitarian policies than are low and middle-income Americans.

For example, a survey found that although 68 percent of the U.S. population is of the view that the government must see to it that no one is without food, clothing, or shelter, only 43 percent of the top 1 percent of U.S. wealth holders agree.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, while 78 percent of Americans supported setting a high enough minimum wage so that no family with a full-time worker falls below the official poverty line, only 40 percent of the top 1 percent agreed with that view. Some recent scholarship suggests that when the opinions of top income groups diverge from those of other Americans, government policy is more likely to correspond with the views of the affluent.<sup>24</sup>

Other research points to the ways in which inequality has translated into disparities in political organization. In recent decades, corporations and the very affluent have become more adept at using their wealth to shape policies through lobbying, investment in activist organizations, campaign contributions, and the like.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, organizations representing less affluent citizens – most notably labor unions, but also traditional civic groups with large mass memberships – have lost ground.<sup>26</sup> These studies of organizational and representational imbalances suggest that, to the extent solutions to inequality are to be found through government policies, tackling this challenge may also require addressing some of the wealth-based inequalities in political influence that are intrinsic to the current system.

One participant contrasted the access that the wealthiest Americans have to policymakers and the influence they wield in shaping policy with the almost total lack of influence among the poorest members of society, who are in greatest need of a voice and a champion. The participant pointed out that those most dramatically impacted by unequal opportunity – who struggle to earn a living, whose children attend failing public schools, or who find themselves stricken by

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from Adam Bonica, Stanford University; Nolan McCarty, Princeton University; Keith T. Poole, University of Georgia; Howard Rosenthal, New York University.)

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin I. Page, Larry M. Bartels, and Jason Seawright. “Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans.” *Perspectives on Politics* 11, No. 1 (March 2013): 51-73, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S153759271200360X>.

<sup>24</sup> Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page. “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens.” *Perspectives on Politics* 12, No. 3 (September 2014): 576, [https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/mgilens/files/gilens\\_and\\_page\\_2014\\_-\\_testing\\_theories\\_of\\_american\\_politics.doc.pdf](https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/mgilens/files/gilens_and_page_2014_-_testing_theories_of_american_politics.doc.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson. “Winner-Take-All Politics: Public Policy, Political Organization, and the Precipitous Rise of Top Incomes in the United States.” *Politics & Society*, Vol 38, Issue 2 (May 2010): 175-180, <http://journals.sagepub.com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/doi/10.1177/0032329210365042>.

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*, at 185-189.

debilitating health problems due to unclean water – are often completely consumed by their daily struggle to survive. And these same individuals tend to lack the time and the knowledge of how to advocate for access to basic resources that they, like all people, should enjoy.

**Racism and other forms of discrimination have played a central role in creating, exacerbating, and perpetuating inequalities across generations, particularly in the United States.**

As one participant noted, we tend to think about racism as something that happened in the past and that is contained there. But the lasting effects of racism and other forms of discrimination carry through to the present, and rather than diminishing, their impact can expand and deepen over time, stratified by bias and by socioeconomic status. Without a deliberate intervention, such problems will get worse – not better. As an example, one participant pointed to the legacy of discrimination against generations of African Americans in housing, in both public and private markets – from exclusion, to segregation, to the “redlining” that systematically denied access to credit and insurance – the repercussions of which continue to be felt today, and have played a central role in the lack of access to other public resources, such as quality schools.

Multiple participants spoke to the need to be attentive to such forms of discrimination when speaking about access to resources to which they may appear unrelated, and not to conflate race and class by suggesting that racial disparities can be remedied simply by tackling socioeconomic inequality. Indeed, recent research has shown that even when black and white male children in the United States “grow up in two-parent families with comparable incomes, education, and wealth, live on the same city block, and attend the same school,” black men will still earn “significantly lower incomes in adulthood” than their white counterparts.<sup>27</sup> In other words, the profound disparities in access to basic resources and inequality cannot be explained by economic forces alone. This point was underscored by participants from a range of fields, including health, housing, and education, who pointed out that socioeconomic status alone cannot explain huge disparities along racial lines, such as the fact that in Washington, D.C., 8 percent of black eighth-graders are proficient in math, compared to 80 percent of their white classmates.<sup>28</sup>

As several participants pointed out, inequality is consistently undergirded and exacerbated by stereotypes, which allow society to falsely attribute to whole groups of people a trait of inferiority, laziness, or lack of ambition. As such, challenging inequality often begins by

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<sup>27</sup> Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, Maggie Jones, and Sonya R. Porter, “Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: Executive Summary,” *The Equality of Opportunity Project* (March 2018): 6, [http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/assets/documents/race\\_summary.pdf](http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/assets/documents/race_summary.pdf); Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, Maggie R. Jones, and Sonya R. Porter, “Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: An Intergenerational Perspective,” *U.S. Census Bureau, NBER Working Paper No. 24441 (March 2018)*, [http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/assets/documents/race\\_paper.pdf](http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/assets/documents/race_paper.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Corydon Ireland, “The Costs of Inequality: Education’s the One Key that Rules Them All,” *The Harvard Gazette*, February 15, 2016.

challenging conscious and unconscious bias, as discrimination might affect people's willingness to intervene to address inequality – attributing its roots to individual behavior, rather than structural barriers that all but ensure people will be given unacceptable, unequal access to basic resources. If we see some groups as less worthy, or as responsible for inequalities that are in reality largely structural, then we will be less willing to intervene to do something to fix those structural problems.

And race is obviously far from the only form of discrimination that can create or exacerbate barriers to opportunity. Consider, for example, that women earn approximately 15 percent less on average than their male counterparts in OECD countries, a disparity that, combined with the fact that women tend to carry out more unpaid work at home, results in women retiring on lower pensions and being more likely to end up in poverty.<sup>29</sup> Women over 65 are one and a half times more likely to live in poverty than men in the same age bracket in OECD countries.<sup>30</sup>

Yet another participant noted that efforts to address inequality must target both its immediate consequences and long-term drivers. That is, we must work to ensure that people gain access to essential resources (such as health care and education) that are denied to them as a result of their socioeconomic status, at the same time as we tackle the underlying structural drivers that produce such unequal access in generation after generation, such as discrimination based on race and gender. Efforts to tackle inequality, the participant noted, too often privilege the former at the expense of the latter.

**Research has shown how unequal access to any one of the crucial resources of education, housing, labor, or health can have lasting consequences for the mobility of individuals, families, communities, and entire societies.** A few key points discussed during the Forum that demonstrate such consequences are highlighted here:

In **education**, a 2016 study found that growing income gaps between those at the bottom and middle of the income distribution spectrum are leading low-income boys to drop out of high school at much higher rates than middle-income boys.<sup>31</sup> These disparities in access to education can have lifelong consequences. In OECD countries, poorer students go on to lower educational attainment, smaller salaries, and lives that are, on average, 2.7 years shorter for men than their

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<sup>29</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2017. <http://www.oecd.org/gender/the-pursuit-of-gender-equality-9789264281318-en.htm>.

<sup>30</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Inequality and Gender," *Inequality*. OECD, 2018, <http://www.oecd.org/inclusive-growth/inequality.htm>. (Accessed 28 August 2018.)

<sup>31</sup> Melissa S. Kearney and Phillip B. Levine, "Income Inequality, Social Mobility, and the Decision to Drop Out of High School," *The Brookings Institution*, Brookings Papers on Economic Activity (3 March 2015), [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/KearneyLevine\\_IncomeInequalityUpwardMobility\\_ConferenceDraft.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/KearneyLevine_IncomeInequalityUpwardMobility_ConferenceDraft.pdf).

more educated counterparts.<sup>32</sup> In the United States, the majority of individuals in the top quarter of income earners have a college degree, compared to the bottom quarter of income earners, less than 10 percent of which have a college degree. And the disparity in economic outcomes between those who have a college degree and those who do not has never been higher – with growing gaps in income, employment, and rates of poverty.<sup>33</sup> The typical high school graduate in the United States earned approximately \$3,000 more in 1965 than the average high school graduate earned in 2013.

In **housing**, studies show that the area where a child grows up has significant causal effects on her prospects for upward mobility. A 2014 study, for example, documented substantial variation in rates of upward mobility depending on the commuting zone (aggregation of counties analogous to metropolitan areas) within which subjects lived in the United States, so that simply moving a child to a different neighborhood could significantly improve her likelihood for obtaining a higher income in adulthood.<sup>34</sup> Even within a given commuting zone, counties with higher rates of upward mobility tended to have five characteristics: less segregation by income and race, lower levels of income inequality, better schools, lower rates of violent crime, and a larger share of two-parent households. Areas with a larger African-American population in the United States tend to have lower rates of upward mobility. In brief, these geographical barriers amplify and reinforce racial inequality across generations: the study estimated that one-fourth of the gap in intergenerational mobility between blacks and whites could be attributed to the counties where they live within the United States.<sup>35</sup>

And of course, **labor** is at the center of economic inequality. As has been repeatedly pointed out, while the jobless rate in the United States is reaching historically low levels, low and middle-income wages have remained stagnant, and have actually fallen for the bottom fifth of earners. In fact, the share of economic output that workers receive has declined steadily since the 1970s, even as productivity has increased.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the emergence of new platforms has made it easier for employers to suppress wages and discourage low-wage earners who have the fewest

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<sup>32</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. *Understanding the Socio-Economic Divide in Europe*. Paris: OECD Publishing, January 2017. <https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/cope-divide-europe-2017-background-report.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> Pew Research Center. *The Rising Cost of Not Going to College*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, February 2014. <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/02/SDT-higher-ed-FINAL-02-11-2014.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren, “The Impact of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility: Childhood Exposure Effects and County-Level Estimates,” Executive Summary (April 2015), [http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/assets/documents/nbhds\\_exec\\_summary.pdf](http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/assets/documents/nbhds_exec_summary.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Jay Shambaugh, Ryan Nunn, Patrick Liu, and Greg Nantz, “Thirteen Facts about Wage Growth,” *The Hamilton Project* (September 2017): 1, [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/thp\\_20170926\\_thirteen\\_facts\\_wage\\_growth.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/thp_20170926_thirteen_facts_wage_growth.pdf).

options and the least bargaining power from organizing, while the potential labor market disruptions from automation loom as a potential accelerant of inequality.

In **health**, a growing body of evidence suggests that large income differences lead to an increasing number not only of physical health issues, but also of mental health and public health issues, such as violence, teenage birth, and child wellbeing.<sup>37</sup> Low socioeconomic status may, furthermore, have a permanent impact on cognitive development: a 2015 study that measured the surface area of children's and young adults' cerebral cortices – the part of the brain where most advanced cognitive processing takes place – found a significant correlation between the cortical surface area and family income levels, suggesting that low socioeconomic status could inhibit brain growth.<sup>38</sup> Disputes remain about the exact causal mechanisms at work – and the extent to which these relationships are causal or related to common forces that precede both inequality and health outcomes. But there can be no question that inequality, health, and well-being are all deeply interrelated.

One participant additionally noted that in the United States and other rich democracies, rural-urban cleavages have exacerbated social cleavages and fueled anti-government resentment that has greatly complicated efforts to address inequality. The urban-rural divide affects all the areas just discussed, including jobs and education, but some of the most profound consequences concern health. Less educated white Americans living outside urban centers, for example, have experienced an absolute decline in life expectancy in recent years, an unprecedented development in modern American history for communities not subject to a disease epidemic (such as AIDS) or engaged in military conflict.<sup>39</sup> A substantial reason for this significant downward turn is the increase in opioid abuse, alcohol-related diseases, and suicide outside of major metro areas.

