

RECONNECTING WORK & WEALTH

A Report from the 2017 Aspen Institute
Economic Security Summit

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Summit Rapporteur





In 2017, building off a successful Summit in 2016, two of the Aspen Institute's policy programs – the Financial Security Program (FSP) and the Economic Opportunities Program (EOP) – re-joined forces to craft a vibrant conversation exploring the critical changes of past decades that have re-shaped both labor and financial markets. The result was the second annual Economic Security Summit, which took place in July 2017 in Aspen, Colorado. With a specific focus – Reconnecting Work and Wealth: Constructing a New American Middle Class – the Summit provided an opportunity for leaders from industry, academia, philanthropy, government, and nonprofit organizations to grapple with challenges that undergird growing levels of financial insecurity and income and wealth inequality in America. Participants found common ground, made connections, and explored new solutions to these pressing issues through an intense and expansive dialogue that unfolded over two and a half days. The convening resulted more than simply bringing together critical players; it has served as catalyst for change.

By weaving together economics and values, business and finance, culture and policy, the Summit stimulated a dynamic discussion between thought leaders, from different sectors and political vantage points, who are invested in finding workable solutions to America's economic security crisis. Out of this year's Summit, we have witnessed the creation of unique partnerships. Our nonprofit partners have found innovative ways to work with industry to pilot new initiatives focused on bringing more financial security to American workers. Our funders and corporate leaders have developed strategies and working groups to look at these issues across silos, forming a plan to address issues at the intersection of work and wealth. The Aspen Institute recommitted to this work by continuing to elevate the important efforts of these partners, highlighting their work, convening leaders, and supporting their initiatives. In fact, participant contributions from this Summit have been essential in shaping the programing of the Institute's Reconnecting Work and Wealth Initiative. This report incorporates these insights and provides an outline for future policy dialogue and directions.

The Aspen Institute wishes to acknowledge and thank Prudential and the Ford Foundation for supporting the 2017 Summit. We thank Karen Kahn, for serving as Summit rapporteur and writing this report. We also thank EOP and FSP's talented and dedicated staff – Rhett Buttle, Joyce Klein, Joanna Smith-Ramani, David Mitchell, Pamela Horn Hall, Katie Bryan, Claire Daviss, Nicole Scott, and Gracie Lynne – for their essential work organizing and documenting the Summit, contributing to the debate, and editing and coordinating the production of this report. Please note that the result is a document that draws on, but does not necessarily reflect, the view of Summit participants.

Finally, the work that is captured in this report and during the last year has also laid the groundwork for our final convening, which will take place in Aspen, Colorado, in July 2018. This year's meeting and the three years of the Reconnecting Work and Wealth Initiative will live beyond these reports and convenings. The impact of this initiative is in stewardship of new leaders, the policy ideas that have been formed, the partnerships that have launched, and the ongoing work of the Institute's programs. It is this action and these change agents that will spur an ongoing movement to create an economy that works for all Americans.



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INTRODUCTION

The decline of the American middle class has become an increasingly urgent topic, as our nation's economic and social divisions fuel widespread discontent. With incomes stagnating and jobs that pay a living wage in sharp decline, anger and resentment are palpable. The American Dream is dying as hope that the younger generation will “do better” disappears with the manufacturing jobs that once powered the rising middle class. While 90 percent of children born in 1940 earned more than their parents at age 30, for those born in the 1980s only 50 percent have surpassed their parents.¹ According to the Federal Reserve, today's young adults are not on track to achieve the wealth and security of their parents' generation.²

From the 1940s to the 1970s, the American economy created the world's largest middle class. The belief that everyone should share in the prosperity of the nation—and the failure to live up to that ideal—helped to drive political reform that broadened and strengthened our democracy. Today, however, many of those gains are being reversed. As economic mobility declines and inequality grows, public policies increasingly favor the “haves” over the “have-nots,” and trust in our democratic institutions is eroding. In a recent study of young people's attitudes toward democracy, only 30 percent of millennials said that “it is essential to live in a democracy,” down from 75 percent of people born in the 1930s.³

In this context, in July 2017, the Aspen Institute convened its second annual Economic Security Summit, “Reconnecting Work and Wealth: Constructing a New American Middle Class.” Over two and a half days, a cross-section of 42 leaders from industry, academia, philanthropy, government, and nonprofit organizations grappled with one of the biggest challenges facing our nation: how to restore widespread economic prosperity to families and communities all across America. This report captures the ideas that emerged as participants debated factors contributing to the growing economic divide, what inequality means for our democracy, and potential opportunities to strengthen family economic security and upward mobility in the 21st century.

RECONNECTING WORK AND WEALTH

Sponsored by the Aspen Institute's Economic Opportunities and Financial Security programs and hosted by respective program directors Maureen Conway and Ida Rademacher, the Summit is designed to bridge conversations that they have described as “taking place in two separate rooms.”⁴ In the first room, people are concerned with jobs and wages: how do we create jobs with family-sustaining wages, reduce unemployment, and ensure workers have the skills needed to succeed in today's economy? This first conversation is about workers and labor markets.

In the second room, people are talking about financial security: how do people access credit to buy homes or start businesses, manage debt, save for retirement? That is, how do individuals and families build wealth and reduce the risks associated with economic downturns, lost jobs, and health care emergencies? This conversation is usually framed around consumers and financial markets.

Though these conversations tend to be walled off from one another, for America's working families, the experience of work and wealth is intertwined in the daily challenges of survival: keeping a roof over one's head, getting food on the table, paying the bills, and saving for the future.

Traditionally, finding a good job that paid a decent wage was the first step toward saving and building a family's financial cushion. Along with that “bread-winner” job often came other benefits that contributed to financial stability: worker's compensation, health coverage, paid time off, unemployment insurance, retirement savings plans. These benefits, now increasingly rare, helped workers maintain economic stability despite periodic crises. They allowed families to invest in the future through investing in education, homes, and businesses.



Speaking Nisha Patel, Executive Director, US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty

KEY QUESTIONS

But as Rademacher and Conway note, the “long-standing bonds between work and wealth are wearing thin. Workers face anemic wage growth, unpredictable schedules, volatile incomes, growing debt, and limited assets.”⁵ These trends, which have resulted in nearly half of Americans living so precariously that they cannot afford a \$400 emergency expense, animated lively debate among Summit participants, who engaged in a series of structured dialogues that tackled the following questions:

- How do we define the “middle class”?
- Is a strong middle-class essential to democracy? Does its decline threaten our democracy?
- What factors contributed to the rise of the middle class in the post-war era, and its subsequent decline beginning in the 1980s?