**For people who lack access to basic resources and opportunities, inequality is rarely confined to any one area. On the contrary, inequality's causes and its effects are often overlapping and mutually reinforcing.**

Inequality, as one participant put it, doesn't stay neatly within its disciplinary sector. A boy who grows up without stable housing or a decent education will almost certainly lose out on future job prospects. A large, unexpected medical bill for a parent without health insurance can result in an inability to pay rent and eviction, which in turn can lead to more health problems. The failure

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<sup>37</sup> Kate E. Pickett and Richard G. Wilkinson, "Income Equality and Health: A Causal Review," *Social Science & Medicine* 128, (March 2015): 316-326, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953614008399?via%3Dihub>.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Balter, "Poverty May Affect the Growth of Children's Brains," *Science*, March 30, 2015, <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2015/03/poverty-may-affect-growth-children-s-brains>.

<sup>39</sup> Anne Case and Angus Deaton, "Mortality and Morbidity in the 21st Century," *The Brookings Institution, Brookings Papers on Economic Activity (Spring 2017)*: <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/casetextsp17bpea.pdf>.

to provide affordable housing can lead to a vicious cycle for people moving back and forth between homelessness and the criminal justice system. School segregation, a longstanding driver of unequal opportunities in education, is almost entirely driven by residential segregation.

And in large part because these problems are mutually reinforcing, participants noted a growing consensus among practitioners that attempting to address unequal access to any of one of these resources alone is unlikely to be effective in expanding the opportunities that are essential for reducing inequality. Rather, to be effective and sustainable, solutions must be integrated – bringing a holistic approach to expanding access to resources that are often out of reach to the poorest members of our societies. For example, over the last few decades, the public health community has increasingly focused on the social determinants of health – particularly socioeconomic factors such as income, wealth, and education that are separate from medical care – as the fundamental drivers of a wide range of health outcomes, and thus a potential lever to address unacceptable disparities in health.<sup>40</sup> As one participant pointed out, it is impossible to think of improving the health of the 30 percent of urban dwellers around the world who live in slums<sup>41</sup> without also thinking of tackling problems such as the lack of access to clean water, sanitation, and energy, as well as durable housing – among other factors. Nonetheless, even as more experts accept the need to approach these barriers in a more comprehensive way, institutions – public, private, and non-profit alike – are not often designed to tackle this problem in an integrated way across sectors.

In addition, as one participant pointed out, the very resources intended to be engines of mobility can themselves become the barriers that reinforce inequality in our societies. Access to high-quality daycare, early childhood programs, and well-trained teachers are all examples of interventions that can have a lasting impact on improving a child’s performance in school, and increase her chances of going on to earn a college degree (as well as accessing the opportunities that enables). But the lack of those same resources can also serve as a barrier to a child’s achievement.

**Measuring the impact of interventions to reduce inequality is challenging for multiple reasons, including that results frequently take years or even decades to be fully realized, and even then manifest themselves in different forms with different outcomes; that counterfactuals are rare; and that consequences are rarely measured across sectors.**

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<sup>40</sup> Paula Braveman and Laura Gottlieb, “The Social Determinants of Health: It’s Time to Consider the Causes of the Causes,” *Public Health Reports* 129, Suppl. 2 (Jan - Feb 2014): 19-31, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3863696/#>; (The article cites a wide range of research demonstrating the social determinants of health in the United States, including studies showing that “lead ingestion in substandard housing contributes to low cognitive function and stunted physical development in exposed children”; “pollution and allergens, also more common in disadvantaged neighborhoods, can exacerbate asthma”; and “workers without sick leave are more likely to go to work when ill, increasing the likelihood of disease spread to coworkers or customers.”)

<sup>41</sup> UN-Habitat. *Slum Almanac 2015-2016: Tracking Improvement in the Lives of Slum Dwellers*. Nairobi: UNON, Publishing Services Section, 2016. <https://unhabitat.org/slum-almanac-2015-2016/>.

Providing people with access to basic resources that would otherwise be unavailable to them due to their socioeconomic status can have profound consequences for the rest of their lives, and not only in the area where the intervention is made or in the creation of financial wealth. So, for example, the fact that a mother living in poverty has access to in-kind support in the first three years of her daughter's life may not only impact the child's cognitive development by age 3, but also whether she goes on to college at age 18, and the kind of job she can get at age 32.

And yet these outcomes, by definition, take years to manifest themselves, and may be different in kind for different individuals, while nevertheless similar insofar as they ultimately broaden access to opportunities. Moreover, the ability to measure them is limited by numerous, often-inevitable methodological challenges. For example, many of the most important of such interventions are not – and sometimes cannot ethically or feasibly be – undertaken with a control group that provides a counterfactual. Nor, in most cases, is the impact of these interventions measured across a range of indicators that go beyond the field of intervention itself, in a way that would provide a more comprehensive measure of impact. Nonetheless, given that obtaining access to basic housing, health care, education, employment, or other critical resources is in many cases a prerequisite for access to a range of opportunities for years to come, we must do a better job of providing such access, which is far more likely to occur if we can measure the consequences of such interventions.

**The mass movement of people, particularly across State borders, can impact inequality in a number of significant ways.**

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency's annual Global Trends study, an estimated 68.5 million people were displaced worldwide at the end of 2017, including more than 25 million refugees, having been forced to flee their homes as a consequence of violence, war, and various forms of persecution – the largest displacement since the Second World War.<sup>42</sup> More broadly, in 2017, nearly 258 million people – or 3.4 percent of the world's population – were living in a country that was different from their country of birth.<sup>43</sup> These individuals collectively represent both potential drivers of, and people affected by, economic inequality. Whether the movement of people is voluntary or forced, and whether they cross borders through legal means or not, they are likely to add potential workers to the labor force in the countries where they settle, which may affect wages and access to certain public resources among the general population. Furthermore, migrants' movements are likely to impact the economy in both their host country and the country where they settle. At the same time, immigrants may have a net positive impact

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<sup>42</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Figures at a Glance," *About Us*. UNHCR, June 2018, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>. (Accessed 17 July 2018.)

<sup>43</sup> United Nations, Department of Economics and Social Affairs, Population Division. *International Migration Report 2017: Highlights*. New York: United Nations, 2017. [http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2017\\_Highlights.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2017_Highlights.pdf), 4.

on the economy of a country,<sup>44</sup> while they simultaneously face unique challenges when attempting to integrate into a community, achieve economic mobility, and obtain equal opportunities for themselves and their families.

While the impact of the movement of such people is a complex phenomenon with diverse implications, the public debate around the impact of this population on the countries where they settle, and particularly on the economy (as well as on security), tends to be politically charged, and is often driven more by fear than fact. For example, in the United States, a study found that immigration accounted for only 5 percent of the overall increase in wage inequality between 1980 and 2000, and that those individuals whose wages are most affected by immigration are other immigrants.<sup>45</sup> Another study found that, on average, native citizens in France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States vastly overestimated the size of their nation's immigrant population, in addition to believing they are poorer, more unemployed, and less educated than they actually are. The study also found native citizens dramatically overestimate the degree to which immigrants rely on government assistance; in France, for example, nearly a quarter of those surveyed believed falsely that the average immigrant receives twice as much government aid as the average native. All of these biases and misperceptions, the researchers found, make native citizens' more averse to redistribution and welfare policies in general, which they see as disproportionately benefitting immigrants.<sup>46</sup>

### **Rising inequality could negatively impact the national security of the United States and other countries, particularly liberal democracies.**

In a presentation on inequality and national security, a participant noted that the United States took on a role of exceptional leadership in global affairs after World War II, at a time when inequality within the country was at an extremely low level, in no small part as a result of New Deal policies. Such engagement enjoyed widespread support among the American public – support which continued, fueled in large part by the emergence of the Soviet Union as a great rival, and was codified in the policy of the Truman Doctrine. This support held, even as levels of domestic inequality began to rise steadily starting in the fifties. The participant raised the question as to whether the dramatic increase in domestic inequality might be a contributing factor leading to declining support among Americans for the country taking a significant leadership role in the world, and whether it presaged a turn inwards.

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<sup>44</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *The Economic and Fiscal Consequences of Immigration*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.17226/23550>; (The report found that immigration has an overall positive impact on long-run economic growth in the U.S.)

<sup>45</sup> David Card and Andrei Shleifer, "Immigration and Inequality," *American Economic Review*, American Economic Association 99, No. 2 (May 2009): 1-21, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w14683.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup> Alberto Alesina, Armando Miano, and Stefanie Stancheva, "Immigration and Redistribution," *National Bureau of Economic Research*, NBER Working Paper No. 24733 (June 2018).

If one believes that public support for America’s engagement in world affairs is critical to national security, growing inequality may well pose a threat to U.S. national security. The participant also noted that rising inequality in the United States might make the American model of government – and liberal democracies in general – less attractive, particularly when considered alongside less democratic forms of government whose countries have experienced greater growth while giving millions of people access to resources and opportunities that were previously unavailable to them. These questions are increasingly being raised within the U.S. foreign policy community, which is beginning to recognize the importance of addressing growing domestic inequality from a foreign policy and national security standpoint.

**One of the greatest challenges in tackling unequal opportunity is determining whether effective local interventions can be expanded, integrated across sectors, and taken to scale in different environments and contexts.**

We have seen how local interventions can provide access to resources that are otherwise inaccessible to people because of their economic status, and can open the pathway to opportunities all people should have. Yet in order for these interventions to have a sufficiently significant and sustainable impact, key questions must be answered around: (i) whether and how such programs can be taken to scale in different environments and contexts; and (ii) whether the intervention can be strengthened, by expanding access to more than just a single resource (for example, combining access to affordable housing services with access to quality schools). Just as the causes of inequality are overlapping and mutually reinforcing, so can the pathways to opportunity be made more robust and sustainable by providing access to multiple resources that are often out of reach to people at the lowest socioeconomic rungs of society. In addition to expanding the impact on the people served, effectively scaling such interventions also has the potential to create, change, and shape policies. After all, governments are more likely to adopt models that have been shown to have a sustainable impact across a range of communities.

#### IV. Working Group Discussions

The Forum participants separated into five pre-determined working groups, each of which was dedicated to a distinct facet of inequality and unequal opportunity. Four working groups focused on a fundamental resource where poverty can lead to unacceptable lack of access: education, health, housing, and labor. The fifth working group – —on public policy and the economics of inequality – focused more broadly on the role that government can play in tackling unacceptable unequal access to these resources, given its unique capacity and responsibility to address this problem.

Going into the working groups, we recognized that their respective themes, like the drivers of inequality, were overlapping. Indeed, in keeping with one of the central observations of the plenary discussion, many of the projects proposed were built on the idea of layering access to

multiple kinds of resources that reflected at least two working group themes, such as embedding prenatal health care or early childhood education services into affordable housing programs. And participants were encouraged to think about how the projects might expand access to additional resources that economic inequality can often put out of reach, so as to make the interventions more holistic and durable. Furthermore, the nature of projects varied from one working group to another, and in some instances within working groups. For example, one participant might propose a specific, concrete intervention, with clearly defined partners, timelines, and deliverables, while another might propose an idea that was far less formed, yet nevertheless intended to address a severe lack of access to the resources in question.

Each working project consisted of six to eight participants, one of whom served as a moderator. Participants who drafted proposals in advance were asked to present a succinct summary of their project, which was followed by a group discussion aimed at providing critical feedback, including on the following key questions:

- Strengths and weaknesses. In particular, are there key weaknesses, omissions, or risks in the framing of the problem or the proposed solution?
- Implementation challenges. What are the greatest obstacles to effectively implementing this project in the field, and can they be overcome?
- Potential improvements. How can the project be strengthened and its chances of success increased?
- Likely impact. If successful, what magnitude of impact will the project likely have on reducing the unacceptable lack of opportunity driven by economic inequality? Is the project scalable?
- Role of the university. Is research and/or scholarship important to the success of the project?

In addition, during a midday break, an ad-hoc working group met to discuss the role big data might play in reducing inequality, including the use of machine learning tools to better understand the relationship between factors such as housing, health, and education in perpetuating poverty and closing off opportunities. The group discussed ways that academic research might be able to help institutions such as government agencies and NGOs make better use of their data to identify those in need and to improve interventions aimed at expanding access to essential resources.