- How do we ensure American families have access to jobs, education, and other financial tools necessary to achieve economic security?
- What are the institutions and incentives necessary to provide a strong foundation to rebuild shared prosperity and a vigorous democracy?

Through these discussions individuals shared expertise, debated assumptions, developed a deeper understanding of the obstacles to shared prosperity, and explored opportunities to realign incentives and institutions to better address the needs of America’s working families.

MIDDLE CLASS MATTERS

Political philosophers since Aristotle have been exploring the relationship between a broad-based middle class and the functioning of democracy. Aristotle, in *The Politics*, Book IV, makes the case that “the best political community is formed by citizens of the middle class.” He argues that where the middle class is weak, the extremes of rich and poor dominate, creating the potential for “extreme democracy, or a pure oligarchy.” He writes, “a tyranny may grow out of either extreme—either out of the most rampant democracy [i.e., “mob rule”], or out of an oligarchy, but it is not so likely to arise out of the middle constitutions.”

Participants began their dialogue by discussing these passages, and their connection to the growing wealth divide within our own country. Despite different political perspectives, participants agreed that our own governing structures have been captured by our nation’s economic elite, leading to public policies that further enrich the “haves” and fail to provide opportunity to the vast majority of Americans.

These trends—confirmed in a 2015 Pew Research Center study⁶ that shows, for the first time since 1971, middle income Americans are fewer in number than the combined number of rich and poor—were the subject of the conference’s opening panel, “The Declining Fortunes of America’s Middle Class: A Threat to Our Democracy,” moderated by journalist Ray Suarez. Panelists Maria Echaveste (Opportunity Institute), Mickey Edwards (Aspen Institute), and Robert Post (Yale University) explored our nation’s economic divisions and how they fueled the anger and disillusionment that surfaced in the 2016 presidential election.

Among the evening’s themes was the profound loss of trust in democratic institutions, which former Congressman Mickey Edwards (R-Oklahoma) attributed to the failures of many of our nation’s core institutions: a justice system in which too many unarmed civilians are shot by police; an educational system that puts too little attention on teaching the humanities, critical thinking, or the basics of democracy; and corporations that focus primarily on maximizing the profits of shareholders and not enough on their obligations to the communities that educated their workers, provided the infrastructure that supports them, and granted them legal immunities and favorable tax rates.



Millions of Americans believe the system is rigged, that it isn't fair, and that "it is a game they are going to lose," said Ray Suarez. That loss of faith is a deep crack in the foundation of our democracy, one that Summit participants committed to repairing as they embarked on deepening their understanding of our nation's economic crisis and envisioning a path toward a reinvigorated middle class.

A PORTRAIT OF FINANCIAL INSECURITY

In the mid-20th century, the United States (US) manufactured 50 percent of all goods worldwide. By the 1970s, one in four American workers were in manufacturing; today those numbers are less than one in ten.⁷ Manufacturing jobs provided Americans with the widespread economic security we define as a middle-class lifestyle: the ability to afford a home and a car, to not worry about day-to-day expenses, to take the family on vacation, to send the kids to college, to save for retirement.

Today, far fewer Americans can count on work that provides this level of economic stability. Half of Americans earn less than \$17.50 an hour. One in three works in a low-wage occupation, earning less than 150 percent of the federal poverty level for a family of three, according to Paul Osterman, NTU Professor of Human Resources and Management at the MIT Sloan School. For working people, wages have remained stagnant since the 1970s, with all gains in household income coming from second earners — primarily women — entering the workplace.

Even with two earners, middle income Americans are struggling. Median household income in 2016 was \$57,617.⁸ Barely half of households save money for the future, according to Prosperity Now, whose president, Andrea Levere, participated in the conference. In the last year, 44 percent of households saved no money for emergencies. Prosperity Now notes that nearly 2 in 5 households are "liquid asset" poor, meaning they could not manage to replace their income at the poverty level for three months, leading to persistent financial insecurity.⁹ When it comes to long-term savings, families are no better off. Nearly one in three has no retirement savings, according to the Federal Reserve.¹⁰

Other indicators also suggest that American families are struggling. Income volatility, another measure of economic instability, is growing. Four in ten households experience more than a 30 percent fluctuation in income month to month, according to findings from JPMorgan Chase Institute.¹¹ Income volatility occurs because of unreliable employment, irregular hours, or periods of unemployment. Low-wage workers in restaurant, retail, and health care jobs, for example, cannot count on full-time hours. More than half of home care aides work part time or part-year.¹² Restaurant and retail workers are sent home in the middle of their shifts when customers drop off, making household income unpredictable.

For people of color, who historically have faced discrimination in employment and housing, the picture is even more bleak. Black workers are more than twice as likely as white workers to be unemployed (7.3 percent vs. 3.4 percent).¹³ Median household income in 2016 for white households was \$65,041, while

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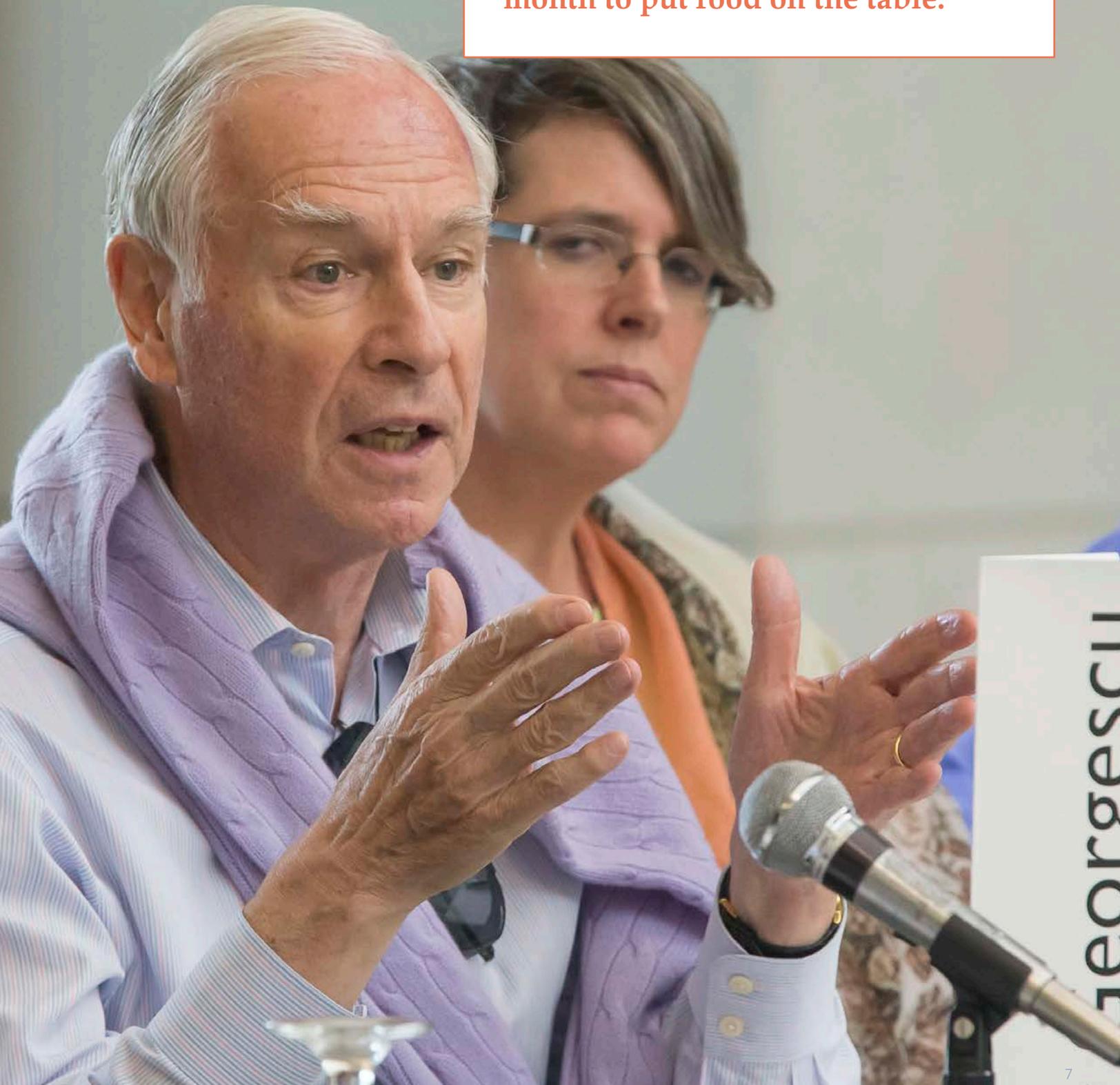


Ray Suarez, *Journalist*

Black households earned an average of \$39,490 and Hispanic households averaged \$47,675.¹⁴

The Pew Research Center defines middle-income earners as those who earn from two-thirds of the median household income (\$38,027) to two times the median (\$115,234). Looking at these numbers, it is safe to say that many of America's middle-income earners — don't have the economic security traditionally associated with being middle class. As incomes have stagnated, big-ticket items such as housing, child care,

“Nearly 60 percent of American households borrow money to meet their basic expenses. In other words, people are going into debt each month to put food on the table.”



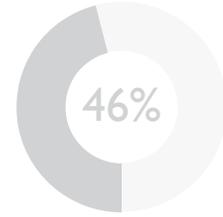
Portrait of Financial Insecurity

Median Annual Wage

Source: Social Security Administration, <https://www.ssa.gov/oact/cola/central.html>

\$30,533.31

Savings



of U.S. families can't manage a **\$400** emergency expense

Source: Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households, 2015. Federal Reserve. <https://www.federalreserve.gov/2015-report-economic-well-being-us-households-201605.pdf>

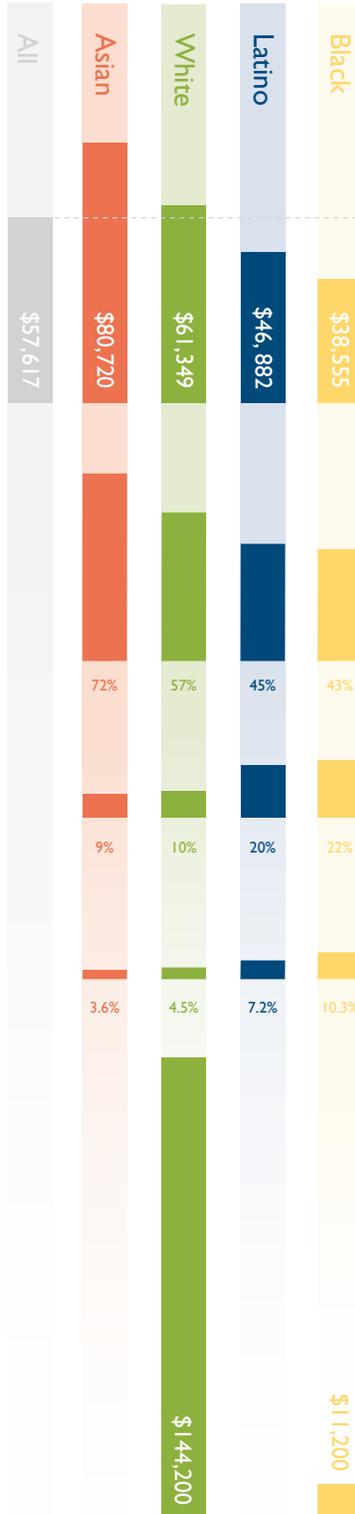


1 in 3 working Americans has no retirement savings

Source: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (May 2015). Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2014. Available at: <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econresdata/2014-report-economic-well-being-us-households-201505.pdf#page45>

Median Adjusted Household Income

Source: American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 2016. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/acs/acsbr16-02.pdf>



Home Ownership

Source: Pew Research Center; <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/1-demographic-trends-and-economic-well-being/>

Unemployment

Source: Pew Research Center; <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/1-demographic-trends-and-economic-well-being/>

Living in Poverty

Source: Income and Poverty in the U.S., 2016. U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/P60-259.pdf>

Median Wealth

Source: Pew Research Center; <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/1-demographic-trends-and-economic-well-being/>

healthcare, and college educations have all become far more expensive. This has made it much harder for families to save and invest in assets that help to reduce financial risk.¹⁵

A FRAYED SOCIAL CONTRACT

Rising income inequality is the subject of numerous books and articles published in recent years. Among the participants at the Summit, Rick Wartzman recently published *The End of Loyalty: The Rise and Fall of Good Jobs in America* (Public Affairs); Tom Shapiro, *Toxic Inequality: How America's Wealth Gap Destroys Mobility, Deepens the Racial Divide, and Threatens Our Future* (Basic Books); David Rolf, *The Fight for \$15: The Right Wage for a Working America* (New Press); Peter Georgescu, *Capitalists Arise* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers); and Paul Osterman, *Who Will Care for Us? Long-Term Care and the Long-Term Workforce* (Russell Sage Foundation). Each of these books examines trends that have given rise to a new economic order, one that has made it increasingly difficult for low- and middle-income Americans to get ahead.