### ***1. Labor***

The labor working group started by speaking about the ways in which the markets are failing to solve, and in some cases exacerbating, inequalities in work. Recent research suggests that the long-term wage stagnation in the United States – where 2017 wages were only 10 percent higher than wages in 1973, after adjusting for inflation<sup>47</sup> – has been caused not only by growing

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<sup>47</sup> Shambaugh et. al., *supra* note 36.

globalization and automation, as has been long presumed, but also by what economists refer to as “monopsony power,” in which large corporations use the dearth of alternative job opportunities and the high cost of switching jobs to pressure workers into accepting low wages and substandard working conditions.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, evidence indicates employers are using their increasing share of the market and the resulting bargaining power to pay workers less, which enhances income inequality by (i) suppressing further the wages of low-income earners, who have the fewest options and the least bargaining power; and (ii) reducing the incomes of workers relative to those who live off of capital.<sup>49</sup> With wages artificially suppressed, qualified workers decline to take jobs or invest in skills and schooling, resulting in the underemployment of labor and reduced overall economic growth. Meanwhile, the share of GDP has increasingly shifted from payments to labor, to payments to profits – which are much more unequally distributed, and tend to benefits shareholders and business owners at the expense of workers.<sup>50</sup> In addition, the shift to a knowledge economy has widened gaps between workers with varying levels and types of knowledge, placing individuals who have not had access to education at a greater disadvantage. (In other words, unequal access to quality education increasingly begets a loss of employment opportunities.) Lastly, the emergence of new platforms and consolidation of firms has given employers greater power to shape the terms and norms of the marketplace, prioritizing the interests of consumers and investors over those of labor, and limiting the opportunities of workers to organize.

Before discussing specific proposals, the group agreed on several key principles in seeking ways to address this growing imbalance. First, to focus on turning bad jobs into good jobs, rather than just moving people from bad jobs to good jobs. That is, focusing on improving overall job quality rather than just improving individual job access. Second, to focus on interventions that restore leverage to workers, such as giving them greater representation in the workplace, greater bargaining power, or greater knowledge of the market. This means pursuing interventions that foster a more equal distribution of economic power and rewards before the government collects taxes or pays out benefits, known as *predistribution*, rather than try to remedy this imbalance through taxes and transfers that take from some, and give to others, or *redistribution*.<sup>51</sup> And third, to move beyond a narrow focus on what makes a job good, to highlighting the range of

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<sup>48</sup> Alan B. Krueger and Eric A. Posner, “Corporate America Is Suppressing Wages for Many Workers,” *New York Times*, February 28, 2018; Alan B. Krueger and Eric A. Posner, “A Proposal for Protecting Low-Income Workers from Monopsony and Collusion,” *The Hamilton Project*, Policy Proposal 2018-05 (Feb 2018), [http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/files/protecting\\_low\\_income\\_workers\\_from\\_monopsony\\_collusion\\_krueger\\_posner\\_pp.pdf](http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/files/protecting_low_income_workers_from_monopsony_collusion_krueger_posner_pp.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> Suresh Naidu, Eric Posner, and E. Glen Weyl, “Antitrust Remedies for Labor Market Power,” *University of Chicago Coase-Sandor Institute for Law & Economics, Research Paper, No. 850* (Feb 2018).

<sup>50</sup> Thomas B. Edsall, “In Our ‘Winner-Take-Most’ Economy, the Wealth Is Not Spreading,” *New York Times*, July 26, 2018.

<sup>51</sup> Jacob S. Hacker, “The Institutional Foundations of Middle-Class Democracy,” Policy Network (May 2011), [http://www.policy-network.net/pno\\_detail.aspx?ID=3998&title=The+institutional+foundations+of+middle-class+democracy](http://www.policy-network.net/pno_detail.aspx?ID=3998&title=The+institutional+foundations+of+middle-class+democracy).

resources (such as health care) and intangible benefits (such as one's sense of dignity) that are often tied to employment.

The group discussed three projects aimed at rebalancing the labor market and restoring leverage to workers without requiring legal or regulatory reform:

The first project was to launch a sectoral, place-based pilot that would aim to turn bad jobs into good jobs, focusing on the care economy. The care economy was selected by the group principally because: (i) care jobs represent a fundamental need in society, relating to one of the most important tasks we can relegate to labor – taking care of children, the elderly, the sick, and the disabled; (ii) the sector is predicted to grow at a rate of five times that of other sectors; (iii) care wages have proven stubbornly stagnant despite the growth of the sector; and (iv) workers in the industry are overwhelmingly women, people of color, and immigrants – groups that tend to have unequal access to opportunity and that would benefit from greater leverage, empowerment, and mobility. The group discussed whether it would be possible to demonstrate that an investment in improving jobs in the care economy could actually result in overall savings in the health sector. And various interventions were discussed that might lead to a rebalancing of the market, including providing income subsidies for care workers; training to enhance workers' value and mobility; and creating a model of portable benefits, which would enable workers without a fixed employer to own their core personal benefits, funded by a combination of individual contributions and pro-rated contributions by employers.

The second project was a “good work certification” – a third-party validated framework that would affirm whether employers meet a quality of work threshold for their employees, based on a set of transparent standards such as job stability, flexibility, wages, and collective bargaining rights. A seal that affirms “good work” could be used to send a signal not only to workers, but also to consumers who want to support businesses that meet a basic standard.

The third project envisioned creating an app for low-income workers who do not work for a single employer, which would (i) aggregate access to and curate good jobs; (ii) make applying for them easier; (iii) give workers a virtual space in which to communicate and organize collective action; and (iv) provide disconnected workers with additional tools and resources, such as the ability to compare wages for similar kinds of work. The group ultimately recommended merging the second and third projects.

Lastly, the group discussed a program that would aim to empower one of the country's most marginalized populations, which faces some of the highest barriers to employment – formerly incarcerated people – by combining training in prisons *before* individuals are released, with technology-enabled coaching *after* they are released. The project would pilot the approach in two locations where there are existing university programs for prison populations, New York and Virginia (with Columbia Business School and the University of Virginia Darden School of Business), with strong connections to progressive employers and workforce development

agencies. For formerly incarcerated people, obtaining career-track employment is critical to accessing other critical resources, as well as to reintegrating into society, and, relatedly, to reducing recidivism. Unemployment (and underemployment) is a leading reason why 76.6 percent of returnees from state prisons end up back in prison within five years.<sup>52</sup>

The group believed the project could be useful in demonstrating how a job-centric intervention aimed at a specific group with dramatically unequal opportunities might target other marginalized groups through similar projects. Members questioned whether this project could be done in a way that was sustainable and scalable, citing the high costs of an existing program jointly run by a university and a corporation (University of Arizona and Starbucks) that targets job placement and retention. The most significant outstanding question surfaced in the discussion is how the program would address an underlying structural issue: the stigma that formerly incarcerated persons face, and the fact that employers often discriminate against them. It was suggested that this challenge might be mitigated to some extent by building partnerships with specific employers (the health care sector, universities, major retailers were suggested) or associations (such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce).

## **2. Health**

The health working group looked at two projects. The first focused on tackling a gap in access to affordable, reliable water and wastewater services in the United States, which exists in a number of U.S. states in different regions of the country, typically in poor rural areas without public sewage systems. The project would start with a pilot in Alabama – designing and implementing a decentralized wastewater and drinking water treatment system for impoverished communities in certain counties within the state’s Black Belt.<sup>53</sup> In that region, rural homes that are not connected to public sewers and that lack septic tanks are discharging raw sewage into the ground and watershed, with profoundly negative health and environmental consequences. A 2017 medical study of one Black Belt county, Lowndes County, showed that among 55 adults surveyed, 34.5 percent tested positive for helminths (parasitic worms)<sup>54</sup>; and a 1993 survey of neighboring Wilcox County found one in three children under the age of ten tested positive for one or more

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<sup>52</sup> Matthew R. Durose, Alexia D. Cooper, and Howard N. Snyder. *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 30 States in 2005: Patterns from 2005 to 2010*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, April 2014, <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rprts05p0510.pdf>, 1; (This and other studies indicate that people who are unable to rejoin the workforce are more likely to either violate their parole conditions or to commit a crime to generate income by illegal means.)

<sup>53</sup> The Black Belt region of the U.S. state of Alabama refers to a series of counties that stretch across the southern side of the state where the soil is black, much of it in the soil order Vertisol, which contains a significant amount of clay.

<sup>54</sup> Megan L. McKenna, Shannon McAtee, Patricia E. Bryan, Rebecca Jeun, Tabitha Ward, Jacob Kraus, Maria E. Bottazzi, Peter J. Hotez, Catherine C. Flowers, and Rojelio Mejia, “Human Intestinal Parasite Burden and Poor Sanitation in Rural Alabama,” *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 97, No. 5 (November 2017): 1625, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5817782/pdf/tpmd170396.pdf>.

helminths.<sup>55</sup> Among children, helminths have been linked to impeded physical and cognitive development; while in adults, they have been linked to reduced productivity and wage-earning potential and to adverse outcomes in pregnancy. Nevertheless, the high cost of upgrading or building for the first time the necessary water and wastewater infrastructure; the poverty, remoteness, and low population density of affected communities; and the chronic underreporting of the negative health consequences – among other reasons – has resulted in this problem being left largely unaddressed.

The project proposes to work with local communities in designing, building, and maintaining decentralized wastewater treatment systems that would serve clusters of rural households – an approach that, when compared with a sewer system, could be both more affordable and yield superior water quality for drinking or other reuse, given new technological developments in the field. If effective, this approach could serve as a model for poor communities across the United States that face similar challenges, which will only grow with increasing water rates and a crumbling water and wastewater infrastructure (principally in poor rural areas, but also in urban areas, where population growth is straining aging systems), as well as in other countries.

Among the key questions raised by the group were whether this decentralized system can be delivered in a sustainable and affordable way, and in particular, what the business model would be for building and maintaining it, as the proposal suggested the private sector would play a central role. Participants also stressed the importance of conducting a needs assessment up front for the area where the project would be piloted, and engaging the affected communities early on, to give them a voice and secure local buy in. The group queried whether parts of this model would indeed be replicable to other communities in the United States, versus what would need to be adapted.

The second project focused on empowering Syrian women refugees and their families in Jordan through embedding economic and financial training into expanded access to health services, which offers a more trusted and reliable way of accessing this target population than creating a standalone program to impart those skills. An estimated 5.6 million Syrians have been displaced from their country by the ongoing conflict, more than 660,000 of them to neighboring Jordan, where over 80 percent of Syrian refugees live below the poverty line.<sup>56</sup> Syrian refugee women face a slew of health problems, as well as high levels of gender-based violence, but only a small proportion have access to health services. Those who do have access typically see the value of those services and are more likely to trust those who provide them. And in other countries where this approach has been implemented, using health workers to introduce economic and financial training has proved more effective than having a separate group attempt to impart such skills.

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<sup>55</sup> Amy Louise Badham, “Wilcox County Alabama: Needs Assessment” *University of Alabama at Birmingham*, PhD Dissertation (1993), <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/2091580/pdf1-hookworm1993.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *3RP regional refugee & resilience plan 2018-2019: In response to the Syrian crisis*. Geneva: UNHCR, 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/3RP-Regional-Strategic-Overview-2018-19.pdf>. (Accessed 28 August 2018.)

The proposed project would aim to expand Syrian women refugees' access to health services, working in partnership with local universities, NGOs, and the Government of Jordan, and then offer alongside those services training for livelihoods, banking, and financial literacy, with a specific focus on micro-entrepreneurship. With approximately 40 percent of Syrian refugee households in Jordan led by women,<sup>57</sup> the improved health and livelihood opportunities will not only expand opportunities and mobility for Syrian women, but will also benefit their families, from helping pay off significant debts to improving child nutrition.