Technology and globalization, two trends that have transformed the 21st century economy, are often blamed for the demise of manufacturing and the deindustrialization that has so devastated vast regions of the US. But conference participants noted, the impacts of these economic forces are shaped by the choices made by policymakers and business leaders. Over the last 40 years, said David Rolf, president of SEIU 775, “these choices have transferred \$2 trillion of national income from the labor share of GDP to the capital share of GDP and to the top 1 percent of the wealthiest Americans.” The result: the top 1 percent own 42 percent of the nation’s wealth.¹⁶

Conference participants identified multiple reasons for this massive transfer of wealth: a shift in business philosophy beginning in the 1970s, the virtual demise of organized labor, and public policies that have weakened the social safety net.

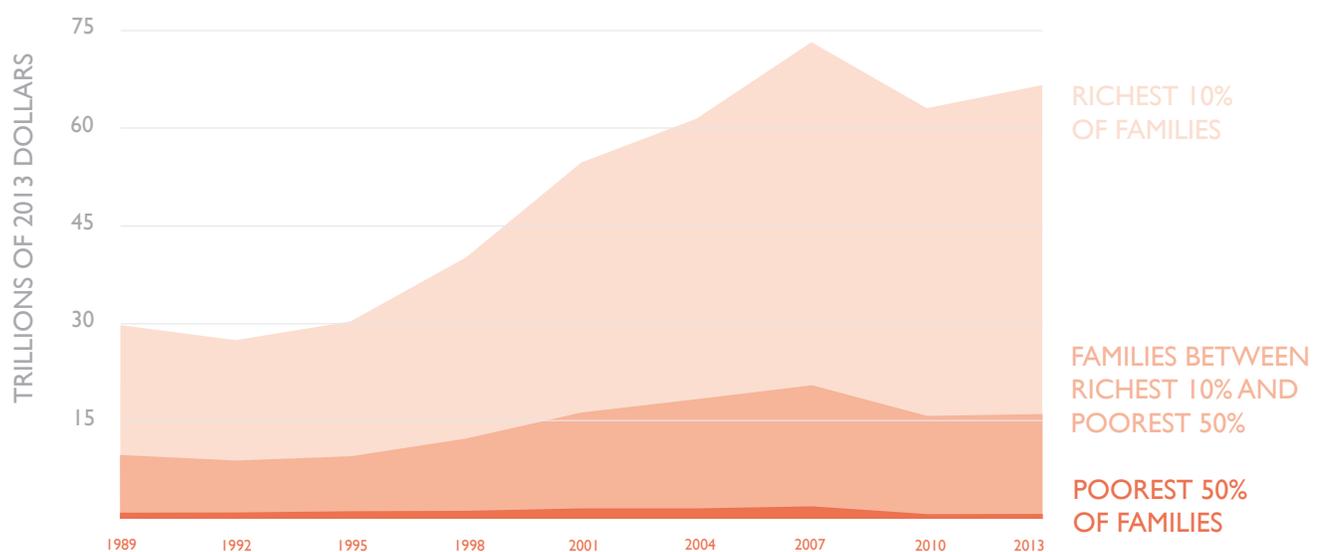
Primacy of the Shareholder

The post-war business model, explained Rick Wartzman, director of the KH Moon Center for a Functioning Society at the Drucker Institute (Claremont Graduate University), revolved around a notion of company loyalty—firms invested in their people with the expectation that they would remain with the company and produce more value over time.

Business leaders also consciously sought to create a consumer class that could spur economic growth as the war economy wound down. Good wages fueled the ability of families to buy homes, cars, and appliances. The inherent tensions between business and labor, particularly in the manufacturing sector, were mediated through collective bargaining. During this era, unions represented 34 percent of private sector workers, providing a counterweight to the interests of management and sufficient power to win job security, raise wages, and increase health and retirement benefits.

In the 1970s, as global competition began to grow and other pressures mounted, this business model that had sought to balance the interests of all stakeholders—customers, shareholders, and employees—was replaced by a new philosophy: the primacy of the shareholder. The new model, in which the wealthy collect a far greater portion of economic gains, tore at the fabric of the social contract that had created the vast middle class of

Holdings of U.S. Family Wealth



Source: Inequality.org via Congressional Budget Office, “Trends in Family Wealth, 1989-2013.” <https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/114th-congress-2015-2016/reports/51846-familywealth.pdf>



Waikinya Clanton, National Executive Director, The National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women



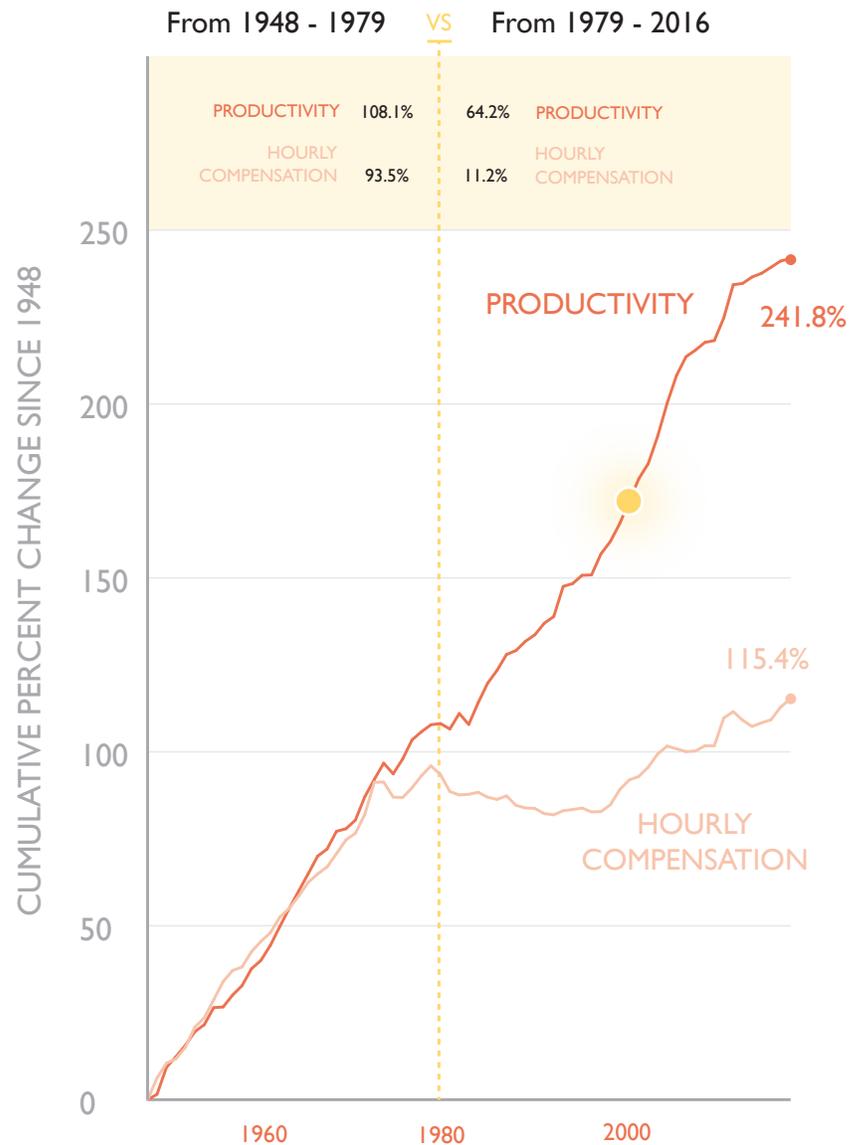
Alex Mazer, Founding Partner, Common Wealth



Julie Gehrki, Vice President Programs - Walmart Foundation, Walmart

the post-war era. As Wartzman explained, from the late 1940s until the late 1970s, compensation increases for most American workers roughly matched productivity gains (with a rise of more than 90 percent); since then, however, rising productivity has not translated into higher pay and better benefits for workers (see chart from the Economic Policy Institute, below). Instead, as research by economist William Lazonick and others have shown, shareholders have been the ones to reap nearly all of the gains made by corporations.

Productivity Growth and Hourly Compensation Growth



Source: EPI analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics and Bureau of Economic Analysis data Updated from Figure A in Raising America's Pay: Why It's Our Central Economic Policy Challenge

During the last four decades, “maximizing shareholder value” has become the holy grail of business. As a result, corporations have responded to the pressures of globalization, automation, the shift from blue-collar work to knowledge work, and other forces in ways that have disempowered labor and weakened the bonds of community that at one time created mutually beneficial relationships. Jobs that once provided decent wages, dependable health coverage, and solid pensions have been replaced by low-wage service jobs, temp work, and fragile “gig” economy jobs.

The social contract is broken, said Wartzman. Corporate decisions have led to the “fissured workplace.”¹⁷ In places like Silicon Valley that loom large in today’s economy, highly skilled workers continue to receive high salaries and robust benefits, but groundskeepers, security guards, bus drivers, and janitors—in this case, mostly African-American and Latino workers—barely make a living, earning \$25,000 or so annually. These workers are no longer employed by the corporations for whom they clean offices, groom lawns, or provide security; they are working for contractors who keep their wages low, and rarely provide traditional worker protections.¹⁸

Rise of Low Wage Work, Weakening of Labor Protections

MIT labor economist Paul Osterman agreed that the employment landscape is changing, but he noted that the threat of the “gig economy” and temporary employment is overblown. Platform-based companies like Task Rabbit and Uber, he noted, employ just about 1 percent of workers; contract work has grown from 10 to 16 percent of the workforce over two decades. Of greater concern, said Osterman, is the trend toward

low-wage work and the shift in the power balance between employers and workers.

That shift has been exacerbated by global trade agreements that have protected capital but not labor and public policies that have weakened the ability of labor to organize, collect dues, and bargain collectively. Today, only 7 percent of private sector workers are unionized.

Insufficient Social Safety Net

Without strong labor protections, workers are more vulnerable and must rely more heavily on public safety-net programs. But at the same time that US workers have been disempowered in the workplace, public policies that could help to alleviate some of the pressure, such as a higher minimum wage, mandated paid leave, and universal access to health care and child care have become increasingly contentious. The federal minimum wage has remained stagnant at \$7.25 for almost a decade. And while health care coverage expanded during the Obama administration, the law remains vulnerable (and imperfect).

Widespread economic insecurity, participants agreed, is weakening our nation’s economy and exacerbating the politics of resentment and division. As the US population shifts from majority white to majority people of color by mid-century, there is ample opportunity to use those divisions to further wealth accumulation among the already wealthy. Restoring shared prosperity could be the most effective strategy for countering the forces of demagoguery and oligarchy that threaten our democracy.



Right to left Paul Osterman, NTU Professor of Human Resources and Management at the MIT Sloan School; Carmen Rojas, CEO of The Workers Lab; Tyler Spalding, Senior Manager, Corporate Affairs, PayPal; Tom Shapiro, Director, IASP Heller School, Brandeis University

RESTORING DEMOCRACY FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS

If Aristotle is correct that democracy doesn't function well without a strong middle class, what about the reverse? Is it also true that without a strong democracy, our nation cannot preserve the robust middle class that has propelled our success as a world power?

Though this question was not central to discussion at the Summit, it deserves attention at future conferences, particularly in light of the threats to democracy in the US and around the world. In the US, we are increasingly seeing attacks of the fundamental fairness of elections and insidious efforts to exclude voters from marginalized communities: people of color, ex-prisoners, people who don't speak English.

In addition, elections are skewed by gerrymandered districts and dark money that is flowing at an unprecedented rate to candidates who will do the bidding of their patrons: the country's economic elite.

An agenda to restore the power and prosperity of America's middle class must embrace:

- Voting rights reforms that challenge the use of discriminatory voter ID laws, and expand voting through mail-in ballots, early voting, and Saturday (rather than Tuesday) voting.
- Campaign finance reform that limits the ability of the wealthy to buy candidates through unlimited spending that may be hidden from the voting public.
- Redistricting reforms that remove this process from the controlling political party and put it in the control of nonpartisan and unbiased authorities.
- Party reforms that empower ordinary people to participate, particularly women, people of color, and people who can't get ahead in today's economy.

If Americans hope to restore widespread prosperity, working and middle-class Americans will need to join together to take back power. As David Rolf said so eloquently during the conference: "It is not possible to redistribute wealth without thinking about the allocation of power. Power is the currency of change, and power ultimately relies on the threat of disruptive force."





RESTORING FAMILY ECONOMIC SECURITY: INCOME AND ASSETS

Family economic security—or financial wellness—explained Snezana Zlatar, senior vice president at Prudential, involves three variables: an ability to manage day-to-day expenses effectively (budget and expenses), achieve long-term goals through savings (assets and investments), and protect against unintended risks (insurance). These variables comprise a three-legged stool upon which middle-class families build economic security for themselves and future generations.

WEAK HOUSEHOLD BALANCE SHEETS

But for much of America, that stool has become increasingly wobbly. Low wages, combined with income volatility, make it hard to cover ordinary expenses, no less save to buy a home, invest in the next generation, and retire with dignity. Even for those who are better off, jobs are less secure, labor protections are weak, and health and retirement plans are skimpier, with a greater burden of risk falling on the individual worker rather than the employer.