Participants were impressed with the work previously done in Malaysia, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia demonstrating the value of combining expanded health care with economic and financial training, but asked whether income-earning opportunities for Syrian women in fact exist in Jordan, given the high levels of unemployment across both the host and refugee populations, as well as the difficulty of obtaining work permits, and without which no amount of training can open opportunities. They also sought greater clarity as to how the proposed program would address the barriers that Syrian women face to accessing health care in Jordan, which the project proposes to tackle through using informal social networks, in addition to the Jordanian Ministry of Health. Questions were raised as to whether the Jordanian government would in fact support – or be able to accommodate – providing health and other services for more Syrians, and whether Syrian households would trust the Jordanian Ministry of Health under such circumstances. It was suggested that the program define key indicators on the health and economic front so as to be able to measure success, and perhaps consider building in a pipeline, to the extent that is possible, to potential jobs that are sought by the women being trained.

### **3. Housing**

The housing working group discussed three projects, the first of which would develop a universal housing screen that would be embedded in existing federal and state safety net programs and their interactions with clients. The screen would: (i) track the housing needs of clients, so as to provide a more accurate assessment of the history of individuals, and the overall magnitude of affordable housing needs; (ii) more accurately estimate the resources necessary to meet that need, so that they can be set aside by federal, state, and local government; and (iii) use the information gathered to inform agencies about where to invest in affordable housing.

Unstable housing can play a major role in determining whether low-income people, particularly people of color who struggle with mental illness or addiction, end up moving back and forth between homelessness and incarceration. In addition, homelessness is a common reason that children are separated from their families and placed in foster care. An estimated 68 percent of

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<sup>57</sup> Care International. *On her own: How women forced to flee from Syria are shouldering increased responsibility as they struggle to survive*. Geneva: CARE, September 2016. [https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/care\\_on-her-own\\_refugee-media-report\\_sept-2016.pdf](https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/care_on-her-own_refugee-media-report_sept-2016.pdf), 3. (Accessed 28 August 2018.)

child welfare cases in the United States are tied to neglect, which is often rooted in poverty, not abuse. And the separation has lasting consequences for children – a survey found 40 percent of adults experiencing chronic homelessness had been children in the foster care system. Yet the agencies that work to address these and other problems, such as the criminal justice system and child welfare agencies, do not keep track of individuals' housing situation and needs. Just as unstable housing can be a driver of homelessness, separation of families, recidivism, and low educational outcomes, so can supportive housing help provide a foundation for stabilizing and reunifying families, and a more effective means of addressing some chronic problems.

The group encouraged the project's drafters to think about ways to incentivize the agencies whose participation is essential to implementing a housing screen to work together, given that such groups do not always tend to collaborate well. Participants also questioned whether better quantifying the need for supportive housing would actually translate into more resources being allocated to the issue. What is to say there will be political will to dedicate resources to a problem that is chronically underfunded, even if elected officials and communities know the problem affects more people? Is lack of awareness of the scale of the problem really the obstacle? One of the best ways to convince officials and communities to invest more resources in supportive housing, participants said, would be to demonstrate that the investment could save money in the long term. To this end, the group recommended seeking out partners who are likely to see their costs decrease as a result of an expansion of supportive housing, and finding out whether they would be willing to bear some of the costs. The health insurance industry and the American Hospital Association were two examples raised. In addition, the group questioned how one would determine which households would receive support, given the spectrum of need – from those facing the most urgent need (e.g. the homeless), to those at risk of losing their housing (because of debt or loss of a job, for example); and relatedly, the degree to which the program would also take actions aimed at preventing people from losing housing in the first place. Participants pointed to a study carried out by Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health, which provided support for people cycling in and out of homelessness, shelters, and the prison system, as a potential model. The program found those who received assistance spent fewer days in shelters and in prison, significantly lowering public costs: for participants in the program, the total per person average cost of shelter and jails went from \$38,351 in the two years prior to the program, to \$9,143 in the two years after the program – a 76 percent reduction.<sup>58</sup>

Two projects were presented in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) work with Syrian refugees in Jordan. One would develop a new program to educate out of school adolescent refugees (age 10 to 18) in Jordan, providing younger children with an accelerated program to prepare them to reintegrate into Jordanian schools, and providing older children with practical and vocational training to help improve their chance of finding jobs. If effective, the program could be adapted for other parts of the world where there are large populations of out of

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<sup>58</sup> Angela A. Aidala, William McAllister, Maiko Yomogida, and Virginia Shubert. *The Frequent User Service Enhancement Initiative: New York City FUSE II, Evaluation Report*. New York: Columbia Mailman School of Public Health, February 2014. <https://shnny.org/uploads/CSH-FUSE-Evaluation.pdf>, ix.

school refugee adolescents. Of the 6.4 million refugee children worldwide, more than half do not attend school, and as refugee children get older, obstacles to education increase. Only 23 percent of refugee adolescents are enrolled in secondary school, compared to 84 percent of all children.<sup>59</sup>

The other NRC-related project would build upon an existing program that provides urban refugees with rent-free housing for one to two years, as well as livelihood training and legal services. According to the proposal, Columbia University would work with NRC to strengthen the integration of services that are usually provided by separate agencies, creating a multi-sectoral approach for empowering refugees that is better suited to the urban (non-camp) situations in which a growing proportion of refugees live. One of the central questions this project would seek to answer is whether the holistic provision of a range of services, which can be quite costly, could not only improve outcomes for refugees, but deliver them in a way that is sustainable and cost-efficient. A previous NRC program that focused only on housing relief proved expensive and unsustainable, with many refugee families returning to substandard housing as soon as the program ended, often due to lack of employment. Participants queried whether the real obstacle to refugee employment – and thus a more sustainable improvement of households’ situation after housing support ends – was the lack of training, or rather the lack of sufficient employment opportunities, or discrimination. (Interestingly, a similar question was asked of a project discussed in the health working group, which proposed providing economic and financial training to Syrian refugee women in Jordan.)

With respect to the two projects in Jordan, the group asked whether the most effective intervention for refugees in that country would necessarily be transferable to other countries, given differences in the nature of the refugee situation and the host country. For example, consider the differences that exist between Jordan and a country like Germany, where the refugee population is smaller (proportionally, and in absolute numbers), more dispersed, and more diverse in terms of their country of origin, and where refugees typically face additional barriers such as not speaking the language of the host country.

The question was raised as to whether those two projects should be merged into one, with educational support being integrated alongside assistance for housing, employment, and legal services, in a comprehensive approach. One participant noted that the education intervention would be distinct, given that in that project, the NRC would actually be co-designing the program with the Jordanian Government, whereas the other proposal anticipates NRC providing the service without governmental coordination. But it was pointed out that coordination with the Government in education, if effective, would be useful for improving access to other resources as well. Lastly, a participant made the point that, for the project proposing a multi-sectoral

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<sup>59</sup> United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, “Over 3.5 Million Refugee Children Miss Out on School, Report Finds,” *News*. UNHCR, (September 2017), <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2017/9/59b65d3b4/35-million-refugee-children-miss-school-report-finds.html>. (Accessed 28 August 2018.)

approach, it may be necessary to shift the mindset of humanitarian funders as well, which tend not to provide resources for a suite of services, but rather in silos.

For all three of the proposed projects, discussants expressed support for integrating housing services with improving access to other resources that can expand opportunity, such as job training, access to education, and health care, and underscored the way the lack of stable, affordable, safe housing can be a potentially devastating social determinant of health.

#### ***4. Education***

The education working group discussed two projects. The first focused on scaling an existing nongovernmental program, Room to Grow, that supports new parents living below or near the poverty line to reduce the negative impacts of poverty on their family, particularly their children. Room to Grow's three-year (prenatal to 36 months) program model incorporates three key forms of support: (i) structured coaching, (ii) material goods for the child, and (iii) assistance in accessing community connections and other resources. The program is designed to remedy the alarming developmental gap that emerges between children of different socioeconomic backgrounds at as early as six months of age, which can widen significantly by age three. These early childhood gaps can contribute to negative consequences for educational and career opportunities, and can have implications for both short and long-term health outcomes. However, nine out of ten children in the Room to Grow program are meeting or exceeding their developmental benchmarks on time – a rate that is nearly 20 percent higher than children from low-income households who do not take part in the program, and one that is on par with rates from higher-income homes. The program is currently the subject of a randomized control trial in partnership with Columbia University. In discussing how to scale the program to reach more families without compromising its efficacy or changing its relationship-driven model, and perhaps even deepening its impact, a number of key recommendations and questions surfaced.

One is whether the recruitment methods through which families are invited to join the program should evolve. Currently, parents find their way to the program through a referral by a doctor or nurse, or through word of mouth during a mother's pregnancy. Forum participants asked whether Room to Grow should consider a more systematic way of informing eligible parents about the program, such as a screen that could be introduced in hospitals in a certain geographic area for all pregnant mothers (perhaps in conjunction with all of those who are eligible for Medicaid). Participants also asked whether income eligible candidates should be prioritized, and if so, how to do it (Severity of need? Limiting the program to single mothers?). Others suggested that, where possible, the timeline of the intervention might be moved to earlier in the pregnancy, with the support and programming beginning during a mother's first or second trimester, which would mean finding new ways to identify participants at an earlier stage. Participants also compared the relative merits and challenges of expanding the program within the cities where it currently operates – New York and Boston – versus testing pilots in new U.S. cities, where, for example, different partnership opportunities may exist or public funding models might be explored.

Several participants suggested reframing the program's message to highlight the fact that central components include providing a type of cash-transfer (through the baby supplies and equipment) and help in navigating other assistance programs for families living on the cusp of insecurity, as opposed to focusing on parent coaching, which risks being perceived as having paternalistic undertones. The value of framing the program in this way, commenters noted, is that it may more clearly showcase the program's core focus on resilience and on parents as the change agents for their families and communities.

The second project discussed would create a web-based application to allow middle and high schools to send timely, actionable information via text message to families about their child's academic performance, such as missing assignments, grades, and absences. In lower-performing schools that disproportionately serve low-income students, only 43 percent of parents are satisfied with information they receive about their children's performance, compared to an 83 percent satisfaction rate among parents in higher-performing schools.<sup>60</sup> In addition, research shows parents systematically hold overly optimistic beliefs about their children's attendance and academic performance; and often learn about serious problems too late, when report cards arrive. More accurate and timely information might prompt parents to engage their children to remedy challenges and problems, and yield better academic results. The proposed app would automate records of attendance, grades, and other performance-related information that teachers and administrators are already collecting, and use it to pre-populate text alerts to parents when a problem surfaces, such as chronically missed assignments or grades below a certain percentage.

In discussing this project, the group considered some of the potential obstacles to adoption and implementation, including the size, bureaucracy, and technological capacity of a given school district, as alert systems would need to be tailored to districts' existing systems. It was noted that the intervention tends to work well for students who are on the cusp – students in the C and D grade range – rather than those who are failing out, for whom more than a nudge is often needed. Participants queried whether it might be worthwhile to notify parents not only when students are doing poorly, but also to give positive feedback, and suggested testing variations on when and how often to notify parents to determine what is maximally effective. One of the advantages of the idea is that the cost of the program would be relatively low: the greatest investment would be required up-front in order to build platforms tailored to each school district's digital infrastructure. Adapting the program and maintaining it, including the sending of texts, would cost very little. Participants also stressed the importance of asking participating parents how they would want to be notified, so as to draw upon their inputs and build buy-in. The group liked that this program would shift from problematizing parents to empowering them.

When it came to measuring the effectiveness of these education projects, participants pointed out that one challenge is that while part of the impact would be immediate – an improvement in

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<sup>60</sup> John M. Bridgeland, John J. DiIulio, Ryan T. Streeter, and James R. Mason. *One Dream, Two Realities: Perspectives of Parents on America's High Schools*. Washington, D.C.: Civic Enterprises, October 2008) [http://www.civicerprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/one\\_dream\\_two\\_realities.pdf](http://www.civicerprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/one_dream_two_realities.pdf).

school attendance in a single school year, or a three-year-old child exhibiting a certain level of cognitive development, to cite a few examples – the long-term consequences of these interventions would take longer to measure, and extend beyond the three to five year time frame of CWP projects. It is fair to say that this phenomenon extends to many interventions aimed at addressing inequality, and in particular to socioeconomic inequality that leads to unequal opportunity: by addressing it, one may open up previously closed pathways, the consequences of which may last a lifetime.