Furthermore, said Ray Boshara, senior advisor at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, most families have relatively weak balance sheets: “They have too much debt, too much wealth in homeownership, and too little liquidity or cash buffers to cover for an unexpected expense or to make a modest mobility-enhancing investment.” As a result, it’s difficult for these households or their children to advance economically.

Wealth Disparities

Perhaps as discouraging as the high concentrations of wealth is recent research from the Federal Reserve, the Pew Research Center, and others that highlight critical fault lines in wealth distribution. Boshara identified three demographic variables that, according to Federal Reserve data, strongly predict the ability of families to accumulate wealth: age (the economic moment one is born), race or ethnicity, and education. Moreover, he noted that other research suggests that gender and family structure (especially whether there are one or two earners in the household) are likely to predict wealth as well. That is, today in the US, the circumstances of your birth – things you don’t control, such as your parents’ wealth and education, race and ethnicity, and moment in history you are born -- appear to have a growing impact on your financial success as an adult. So, and as other research shows as well, a child born in a poor neighborhood to high-school educated parents is far less likely to succeed than one born to college-educated parents in neighborhoods ripe with opportunities.

Tom Shapiro, director of the Heller School Institute on Assets and Social Policy at Brandeis University and author of *Toxic Inequality*, explained that middle-income families have the majority of their wealth (66 percent) in home equity, followed by retirement savings and business equity. Wealth disparities result from differential access to these assets. For example, residential segregation has limited home equity for African American and Hispanic families.

Research from Pew confirms this assessment. “Two-thirds of African Americans, including many who are middle income, live in high-poverty neighborhoods as compared to only 6 percent of whites,” said Erin Currier, director of family financial security and mobility at the Pew Charitable Trusts. This makes it far more difficult for African-American families to get mortgages at market rates, or to accumulate equity from rising home values. During and after the Great Recession, African Americans were 76 percent more likely to lose their homes to foreclosure than white households.¹⁹

Shapiro noted similar dynamics related to occupational segregation, which limits retirement savings for African-American and Hispanic families. According to a recent report from the Aspen Leadership Forum on Retirement Savings, one in four near-retirement households (head of household 55-64) have no retirement savings in either a defined benefit or a defined contribution plan.²⁰ These disparities, said Shapiro, underlie the racial divide we see in wealth accumulation: white households have an average of \$144,000 in wealth as compared to \$11,000 for African-American and \$13,000 for Hispanic households.

Participants offered several solutions to improving family balance sheets and addressing these inequities in wealth distribution. Fundamentally, participants agreed, we need more good jobs, with predictable hours, safe working conditions, and wages and benefits capable of supporting a family. But good jobs, they argued, are not sufficient. In addition, working families need new tools to help them manage their expenses, save for the future, and build wealth.



Sarah Keh, Vice President, Corporate Giving at the Prudential Foundation



Above, Right to Left Ray Suarez, Journalist; Mickey Edwards, Director, Aspen Institute–Rodel Fellowships in Public Leadership; Robert Post, Sterling Professor of Law, Yale University; Maria Echaveste, Senior Fellow, Opportunity Institute

“To reconnect work and wealth, we need to base solutions in local communities and make sure people have the right skill sets for in-demand jobs. We also have to ensure people have access to the resources and tools needed to build their financial security.”

BETTER JOBS

Over the last several decades, as the interests of shareholders have taken precedence over the interests of other stakeholders, business leaders have prioritized short-term profits over long-term investments. In their efforts to keep costs down, the lens has shifted from seeing labor as a value producing asset to seeing it as a cost center to control.

That thinking is short-sighted, said Conway. “Making the right investments in training and compensation is essential to building a productive workforce and to sustaining long-term growth.”

Raise the Floor and Build Ladders

There are two paths to better jobs, said Osterman. Traditionally, workforce development has focused on improving human capital—i.e., training workers so they can advance up a career ladder. The second path is to “raise the floor” by making “bad jobs” better. With one in three workers earning poverty or near-poverty wages, the latter strategy is essential. Otherwise, a third of the workforce will always be stuck in poverty-wage jobs.

The good news is that increasing numbers of companies are embracing the logic of “better jobs,” said Conway. Julie Gehrki, vice president of programs at the Walmart Foundation, for example, described Walmart’s decision to invest \$2.7 billion in better wages and 200 employee training institutes, where workers can upgrade their skills and move up the ladder to management positions. This raise-the-floor and build-ladders strategy, had two goals: to improve retention of frontline workers in a tight labor market and to improve the customer experience.

In 2015, Walmart made a commitment to a base wage of \$10 per hour. Over two years, average wages for nonsupervisory workers increased to \$13.99 per hour. Though still below the \$15 threshold many frontline workers are demanding, this was a significant wage jump for Walmart associates. Simultaneously, Walmart embarked on an effort to upgrade the training for frontline workers and give them the opportunity to build management careers.

Walmart’s investment in training and better wages, Gehrki said, has been good for the business. Retention has improved, the customer experience is better, and comp sales are up.

Atrium Health, formerly Carolinas HealthCare System, sees multiple benefits from its investment in frontline workers, said System Chief of Staff Debra Plousha Moore. The company avoids the outsourcing typical of its industry, said Plousha Moore, and they prefer to call their employees “teammates.” “Atrium Health is committed to creating a culture where

teammates are engaged, productive, and committed to the organization,” she said, “providing patients with a better experience.” The strategy pays off, providing Atrium Health with a marketing advantage.

Plousha Moore would like to see more of the company’s 5000 certified nursing assistants move into its 10,000 nursing positions. She noted that 85 percent of teammates who make this transition from an essentially low-wage occupation to a middle-class salary of \$60,000 are white. Understanding why that is—and changing the trajectory for thousands of low-income workers of color—involves breaking down barriers and establishing structured pathways to success, she said.

HELLO ALFRED EMBRACES GOOD JOBS STRATEGY

Marcela Sapone, founder and CEO of Hello Alfred, wanted to build a company that stood on a foundation of quality jobs. Hello Alfred, a platform-based company, provides home management services to over-stressed professionals, employing both a technical team and client services team, workers who manage an array of domestic services.

Despite the skepticism of investors, Hello Alfred’s domestic workers, or “home managers,” earn on average \$42,000 annually and have the same benefit package and perks as the technical team. These workers are all employees, not contract workers, as is more common among platform-based businesses. This strategy has attracted a diverse workforce, about half male, half female, and 60 percent people of color. Sapone says, “We are one company,” and “every person and every job is worthy of respect.” Her investment in her employees pays off, she says, in the trust that she builds within her company and with her customers who open their homes freely to Hello Alfred’s home managers.

Taking Risks

Investing in quality jobs does not come without risks for employers. Gehrki noted that when Walmart announced that it would spend almost \$3 billion on workforce investment, its stock plummeted 10 percent, or \$20 billion in market value. Fortunately, Walmart could ride out the storm, and the new CEO at the time was a trusted leader, focused on articulating the vision and business case for a stronger, better trained and better compensated workforce.

Plousha Moore also noted that Atrium Health's lenders sometimes look askance on its workforce investment strategy because of the health system's labor costs. To Plousha Moore, it is all about hitting the right balance, ensuring that patients have an extraordinary experience, prices stay competitive, and teammates feel valued.

If companies are going to take this type of risk, said Gehrki, advocates for workforce investment need to make a strong case that creating better jobs is both good for workers and for business.

HELPING FAMILIES SAVE FOR THE FUTURE

With almost half of US families unable to manage a \$400 emergency expense, nearly 60 percent borrowing to put food on the table, and one-third with no retirement savings, participants explored what tools and incentives might help low- and middle-income families to save. Research shows that low-income families want to save, but they need more support and access to better tools. Among the potential solutions discussed at the conference were "rainy day" savings accounts and a variety of newly emerging Fintech tools.

Rainy Day Savings Accounts

With less secure employment and more volatile incomes, today's families often face periods when the monthly bills exceed monthly income. New ideas are emerging regarding how employers can help employees save money for short-term needs as well as for retirement. For example, said Rademacher, there is growing interest in the idea of developing "rainy day" savings accounts funded through payroll deductions.



“Employers are concerned that their employees’ financial anxieties negatively impact product, engagement, and long-term workforce management outcomes. Consequently, at Prudential, we are seeing more clients offering targeted financial education, guidance, and solutions to address day-to-day financial issues, long-term term saving needs, and protection from unforeseen crises.”

Vishal Jain, Vice President of Prudential Financial, Inc.

One in four people with an IRA, 401K, or other defined contribution plan withdraws money they are saving for retirement to cover unexpected expenses or big-ticket items like a down payment on a house. This “leakage” amounts to about .40 cents on every \$1 of retirement savings, a significant loss in future assets.²¹

The “rainy day” account would help workers amass liquid savings and avoid taking funds from retirement accounts. The idea, as described in an Aspen Institute issue brief, is relatively simple:

Workers would fund a short-term savings account that could be used for emergencies, and once a sufficient savings buffer was built up, additional contributions would automatically be diverted to a traditional, less liquid retirement account. To ensure a constant savings buffer, the short-term account would be automatically replenished as necessary.²²

By formalizing the role that retirement savings accounts are already playing in helping people meet short-term needs, savers would become better at understanding what resources they have available to meet current needs and what resources are locked away for the future. This would allow working families to more easily meet short- and long-term financial goals.

Fintech: New Tools for Saving

In addition to the rainy day—or short-term savings—innovation, Summit participants offered an array of “fintech” solutions to assist low and moderate earners in managing volatility and putting money aside for long-term economic stability.

Quinten Farmer, the president of Even, for example, developed a mobile application that provides more stable income to people living paycheck to paycheck. Employers pay a subscription fee for their employees, who can use the tool to establish financial goals, track income and expenses, set aside savings, and pay bills. When a user is short on funds, he or she may access earned wages ahead of a scheduled paycheck to cover bill payments, thereby avoiding the high costs of bounced checks and payday lenders. Farmer has recently partnered with Walmart to offer Even as a benefit to its 1.4 million US employees.

Commonwealth, a mission-driven organization that builds solutions to make people financially secure, has had success with prize-linked savings (PLS) accounts, said Executive Director Timothy Flacke. PLS reward savers with chances to win cash prizes, tapping the allure of winning to make saving more exciting and engaging. Save to Win, the first major PLS product, began as a pilot test with eight Michigan credit unions.



“The narrative that suggests poor people make poor decisions is based on stereotypes and discrimination.”

JESÚS GERENA

Left to Right, Tom Shapiro Director, IASP Heller School, Brandeis University; Claire Daviss, Communications Manager, The Aspen Institute; Jesús Gerena, CEO of Family Independence Initiative

Today 165 credit unions in 13 states offer a PLS product, and 82,000 account holders—three-quarters of whom are financially vulnerable—have saved \$190 million since 2009. Commonwealth has also worked with Walmart and Green Dot to design Prize Savings, a PLS feature that allows Walmart MoneyCard holders an opportunity to win cash prizes through saving.

“Our nation’s growing economic divide is our generation’s problem to solve.”

Understanding the Challenges Facing Low-Income Families

Technology offers other new opportunities to support low-income earners in becoming more financially secure. Jesus Gerena, CEO of the Family Independence Initiative (FII), is using data provided by families from ten cities to understand more deeply the constraints and opportunities and the financial decisions families make. Gerena observed that the families participating in his project are extremely resourceful. Among the FII families, for example, many have a side business in addition to their regular jobs. These businesses fail to grow, said Gerena, because of the inability of families to access capital to invest, not because of poor decision making.

In discussing how to improve the quality of jobs and tools for saving, Summit participants raised important lines of inquiry regarding both how to change the narrative around low-income Americans and their aspirations to reach the middle class, and how to develop the tools and policies that would once again broaden opportunity and mobility across America’s wealth divide.

ROADMAP FOR CHANGE

During the post-World War II era, business, labor, and government worked together to create the shared prosperity that fueled the expansion of the middle class. “Free-market capitalism continues to be the most effective engine of wealth creation the world has seen,” said Summit host Ida Rademacher, “but that wealth is not being shared in the same way.” As our society becomes more diverse, our national commitment to providing equal opportunity through access to meaningful work, fair wages, and quality education appears to be wavering.

What should be the balance between public and private sectors in ensuring shared prosperity? asked Rademacher. What institutions are necessary to protect working Americans from the vagaries of a globalized economy? Do 20th century institutions need an update—or an entire remake to work for middle-class families today?

In a deep and wide-ranging discussion, Summit participants considered these questions, particularly the balance of responsibility between public and private sectors in rebuilding the middle class. An inherent tension exists, said one participant, between the role of employers in providing wages and benefits that ensure economic security versus the right of every person, regardless of the work they do, to basic protections such as health coverage and retirement income. As American citizens, participants asked, do we deserve a base level of support, whether we are wealthy or not, whether we are connected to an employer or not?



Joanna Smith-Ramani, *Managing Director, Financial Security Program*

Out of these discussions, participants identified three potential areas for influencing change:

Realigning Incentives: Encouraging businesses to invest in high-quality jobs and to facilitate access to a range of financial products and services to build workers' financial security.