## **5. Public Policy**

The public policy working group focused on the United States and on ways in which state or local governments might effectively tackle inequality, primarily by reducing unemployment. The group began with a discussion of the macro tools available to the government to address inequality and unequal opportunity – chief among them setting tax policy, establishing minimum wages, reducing barriers to employment and mobility, providing benefits and financial inclusion, and regulating the private sector (including by promoting competition and breaking up monopolies).

A proposal was presented for reforming unemployment insurance (UI), which – although organized by the federal government, is administered by the states – has succeeded neither in providing economic security for jobless workers nor in stabilizing the economy during economic downturns. The problems identified with the existing UI system include: (i) limited and inconsistent coverage (particularly of part-time or contractual workers who, on average, earn lower wages and are more likely to be out of work); (ii) insufficient benefits for preventing low-income jobless workers from falling into poverty; (iii) uncertain and often limited duration of benefits, which may encourage the long-term unemployed to leave the workforce rather than keep looking for jobs; (iv) a regressive tax approach to funding UI that is based on wages and that places a cap on taxable income, thus falling disproportionately on lower wage workers; and (v) the insolvency of the many state programs, particularly during economic downturns, when the demand for UI is greatest.

A number of possible reforms to the system were discussed, including: (i) federalizing UI, to ensure financing and benefit constituency; (ii) offering self-employment assistance for jobless workers; (iii) creating personal reemployment accounts that UI recipients could use to fund job training; and (iv) developing reemployment strategies specifically focused on meeting the needs of older workers who have been out of work for more than six months.

In its discussion, the group focused on ways to effectively reframe the discussion from one on *un*employment to one focused on *re*employment. Participants suggested thinking about reemployment efforts in three stages: i) preventing unemployment; ii) assisting unemployed workers while they are out of work; and iii) helping unemployed workers get jobs.

As a means of preventing unemployment, participants discussed the possibility of incentivizing work-sharing; that is, reducing hours for workers across a business as a means of distributing more broadly the negative effects of a downturn, as opposed to laying off a comparatively smaller number of workers. The existing system, the group noted, tends to incentivize lay-offs over work-sharing, for while UI provides support when people lose their jobs, there is no parallel system to provide assistance for workers whose wages may be reduced as a result of work-sharing, which is less disruptive for those affected. Participants also shared ideas for how to increase worker mobility – such as eliminating some of the restrictions that make it hard for workers to move from state to state, including place-bound health plans. Participants discussed the importance of promoting ideas that go beyond simply helping workers *keep* their jobs, to giving them opportunities to find better ones. When it comes to assisting people while they are unemployed, participants noted an inherent tension: unemployed workers tend to need benefits for longer when it is a recession (when job opportunities are more limited), yet that is precisely when the budgets of UI programs tend to be the most depleted. Multiple strategies were discussed for helping the unemployed find jobs. Wage insurance, which can ease the burden on people of taking a lower-paying job by helping make up the difference, can be a helpful incentive to get people to return to the work force.

The challenge for reforming UI programs, participants pointed out, is that the vast majority of reforms would cost additional money, and states' UI budgets are stretched thin as it is. Moreover, given the current structure of funding such programs through regressive taxes, expanding UI programs under the current system could actually end up placing a greater burden on low-wage workers. As such, any discussion about reforming UI also needs to take into account how to change its funding mechanism. Discussants also noted that one of the perverse consequences of having a system with insufficient coverage is that it may drive workers to seek coverage through disability insurance (even when they do not have a disability), which is condition-limited rather than time-limited, and thus may come at a greater cost to the taxpayers, as well as being less likely to help people return to the workforce. (Disability insurance is paid by the federal government, as opposed to unemployment insurance, which is paid for by the states).

In addition, discussants observed that the problem of unemployment is intrinsically tied to broader trends in inequality, such as the fact that even as worker productivity has increased, the benefits have mostly accrued to those in the upper income bracket; and that the workers whose jobs are most vulnerable are also often under-compensated for their work, and thus in a more tenuous situation to begin with. For them, losing a job may mean a swift fall into deep poverty.

The group suggested that one strategy for attempting to build a model for the reform of UI, given the current system, would be to work with an individual state to overhaul its approach and use it as a pilot that would help convince other states of the value of conducting similar reforms. The group noted that, at the state level, it may be easier to identify partners, even if the impact would be smaller than creating a nationwide UI system. Columbia University's range of expertise could offer a unique combination of knowledge and skills – drawing on disciplines such as economics,

policy, law, business, and data science – as well as the ability to measure the efficacy of any reforms undertaken. That said, possible risks in working with any government partner include the fact that all facets of the reform – formulating policies, allocating necessary staff, securing a budget and so on – will be contingent, to some extent, on political factors and influenced by an electoral timeline. In talking through how to potentially select a state, the group suggested considering the advantages of selecting a small state (where it would be easier to implement at scale); looking at New York, where Columbia University is based and has strong connections; as well as contemplating a state that has experienced high levels of unemployment as a result of globalization.

The group discussed whether one way to approach reemployment at the state level would be to seek to plan and implement a significant tranche of public and private investment in infrastructure. Such an effort could lay the foundation for a state's future economic development; put to work a large number of people who have been displaced by shifts in the economy; and show a tangible, immediate effort to reduce inequality. Columbia University could convene key state government actors with potential investors to determine some of the greatest barriers to investment in infrastructure, and explore how they might be overcome, such as making higher-risk, baseline public investments up front that would make it more appealing for private capital to enter the market, and clearing out some of the most onerous permits and other obstacles to public-private partnerships. If successful in one state, the infrastructure approach might be taken up and modified by other states.

## V. Conclusions and Project Selection

When participants reconvened in a plenary session, the five working group moderators reported out on the project ideas discussed in their respective groups, including how each project would address unacceptable, unequal access to opportunity, whether it met key criteria, and critical feedback that emerged during the course of their breakout sessions. Each participant was then asked to identify the projects that she or he thought were most promising out of all those described, and to provide her or his recommendations regarding which projects should be further developed by CWP for possible funding.

Some participants resisted the request to identify a particular project or two for further development, generally expressing support for many of the projects described by the working group moderators. Yet the conversation that ensued resulted in significant agreement among participants regarding areas where further work should be done, and certain projects that could, in some cases, be combined, developed, and pursued. Specifically, there was significant support for focusing on projects related to three themes: water infrastructure, neonatal and early childhood education, and the future of work.

Participants expressed considerable support for the wastewater treatment and clean drinking water project, while suggesting that expertise from other disciplines – such as business and health – would be critical to making the proposed pilot sustainable and could assist in measuring the impact of the solution. In the area of neonatal and early childhood education, participants were very supportive of the Room to Grow project, but noted that it would ideally be integrated with other ideas presented, such as the housing screen. And the view of the vast majority of participants was that in the labor area, we should combine a few of the ideas discussed, as elaborated below, perhaps in partnership with the governor of a U.S. state. A great many participants expressed the view that the need for work in the refugee and migrant area was critical and urgent, but several were not sure that the projects identified were necessarily the right ones for CWP to pursue when tackling that issue, without considering them alongside other possible efforts in this sphere. One participant suggested that CWP consider holding a separate forum on that topic, which CWP leadership is exploring, within which the refugee and migrant projects identified in this first forum on inequality might be considered, along with other ideas. In the meantime, however, further detail is provided below regarding the three projects that emerged from the Forum with significant support for further development.

All three of these projects would, if pursued, be implemented in the United States. Indeed, the vast majority of ideas discussed at the Forum proposed interventions in the United States, as is reflected in the previous section. While this might seem antithetical to an institution with “world” in its name, the focus seems wholly appropriate given the acute and growing inequality problem in the United States, which, despite being one of the richest countries in the world, is also one of the most unequal. Indeed, it is the very wealth of the United States that makes such a lack of access to opportunity all the more unacceptable, a point underscored by many participants. What’s more, many of the proposed solutions could, if piloted effectively in the United States, be applied (with adaptations) to expand opportunity for people facing similar barriers in other countries.

The first project slated for further development by CWP is the proposal from the health working group to start by designing and piloting a decentralized wastewater treatment and clean drinking water system for an impoverished county in Alabama’s Black Belt, where rural homes that lack connections to public sewers and septic tanks are discharging raw sewage into the ground and watershed – causing profoundly negative health and environmental consequences, particularly for children, and then expanding the project to additional areas across the United States where this problem exists. Participants cited the importance of finding a sustainable solution to this problem, given the decline of America’s wastewater infrastructure, the rise of water rates, and communities across the country facing similar problems in a number of U.S. states; the fact that the project would focus on one of the most marginalized regions of the United States; the potential scalability of a solution that would serve clusters of households, not just in the United States but globally; and the resonance of a project focusing on addressing unsafe water in the aftermath of the crisis in Flint, Michigan. In developing the project, participants underscored the importance of coming up with a plan for engaging the community where this will be piloted, to

ensure they have a voice in shaping the project and are part of the solution. Additionally, the discussion highlighted the need for including expertise from Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health and Business School, to measure the health outcomes and develop a sustainable business model for the pilot, which may include private sector investment.

The second project is the proposal from the education working group to strengthen and scale the Room to Grow program, which provides support to new parents below or near the poverty line during the first three years of their child's life – through coaching, in-kind baby goods, and help accessing other assistance programs. Such supports, especially throughout the first three years of a child's development, have been shown to be an effective and affordable way to close the developmental and achievement gaps for low-income families. Forum participants strongly supported the idea of investing in early interventions that ensure children have access to the same basic opportunities, and suggested starting the program earlier, in the second or even first trimester. As part of the potential expansion project, participants recommended partnering or even embedding the program into existing public systems such as health care, housing, social services, and education. For example, given that a significant proportion of beneficiaries of the program are homeless or living in substandard housing – and given the importance of stable, safe, adequate housing to early child development – participants suggested that Room to Grow consider working with experts in the housing sector to introduce a “housing screen” into their work with participating families. This would draw on a project idea discussed in the housing working group, which proposed using a screen to track people's housing status over time, in order to better understand their needs and guide interventions that could help prevent evictions, homelessness, and family separation.

The third project is a combination of a series of ideas discussed in the labor and public policy working groups regarding the future of work. The proposal is to partner with the governor of a U.S. state to introduce a suite of policies aimed at reducing inequality. This could include, among other possibilities, overhauling a state's care sector by undertaking reforms to turn bad jobs into good jobs, which in addition to improving the lives of low-income care workers, could also improve health outcomes and thereby lower state health costs; and launching a state-endorsed “good work certification” program, which would give a boost to employers in the state who meet a set of transparent standards around issues such as wages and collective bargaining rights, and signal to consumers which businesses enable good work. Another area of possible collaboration could be in overhauling the state-administered unemployment insurance, including creating incentives for work-sharing. In developing this project, other ideas for state-based reforms might arise, but always with the overall idea that, together, the interventions could demonstrate how a state government might effectively address the future of work, as well as provide a model to inform future federal interventions in this arena.

While the three projects tapped for further development target different facets of inequality, they share in common that they could have a transformative impact on reducing, or even overcoming, a key driver of unacceptable, unequal opportunity. The water infrastructure project would make

it so that no household in the pilot county in Alabama, no matter how poor, would have to worry about getting sick or inflicting lasting damage on their environment because of a lack of access to a safe, affordable way to deal with their wastewater and clean drinking water. The education project would ensure that children born to parents below the poverty line are not placed at a lifelong disadvantage because of a lack of resources critical to learning and cognitive development in the first years of their lives. And the labor project presumes that government can and should develop a set of policies that help people in low-income jobs, or people who are unemployed but want to work, earn a wage that allows them to live with dignity and to have access to basic opportunities. Furthermore, participants noted that each of these projects, if implemented successfully, would not only have a profound impact on the places where they are piloted, but could create models for communities, organizations, businesses, and governments around the country and the world that are committed to ensuring that socioeconomic status does not deprive people of certain fundamental opportunities.

## VI. Next Steps: Project Development, Assessment, and Implementation

For each of the three projects identified above, CWP will work with the project leads to develop a formal project proposal, which will include a description of the project, its objectives, the individuals and institutions that would be involved, a general sense of how long it would take to implement, and a rough estimate of the amount of money it would cost. The proposal should also address any outstanding questions, recommendations, or critical feedback on the project that was surfaced during the Forum. In the Fall of 2018, these three project proposals will be presented to the CWP Advisory Committee, which will advise on whether they merit further development as CWP projects.

Projects that are determined to merit further development will receive an initial tranche of funding to undergo a rigorous project design phase of approximately three months, during which the project leads will work with CWP staff to define the major deliverables, a precise timeline for implementation, a funding plan, a set of performance indicators for monitoring and evaluation, and the key implementing partners. All of this information will be synthesized in a project design plan. CWP staff will then prepare an evaluation of this report, which identifies potential impact and strengths and weaknesses, and recommends whether the project should be funded. This evaluation, the project design plan, and earlier feedback from the Advisory Committee will be key factors in deciding whether these projects are implemented by CWP.

## VII. Acknowledgments

A number of people helped to organize and shape CWP's first Forum on inequality, to whom we are profoundly grateful.

First, we thank the many individuals who gave generously of their time in advance of the Forum, informing our understanding of the challenge, developing ideas for specific projects, and suggesting potential partners for implementation. They include (unless otherwise noted, the academic institution with which individuals are affiliated is Columbia University): Hillary Beard, Legislative Assistant to Congresswoman Terri Sewell; Michele Chang, Director, Markle Foundation; Jimmy Chen, CEO of Propel; Greg Eirich, Director, Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences; Thomas A. DiPrete, Giddings Professor of Sociology and Co-Director, Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy; Nabila El-Bassel, Willma and Albert Musher Professor of Social Work, and Director of the Social Intervention Group (SIG); Molly Elgin-Cossart, Director, Rework America Task Force, Markle Foundation; Carlo Gherardi, Country Director, Jordan, Norwegian Refugee Council; Negar Ghobadi, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager in Jordan, Norwegian Refugee Council; Jacob Hacker, Director of the Institution for Social and Policy Studies and Stanley B. Resor Professor of Political Science at Yale University; Glen Hubbard, then-Dean of Columbia Business School; Upmanu Lall, Professor of Engineering, Chair of the Department of Earth and Environmental Engineering, and Director of Columbia University's Water Center; Tiffany Manuel, Vice President of Knowledge, Impact, and Strategy, Enterprise Community Partners; Mary Mendenhall, Associate Professor of Practice and Program Director, International and Comparative Education Program; Tara McGuinness, Senior Advisor, New America's National Network; Suresh Naidu, Associate Professor of International and Public Affairs and Economics; Sandra Navalli, Managing Director, Tamer Center for Social Enterprise; Stephen Norman, Executive Director of the King County Housing Authority; Ryan Rippel, Strategy Advisor for U.S. Poverty and Economic Mobility Initiatives, Gates Foundation; Ana Povrzenic, Programme Director, Norwegian Refugee Council; Palak Shah, Social Innovations Director, National Domestic Workers Alliance; Michael Wadman, Vice President, Phipps Houses; Jane Waldfogel, Compton Foundation Centennial Professor; Dan Walsh, Real Estate Developer, Community Housing Development Corporation; Chris Wimer, Co-Director of the Center on Poverty and Social Policy; and Suna Zatterman, Executive Director, Council of Large Public Housing Authorities.

Second, we would like to recognize the Forum participants who gave presentations in the opening plenary session, which illuminated some of the central challenges undergirding the broader theme of inequality: Salman Ahmed, Deborah DeSantis, Jacob Hacker, Malo Hutson, Olatunde Johnson, Mary Jordan, and Na'ilah Nasir.

Third, we are deeply indebted to the moderators of the Forum's working groups, who went above and beyond to facilitate discussions of proposed projects and improve our work in all

respects: the Hon. John Brennan (health), Malo Hutson (housing), Mary Jordan (education), the Hon. Jacob Lew (public policy), and the Hon. Denis McDonough (labor).

Fourth, we thank the experts who enriched the discussions of specific projects in the Forum's working groups: Angela Aidala, Jean Magnano Bollinger, Brian Chapman, Laura Kurgan, Gabriel Schuster, and Jenny Wang.

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Finally, our greatest thanks go to the Forum participants, who are listed below:

## **PARTICIPANT BIOS**

### **Lee C. Bollinger**

*President, Columbia University*

Lee C. Bollinger became Columbia University's nineteenth president in 2002. Under his leadership, Columbia stands again at the very top rank of great research universities, distinguished by comprehensive academic excellence, historic institutional development, an innovative and sustainable approach to global engagement, and unprecedented levels of alumni involvement and financial stability. President Bollinger is Columbia's first Seth Low Professor of the University, a member of the Columbia Law School faculty, and one of the country's foremost First Amendment scholars. As president of the University of Michigan, Bollinger led the school's historic litigation in *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger*. These Supreme Court decisions that upheld and clarified the importance of diversity as a compelling justification for affirmative action in higher education were reaffirmed in the Court's 2016 ruling in *Fisher v. University of Texas*. As Columbia's president, Bollinger conceived and led the University's most ambitious expansion in over a century with the creation of the Manhattanville campus in West Harlem. An historic community benefits agreement emerging from the city and state review process for the new campus provides Columbia's local neighborhoods with decades of investment in the community's health, education, and economic growth.

### **Salman Ahmed**

*Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*

Salman Ahmed is currently a Senior Fellow in the new Geoeconomics and Strategy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, D.C. He leads a bipartisan task force that is examining how the U.S. role abroad impacts the American middle class economically. The task force is currently working in partnership with The Ohio State University on a case study of Ohio. Ahmed formerly headed the Strategic Planning Directorate at the

National Security Council, and was Chief of Staff of the United States Mission to the United Nations in the Obama administration. Prior to joining the U.S. government, he was an international civil servant with the United Nations for over 15 years. He focused on UN peacekeeping reform, helped plan several UN peacekeeping operations and political missions, and served in Cambodia, South Africa, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan, and Iraq. He also taught at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

### **William (Bill) Becker**

*Vice President and Corporate Drinking Water Practice Leader, Hazen and Sawyer*

Bill Becker, PhD, PE, is Vice President and the Corporate Drinking Water Practice Leader at Hazen and Sawyer and an Adjunct Professor at Columbia University. He has a PhD from the Johns Hopkins University, and MS and BS degrees from Clarkson University. Becker is a licensed engineer and has 30 years of experience in drinking water treatment. In addition to consulting, his background also includes significant experience at universities and at American Water. He has conducted pilot studies, evaluated treatment systems, and performed conceptual design for the development and optimization of water treatment systems, and trained employees and operators in various water treatment plant processes. He has consulted for some of the largest utilities in the country on a variety of water quality and treatment process issues. In addition, he has conducted several Water Research Foundation projects and has authored more than 200 technical presentations and publications.

### **Peter Bergman**

*Assistant Professor of Economics and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University*

Peter Bergman studies how information problems affect human capital decision making. Much of his research combines technology and information interventions to improve outcomes for low-income families at scale. He has conducted large-scale experiments aimed at improving parental engagement, helping families find and move to neighborhoods that promote economic mobility, understanding the effects of school integration, using predictive analytics to track students in higher education, and assessing discrimination in systems of school choice. Bergman's research has been covered by the *New York Times*, CNN, and NPR, among other outlets. Peter earned a BA in political economy from the University of California, Berkeley, and a PhD in economics from the University of California, Los Angeles.

### **Neil Boothby**

*Professor of Population and Family Health, Columbia University*

Neil Boothby is a Professor of Population and Family Health and Director of the Fostering Resilience Program at the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at the Earth Institute at Columbia University. His research focuses on the long-term consequences of deprivation and danger on child development, and the comparative efficacy of interventions that aim to strengthen the capacities of families and communities to protect young children from harm. From 2012-2014, Boothby took a leave of absence from Columbia University to serve as the U.S. government Special Adviser and Senior Coordinator to the USAID Administrator for Children in

Adversity. During this time, he led the development of the USG Action Plan for Children in Adversity, which was launched at the White House to guide the government's foreign assistance for vulnerable children in low- and middle-income countries. Boothby has published extensively on risk and resilience among war and disaster-affected children, and is also the recipient of a number of awards for his field work, including the International Red Cross Humanitarian of the Year Award for his work on child soldiers; the Mickey Leland Award for his work with refugee children; the United Nation's Golden Achievement Award for Excellence in the Social Sector; and the USAID Award for Outstanding Group Achievement for his intergovernmental leadership.

### **Hon. John O. Brennan**

*Former Director, Central Intelligence Agency; Distinguished Fellow at Fordham Law School and the University of Texas at Austin*

John O. Brennan currently serves as a Distinguished Fellow at the Center on National Security at Fordham Law School, a Distinguished Scholar at the University of Texas at Austin, a senior national security and intelligence analyst for NBC and MSNBC, and as an advisor and consultant to a variety of private sector companies. During the Obama Administration, Brennan served as Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism (2009 – 2013) and as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (2013 – 2017). Brennan began his service in government at the CIA, where he worked from 1980 to 2005. Mr. Brennan graduated from Fordham University in 1977 with a bachelor's degree in political science. While enrolled at Fordham, he studied abroad at the American University in Cairo in 1975-1976. He later attended the University of Texas at Austin, earning a master's degree in government with a concentration in Middle Eastern Studies in 1980. He is a resident of northern Virginia.

### **Jeanne Brooks-Gunn**

*Virginia & Leonard Marx Professor of Child Development & Education, Teachers College; Columbia University Professor of Pediatrics, College of Physicians and Surgeons; Columbia University Co-director, National Center for Children and Families, Teachers College*

Jeanne Brooks-Gunn directs the National Center for Children and Families at Columbia University. A life span developmental psychologist, she is interested in how lives unfold over time and factors that contribute to well-being across childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Brooks-Gunn conducts long-run studies beginning when mothers are pregnant or have just given birth, and has followed families through her research, sometimes for thirty years. Some of her other studies follow families living in a variety of neighborhoods and housing types. In addition, she designs and evaluates intervention programs for children and parents, including home visiting programs for pregnant women or new parents, early childhood education programs for toddlers and preschoolers, two generation programs for young children and their parents, and after school programs for older children. She is the author of several books including *Adolescent mothers in later life*; *Consequences of Growing up Poor*; and *Neighborhood Poverty: Context and Consequences for Children*. She has been elected into both the National Academy of Medicine and the National Academy of Education, and she has received life-time achievement

awards from the Society for Research in Child Development, American Academy of Political and Social Science, the American Psychological Society, the American Psychological Association, and the Society for Research on Adolescence. She holds an honorary doctorate from Northwestern University and the distinguished alumni award from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

### **Jimmy Chen**

*CEO, Propel*

Jimmy Chen is the founder and CEO of Propel. Propel builds Fresh EBT, a free smartphone app that enables food stamp recipients to manage their benefits, save money, and build their careers. Fresh EBT is used by over a million families across the country each month and has over 15,000 five-star reviews. Originally founded through the Blue Ridge Labs Fellowship @ Robin Hood Foundation, Propel has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Wired Magazine*, and their investors include Andreessen Horowitz, the Omidyar Network, Kevin Durant, and Nas. Previously, Chen was a Product Manager at Facebook, where he led the Facebook Groups team. He has also worked at LinkedIn, Yahoo, and the World Bank. Chen has a degree in Symbolic Systems from Stanford University.

### **Allyson Crawford**

*CEO, Room to Grow*

Driven by a passionate belief in the transformational potential of early childhood investments, Allyson Crawford joined Room to Grow in 2014 with robust experience in the K-12 education space and non-profit organizational leadership. She previously served as Managing Director at Citizen Schools New York where she led civic engagement, fundraising, and communications efforts. With over 15 years of nonprofit experience and leadership, Allyson has enjoyed helping organizations to raise over \$25M and recruiting thousands of volunteers. Allyson also has a background in corporate marketing and continuing professional education for adults. She began her career as a preschool teacher in her hometown of Boston and later on the West Coast as a Teach for America corps member in South Central Los Angeles. A graduate of Oberlin College, she also holds a Master's Degree in Education from Loyola Marymount University. Allyson enjoys speaking publicly about the importance of early childhood and nonprofit leadership and strategy, where her prior engagements include NYU Wagner, the Clinton Global Initiative, and iHeart Radio, among others. She lives in New York with her husband, a special education teacher, who shares her disdain for the Yankees.

### **Sheldon Danziger**

*President, Russell Sage Foundation*

Sheldon Danziger is the President of the Russell Sage Foundation, which supports social science research “for the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States.” He is also a Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of Public Policy at the University of Michigan. Previously, he was Director of the National Poverty Center at the University of Michigan and of the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is a member of

the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a John Kenneth Galbraith Fellow of the American Academy of Political and Social Science and was a John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellow. He is the co-author of *America Unequal* (1995) and co-editor of *Legacies of the War on Poverty* (2013). He received his BA from Columbia University and his PhD in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

### **Deborah DeSantis**

*President and CEO, Corporation for Supportive Housing*

As President and Chief Executive Officer, Deborah DeSantis has led the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) since 2007 in tripling its lending and support for the creation of over 200,000 permanent stable homes for individuals and families struggling through multiple challenges, including homelessness, lack of healthcare, and intergenerational poverty. DeSantis has spearheaded the reorganization of CSH to deepen its focus on data-driven results, innovative funding models such as Pay-For-Success, and expansion into high-need communities.

### **Gregory M. Eirich**

*Director, Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences, Columbia University*

Gregory M. Eirich is the Director of the Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences (QMSS) MA Program at Columbia University. His course offerings include Data Analysis for the Social Sciences, Advanced Analytic Techniques, Time Series, Panel Data and Forecasting, Research Seminar, and Social Network Analysis. He is a member of the Data Science Institute's Computational Social Science Working Group. He researches the causes and consequences of socioeconomic inequality, with a particular focus on family processes. He has studied “rich-get-richer” dynamics in the CEO labor market and the cumulative academic consequences of reading ability groups in early education. His dissertation examined the relationship between parental religiosity and children’s educational attainment in the United States. He has many on-going projects in collaboration with MA and PhD students. His work has appeared in the *American Journal of Sociology*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, *International Journal of the Sociology of the Family*, *Research in the Sociology of Work*, and the *Journal of Family Issues*. He has a BA in Classical Languages and Philosophy from Fordham University and his PhD in Sociology from Columbia University. Prior to teaching, Eirich was a senior consultant, where he conducted health care research at The Advisory Board Company in Washington, DC.

### **Nabila El-Bassel**

*Willma and Albert Musher Professor of Social Work, Columbia University*

Nabila El-Bassel is a Professor at the Columbia University School of Social Work and Director of the Columbia University Global Health Research Center of Central Asia (GHRCCA). She is also Director of the Social Intervention Group (SIG), a multi-disciplinary center focused on developing and evaluating prevention and intervention strategies to reduce substance use, opioid epidemic, gender-based violence, and HIV. She is the principal investigator of the ASPIRE initiative, a Columbia University-wide initiative aimed at responding to the Syrian refugee crisis through rigorous research. She has conducted multi-level interventions in Central Asia and Malaysia on financial inclusiveness programs for marginalized women. El-Bassel has been

funded extensively by the National Institute of Health and has conducted research in the U.S., Central Asia, South and East Asia, the Middle East and other countries. El-Bassel is a principal investigator of a pre-and post-doc training program on substance use and HIV implementation science in the criminal justice system, and also a principal investigator on a national training program on HIV prevention science for research scientists from underrepresented communities.

### **Jason Furman**

*Former Chair, Council of Economic Advisers (2013-2017); Professor of the Practice of Economic Policy at Harvard Kennedy School*

Jason Furman is Professor of the Practice of Economic Policy at Harvard Kennedy School (HKS). He is also a nonresident senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics. This followed eight years as a top economic adviser to President Obama, including serving as the 28th Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers from August 2013 to January 2017, acting as both President Obama's chief economist and a member of the cabinet. During this time Furman played a major role in most of the major economic policies of the Obama Administration. Previously Furman held a variety of posts in public policy and research. In public policy, Furman worked at both the Council of Economic Advisers and National Economic Council during the Clinton administration and also at the World Bank. In research, Furman was a Director of the Hamilton Project and Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution and also has served in visiting positions at various universities, including NYU's Wagner Graduate School of Public Policy. Furman has conducted research in a wide range of areas, including fiscal policy, tax policy, health economics, Social Security, technology policy, and domestic and international macroeconomics. In addition to articles in scholarly journals and periodicals, Furman is the editor of two books on economic policy. Furman holds a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard University.

### **Negar Ghobadi**

*Monitoring and Evaluation Manager in Jordan, Norwegian Refugee Council*

Negar Ghobadi is an economist by training, and a humanitarian practitioner by vocation. She finished her PhD in development economics at the University of California, Berkeley, and has since been working in international development research and humanitarian programming with the World Bank, the United Nations, and other international NGOs. Over the past five years, she has worked with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) implementing education and livelihood programs for refugees. Since 2015, Ghobadi has been working as the head of the monitoring and evaluation unit with NRC Jordan, serving Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in response to the Syrian crisis. Ghobadi was born and raised in Iran and migrated to the United States at 17, where she lived in San Francisco and the broader Bay Area for more than twelve years before returning to the Middle East for work.

### **Michael J. Graetz**

*Columbia Alumni Professor of Tax Law, Columbia University*

Before coming to Columbia in 2009, Michael Graetz was the Justus S. Hotchkiss Professor of Law at Yale University, where he had taught since 1983. During January-June 1992, Graetz served as Assistant to the Secretary and Special Counsel at the Treasury Department, and also previously served as the Treasury Department Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy. In 2013, Graetz was awarded the Daniel M. Holland Medal by the National Tax Association for outstanding contributions to the study and practice of public finance. He has been a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellow and received an award from *Esquire* magazine for courses and work in connection with provision of shelter for the homeless. His most recent books are: *The Burger Court and the Rise of the Judicial Right* and *Follow the Money: Essays on International Taxation*. Previous books include: *The End of Energy: The Unmaking of America's Environment, Security and Independence*; *100 Million Unnecessary Returns: A Simple, Fair, and Competitive Tax Plan for the United States*; *Death by a Thousand Cuts: The Fight over Taxing Inherited Wealth*; *True Security: Rethinking Social Insurance*; *The U.S. Income Tax: What It Is, How It Got That Way and Where We Go from Here*; and *Foundations of International Income Taxation*. He is also the co-author of a leading law school coursebook, *Federal Income Taxation: Principles and Policies*, and has published more than 80 articles on a wide range of federal tax, international tax, health policy, and social insurance issues.

### **Jacob S. Hacker**

*Visiting Professor of Political Science and Public Affairs, Columbia University; Stanley Resor Professor of Political Science and Director of the Institution for Social and Policy Studies, Yale University*

Jacob S. Hacker is a Visiting Professor of Political Science and Public Affairs at Columbia University and the Stanley Resor Professor of Political Science and Director of the Institution for Social and Policy Studies at Yale University. A regular media commentator and policy adviser, he is the author or co-author of five books, numerous journal articles, and a wide range of popular writings on American politics and public policy. His most recent book, written with Paul Pierson, is *American Amnesia: How the War on Government Led Us to Forget What Made America Prosper* – a *New York Times* Book Review Editor's Choice and a best business book of 2016 according to the management magazine *Strategy+Business*. Previously, the two wrote the *New York Times* bestseller *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class*. Professor Hacker is known for his research and writings regarding health policy, especially his development of the so-called public option. He is also a member of the OECD's High-Level Expert Group on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress. He was recently elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

### **Avril Haines**

*Senior Research Scholar, Columbia University*

Avril D. Haines is currently a Senior Research Scholar at Columbia University and a Lecturer in Law at Columbia University Law School. She served as Deputy National Security Advisor to President Obama, was the Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and served as the

Legal Adviser to the National Security Council. Before joining the NSC, she led the Treaty office at the Department of State, was the Deputy Chief Counsel for the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, worked for The Hague Conference on Private International Law, and served as a law clerk for Judge Danny Boggs on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. Haines received a bachelor's degree in Physics from the University of Chicago, a law degree from Georgetown University Law Center, and founded and ran a bookstore café for five years while engaged in community service in Baltimore.

### **Malo Hutson**

*Associate Professor of Urban Planning and Director of the Urban Community and Health Equity Lab, Columbia University*

Malo Hutson is an Associate Professor in Urban Planning and founder and director of the Urban Community and Health Equity Lab at Columbia University. He is also an Associate Member of the Earth Institute faculty at Columbia. Hutson's specific focus is on community development and urban health equity, racial and ethnic inequalities, urban policy, as well as the environment and health. He earned his PhD in Urban and Regional Planning from the School of Architecture and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and earned both his Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Master of City Planning degrees from the University of California at Berkeley. Hutson is an alumnus of the Robert Wood Johnson Health and Society Scholars Program where he was a fellow at the University of Michigan's Center for Social Epidemiology and Population Health within the School of Public Health.

### **Merit Janow**

*Dean of the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University*

Merit E. Janow is an internationally recognized expert in international trade and investment, with extensive experience in academia, government, international organizations and business. She is Dean of the Faculty and a Professor of Practice in International Economic Law & International Affairs at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) and affiliated faculty at Columbia Law. She is also Co-Director of the APEC Study Center and until recently, served as Chair of the Faculty Oversight Committee of Columbia's Global Center East Asia. In December 2003 Professor Janow was elected for a four-year term as one of the seven Members of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Appellate Body – the first female to serve as a judge on the Geneva-based Appellate body, which hears government-to-government disputes on economic issues. From 1997 to 2000, she served as the Executive Director of the first international antitrust advisory committee of the U.S. Department of Justice. Prior to joining Columbia's faculty, she was Deputy Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Japan and China (1989-93), responsible for all bilateral trade negotiations between the United States and both Japan and China. She negotiated more than a dozen trade agreements. She has written two books and numerous articles. Janow is on the Board of Directors of several companies and not for profit organizations including Mastercard, Trimble, the American Funds and the National Committee on U.S. China Relations. In 2009, she became a charter member of the International

Advisory Council of China's sovereign wealth fund, China Investment Corporation, or CIC. She was raised in Tokyo Japan and speaks Japanese.

### **Olatunde Johnson**

*Jerome B. Sherman Professor of Law and Vice-Dean for Intellectual Life, Columbia Law School*  
Olatunde Johnson is the Jerome B. Sherman Professor of Law at Columbia Law School where she teaches legislation, antidiscrimination law, and civil procedure, and writes about congressional power, administrative law, and inequality in the United States. Recent representative publications include: *The Troubling Turn in State Preemption* (co-authored, 2017), *Overreach and Innovation in Equality Law* (2017); and *The Local Turn; Innovation & Diffusion in Equality Law* (2016). Professor Johnson graduated from Yale University and from Stanford Law School. After law school, Johnson clerked for Judge David Tatel on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit and for Justice John Paul Stevens on the United States Supreme Court. Prior to entering academia, Johnson served as constitutional and civil rights counsel to Senator Edward M. Kennedy on the Senate Judiciary Committee and as counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF).

### **Mary Jordan**

*National Correspondent, The Washington Post*

Mary Jordan writes about national political issues for *The Washington Post*. She spent 14 years abroad as a foreign correspondent based in Tokyo, Mexico City, and London. She has written from more than 40 countries. She and her husband and colleague, Kevin Sullivan, won the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for their investigation of the Mexican justice system. She has co-written two books, the No. 1 New York Times bestseller, *Hope: A Memoir of Survival in Cleveland* and *The Prison Angel*, the true story of a wealthy California woman who lived in Mexico to help the poor. She also contributed to *Trump Revealed*, a Washington Post staff biography of Donald Trump. In 2016, *The Washington Post* honored Jordan with the Eugene Meyer Award for a distinguished career based on the principles of the paper's legendary former owner: Tell the truth for the public good and always be fair. Jordan earned her BA at Georgetown University and a master's degree from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. She also studied in year-long stints at Trinity College, Dublin (Irish history and the poetry of W.B Yeats), Georgetown University (Japanese language and Asian studies) Harvard University (as a Nieman fellow examining solutions to poverty) and Stanford University (Spanish and Latin American studies).

### **Alan Khazei**

*CEO, Be The Change, Inc.*

Alan Khazei is a social entrepreneur who has pioneered ways to empower citizens to make a difference. Khazei is the Founder and CEO of Be The Change, Inc., which developed three campaigns: Service Year Alliance, to promote a year of national service as a civic rite of passage; Opportunity Nation, to promote social mobility and expand opportunity; and Got Your 6, to empower post 9/11 veterans to lead a resurgence of community. Khazei is the Co-Founder and former CEO of City Year, a national service program that served as a model for President

Clinton's AmeriCorps program. Khazei also serves as a Commissioner on the new Federal Commission on Military, National and Public Service. Khazei is the author of *Big Citizenship: How Pragmatic Idealism Can Bring Out the Best in America*.

### **Upmanu Lall**

*Professor of Engineering, Chair of the Department of Earth & Environmental Engineering, Director of Columbia University's Water Center, Columbia University*

Dr. Upmanu Lall is the Director of the Columbia Water Center, the Alan and Carol Silberstein Professor of Engineering, and the Chair of the Department of Earth & Environmental Engineering at Columbia University. His research uses data science to address critical theoretical and real-world problems related to climate risk mitigation and the sustainability and resilience of water and energy systems. He is a Fellow of the American Geophysical Union, and was awarded the Darcy Medal by the European Geophysical Union and the Arid Lands Hydraulic Engineering Award by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

### **Nick Lemann**

*Director, Columbia World Projects; Director, Columbia Global Reports; Joseph Pulitzer II and Edith Pulitzer Moore Professor of Journalism; Dean Emeritus of the Faculty of Journalism, Columbia University*

Nicholas Lemann directs Columbia World Projects, a new initiative to connect academic work with entities beyond the academy that possess the power and influence to transform research into concrete consequences benefiting humanity. He also directs Columbia Global Reports, a book publishing venture that presents reporting around the globe on a wide range of political, financial, scientific, and cultural topics. Lemann is Dean Emeritus and Pulitzer Moore Professor of Journalism at Columbia. During his deanship, the Journalism School completed its first capital fundraising campaign, started its first new professional degree program since the 1930s, and launched significant initiatives in investigative reporting, digital journalism, and executive leadership for news organizations. Board memberships include Columbia's Knight First Amendment Institute and the Russell Sage Foundation. Lemann is a member of the New York Institute for the Humanities and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a staff writer for *The New Yorker*.

### **Hon. Jacob Lew**

*Former United States Secretary of the Treasury (2013-2017); Visiting Professor, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University*

The Honorable Jacob J. Lew is a Partner at Lindsay Goldberg LLC and a Visiting Professor of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. Lew served as the 76th Secretary of the Treasury from 2013 to 2017 under the Obama Administration. Prior to this role, he served as President Obama's Chief of Staff after serving as the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Lew first joined the Obama Administration as Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources. Before joining the Department of State, Lew served as Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer for two

different Citigroup business units. Prior to that, he was the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of New York University and a professor of public administration. Lew has served on a number of boards, including the Kaiser Family Foundation, the Brookings Institution's Hamilton Project, and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Lew graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University and received his J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center.

### **Hon. Denis McDonough**

*Senior Principal, Markle Foundation*

Denis McDonough served as White House Chief of Staff to President Barack Obama from February 1, 2013 to January 20, 2017. In this role, he managed a four-thousand-member White House staff, as well as Cabinet Secretaries and agency leaders. He provided strategic advice to the President on the most significant domestic policy, national security and management issues facing the federal government; enforced plans and accountability for performance goals; and planned and coordinated efforts to recruit and retain key talent in the federal government. Prior to the White House, McDonough served in senior leadership and policy-making positions in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate. McDonough is currently a Senior Principal at the Markle Foundation and chairs its Rework America Task Force, a national initiative to transform the labor market so that all Americans can thrive in the digital economy. He also serves as an executive fellow at the University of Notre Dame's Keough School of Global Affairs. McDonough is a graduate of St. John's University (MN) and Georgetown University School of Foreign Service.

### **Tara McGuinness**

*Senior Advisor, New America's National Network*

Tara Dawson McGuinness is a Senior Fellow with New America where she focuses on how new technologies can be used to reduce inequity. Prior to this work she served in several roles in the Obama administration including overseeing the federal teams working on Flint, Baltimore, and Detroit. She was a senior communications advisor working on the implementation of Obamacare. She previously served in numerous policy and non-profit roles including as Executive Director of the Center for American Progress Action Fund.

### **Na'ilah Nasir**

*President, Spencer Foundation*

Dr. Na'ilah Suad Nasir is the sixth President of the Spencer Foundation, which supports research about education. She has been a faculty member (currently on leave) at the University of California, Berkeley since 2008, where she served as Vice-Chancellor of Equity and Inclusion at the University of California Berkeley from 2015 to 2017. Nasir earned her PhD in Educational Psychology at UCLA in 2000, and was a member of the faculty in the School of Education at Stanford University from 2000 – 2008. Her work focuses on issues of race, culture, learning, and identity. She is the author of *Racialized Identities: Race and Achievement for African-American Youth* and has published numerous other books and scholarly articles. Nasir is a member of the

National Academy of Education and a fellow of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). In 2016, she was the recipient of the AERA Division G Mentoring Award.

### **Damon Phillips**

*Lambert Family Professor of Social Enterprise; Co-Director of the Tamer Center for Social Enterprise, Columbia Business School*

Damon J. Phillips is the Lambert Family Professor of Social Enterprise. He is also Co-Director of the Tamer Center for Social Enterprise at Columbia University. He teaches entrepreneurship and change leadership to senior leaders of nonprofits, Masters of Business Administration (MBA) students, and undergraduates. A scholar with broad and diverse contributions, Phillips is a business school-trained sociologist who studies entrepreneurship and innovation, labor market inequality, conformity and deviance in the marketplace, professions, and cultural markets. His media mentions and appearances include C-SPAN, *Crain's New York*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Knowledge@Wharton*, MSNBC, *Harvard Business Review*, *New York Daily News*, *New York Times*, and *US News & World Report*. Phillips has a bachelor's in physics from Morehouse College (Phi Beta Kappa) and a master's in aeronautics and astronautics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His second master's in sociology and PhD in organizational behavior are from Stanford University. Before pursuing his PhD at Stanford, he worked as an engineer and researcher affiliated with the U.S. Air Force (Lincoln Labs, MA) and was an executive in a family-owned electronics manufacturing business whose employees included people who had criminal records. In addition to non-profit board service, he enjoys spending time with his family, learning to play instruments, and listening to music.

### **Kenneth Prewitt**

*Carnegie Professor of Public Affairs, Columbia University; Special Advisor to the President*

Kenneth Prewitt is the Carnegie Professor of Public Affairs at Columbia University. He taught Political Science at the University of Chicago from 1965–1982, and for shorter stints was on the faculty of Stanford University, Washington University, the University of Nairobi, Makerere University, and the Graduate Faculty at the New School University, where he was also Dean. Prewitt's professional career also includes: Director of the United States Census Bureau, Director of the National Opinion Research Center, President of the Social Science Research Council, and Senior Vice President of the Rockefeller Foundation. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Academy of Political and Social Science, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Center for the Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, the Russell-Sage Foundation, and member of other professional associations, including the Council on Foreign Relations. Among his awards are a Guggenheim Fellowship, honorary degrees from Carnegie Mellon and Southern Methodist University, a Distinguished Service Award from the New School for Social Research, the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit from the Federal Republic of Germany, the Charles E. Merriam Lifetime Career Award, American Political Science Association and a Lifetime National Associate of the NRC/NAS.

### **Representative Terri Sewell**

*Congresswoman, 7th District of Alabama*

Congresswoman Terri A. Sewell is in her fourth term representing Alabama's 7th Congressional District. She is one of the first women elected to Congress from Alabama in her own right and is the first black woman to ever serve in the Alabama Congressional delegation. Sewell sits on the exclusive House Ways and Means Committee and the distinguished House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence charged with the oversight of our national security. She is the Ranking Member on the Subcommittee on the Department of Defense Intelligence and Overhead Architecture, a key subcommittee on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. In her short time in Congress, Sewell has held several leadership positions, including Freshman Class President in the 112th Congress. This current term, she was selected by Democratic leadership to serve as a Chief Deputy Whip, and sits on the prestigious Steering and Policy Committee which sets the policy direction of the Democratic Caucus. Congresswoman Sewell is a member of the Congressional Black Caucus and is Vice Chair of the New Democrat Coalition. She is also Co-Chair of the newly formed Voting Rights Caucus.

### **Palak Shah**

*Social Innovations Director, National Domestic Workers Alliance; Founding Director, Fair Care Labs*

Palak Shah leads NDWA's national strategy on raising market norms and standards, partnering with the private sector, and building scalable and sustainable business ventures. NDWA is the nation's leading organization working for the power, respect, and fair labor standards for the 2.5 million nannies, housekeepers and elderly caregivers in the United States.

### **Nik Steinberg**

*Columbia World Projects, Forum Director*

Nik Steinberg is the Forum Director at Columbia World Projects. He previously served as the Counselor and Chief Speechwriter for Samantha Power, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Prior to that, Steinberg was Senior Researcher in the Americas Division of Human Rights Watch, where his work focused primarily on Mexico and Cuba. He is a graduate of Dartmouth College and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

### **Ashwin Vasan**

*Executive Director, Health Access Equity Unit, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Assistant Professor of Clinical Population and Family Health & Medicine, Mailman School of Public Health, Vagelos College of Physicians & Surgeons, Columbia University*

Dr. Vasan is the founding Executive Director of the Health Access Equity Unit at the NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene. This unit – the first of its kind in the nation – is focused on bringing healthcare and public health solutions to bear on social systems challenges for specific marginalized populations in New York City that are often overlooked by existing systems. The unit puts a specific emphasis on people exposed to the criminal justice system and other populations with disproportionate trauma and complex health and social needs, and leverages the Department's historical strengths in epidemiology and surveillance, administrative

data integration and analysis, program implementation at the intersection of clinical and community systems, and policy and regulatory reform to reduce barriers to engagement and the quality of health and human services for those in greatest need. This new role builds off of Vasan's 15 years of experience at the intersection of global health and primary care, working with Partners In Health in Rwanda, Lesotho, and Boston, and the World Health Organization in Geneva and Uganda, under World Bank President Jim Yong Kim. Vasan's methodological expertise involves implementation science, quality and performance improvement studies, and evaluations of large-scale clinical and public health interventions. At Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, he was formerly the Deputy Director of ARChES, a \$17M program of health systems development and research in Ghana and Tanzania, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. He continues to teach a graduate seminar in Implementation Science and Global Health at Mailman, and is a practicing Internist in the Division of General Medicine at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia Irving Medical Center, where he supervises trainees and cares for a predominately low-income Medicaid/Medicare and uninsured population. In addition, Vasan holds a non-clinical affiliate appointment as an Associate Physician in the Division of Global Health Equity at the Brigham & Women's Hospital, a teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School. He received his MD from the University of Michigan, his PhD in Public Health from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, and holds a MSc in Epidemiology from the Harvard School of Public Health.