Reimagining Institutions: Establishing new institutions, policies, and platforms to support people in traditional and non-traditional work arrangements, help strengthen their voices, and increase their access to benefits that would enhance their financial security.

Expanding shared ownership: Broadening opportunities to share in the ownership of businesses, housing, land or other mutual assets, while simultaneously reducing risk.

REALIGNING INCENTIVES

If, as Osterman said, "firms will only change when they see it is in their interest," how do we better align incentives to drive business leaders to improve the quality of jobs and expand access to insurance and other products and tools that enhance economic security? Participants debated an array of solutions in both the private and public sectors that could help to shape business decisions in the future.

Government policies are crucial to defining the playing field, but there are many other influencers, said Jennifer Tescher, CEO of the Center for Financial Services Innovation. These include customers, investors, consumer advocates, and employees. Business leaders consider all of these stakeholders and may be influenced by moral arguments as much as profit margins. "We shouldn't overweight the business case," said Tescher.

Customers and Investors Making Value-Based Decisions

Conway noted that there is growing interest among large and small employers – including those represented at the Summit – in developing business models aimed at building shared value and a stronger middle class. These businesses are responding to various pressures, including customers and shareholders who are concerned about growing economic inequality and its impact on our society.

"If you don't grapple with the convergence of social, business, and environmental issues, you aren't going to thrive in the future," said Julie Gehrki of Walmart. At the same time, finding the right path involves taking risks, as evidenced by the 10 percent drop in shareholder value that followed Walmart's decision to invest in its workforce. Business leaders can't ignore these risks.

Gehrki noted that Walmart is pleased with the results of its workforce investment strategy, but the company needs more data to understand the interaction of multiple variables, including the structure of jobs, wages, benefits, and education. Noting that research on the obstacles to retention is far more extensive than research on solutions, she proposed an "innovation lab," through which large retailers could work together to develop effective solutions.

Doing well and doing good are not at odds, said Andrei Cherny, CEO and co-founder of Aspiration, a financial investment firm that provides low- and moderate-income earners with access to low-cost investment vehicles. He argued that companies that invest in workers and promote diversity have higher retention and better productivity than companies that view workers as a cost center only. Cherny invests in leaders of these high-road companies through his large-cap investment fund, which at the time of the conference had the highest returns of any fund in its investment class. Agreeing with Gehrki, he said, consumers today make choices based on their values.

Despite Cherny's experience, participants agreed that investors remain skeptical about high-road employment strategies. As powerful influencers, however, they suggested, it is essential to engage investors around why they should value and prioritize quality jobs and shared value in their investment decisions.

One tool that could be used to engage investors, participants agreed, is Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting. But to influence investors, businesses need to figure out how to measure the impact of shared prosperity strategies, and how to meaningfully include these figures in financial reporting documents. One promising strategy participants discussed was to engage institutional investors around the value of ESG investments so that they can better communicate their value to those on whose behalf they are investing.

Public Policies

Government, through tax and regulatory policies, plays a crucial role in influencing corporate behavior by providing incentives and disincentives that influence everything from where a company locates a new factory to its supply chains, sustainability practices, research and development, workforce investment strategies, and distribution of profits.

"The government creates corporations to benefit the community. That's why a corporation gets tax and legal benefits – to take care of their employees," said former Congressman Mickey Edwards. Over the last 30 years, however, trade, tax, and regulatory policies have incentivized the free movement of capital while diminishing the power of labor and local communities. "To reclaim a constructive role for accountable, representative government," said Edwards, "voters need to re-engage, and demand policies that hold corporations accountable."

Government has multiple tools at its disposal, said Osterman, if our representatives can be convinced to take action. In addition to providing better worker protections in trade agreements and using the tax and regulatory codes to encourage employers to invest in training and advancement, retirement funds or other benefits, Congress could improve job quality by raising the floor through a minimum wage increase, requiring predictable scheduling, and enforcing regulations around wage theft and the misclassification of "employees" as "contractors."

CARLA JAVITS: GOVERNMENT POLICIES HAVE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES FOR SMALL BUSINESS



Carla Javits is the CEO of REDF, a nonprofit venture philanthropy and intermediary that is creating jobs for people facing the greatest barriers to employment. Policies that make sense for large corporations may require some modification to be appropriate for small businesses that face different constraints in the marketplace. For example, the social entrepreneurs that REDF works with have small margins and their customers are extremely sensitive to price changes. They want to

raise wages but, at the same time, may be more able to stay in business if higher minimum wage policies allow them to phase in the increases over time. They need time to adjust, to raise prices incrementally and/or to find a way to trim expenses. When it comes to providing health care and retirement benefits, these small businesses don't have human resource departments. They need better products that are easy for employees to afford and access.

REIMAGINING INSTITUTIONS

“Today’s institutions, designed in an earlier century, are wildly misaligned for the problems they are meant to solve. Not only are businesses facing different pressures but families are far more diverse.”

New Opportunities to Raise Workers’ Voices

For much of the 20th century, employers willingly shouldered much of the responsibility for economic security that European social welfare states allocated to the public sector. This uniquely American labor model, however, explained David Rolf from SEIU, held the seeds of its own destruction, making American companies perceive that with a union they would be less profitable and less nimble in the face of competition. “The decision



Ben Mangan, Executive Director, Berkeley-Haas Center for Social Sector Leadership

How do we balance the interests of business and labor in the 21st century? What institutions do we need—in the private and public sectors—to ensure a more level playing field, greater economic opportunity, and a basic level of economic security for all? Debating these questions, participants identified the need to raise up workers’ voices and to provide new models for expanding access to traditional benefits for nontraditional workers.

to privatize benefits into the employment relationship created a set of incentives that resulted in massive outsourcing of labor,” said Rolf.

Finding a way to empower workers through new institutions and to reestablish a balance between labor and corporate power, participants agreed, is essential to addressing inequality of income and wealth. Rolf argued that it is time to replace broken

labor laws and weak unions with “regional and sectoral bargaining that covers every worker in the country.” He proposed a new “social contract” between employer and employees that would accommodate the changing nature of employment in the 21st century:

- A minimum wage, starting at \$15
- Secure & humane scheduling
- Safe workplaces
- Nondiscriminatory workplaces
- Contributions to a worker-owned universal, portable, pro-rated benefit fund

Carmen Rojas, cofounder and CEO of the Workers Lab, pointed to the emergence of new models for empowering workers and ensuring they have a voice at the table. Examples include the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, which has improved wages, health and safety for tomato pickers in Florida, and the Worker’s Defense Project, a Texas-based organization that has changed labor conditions for construction workers across the state. These worker organizations use a community-organizing model to engage workers and negotiate solutions with employers across economic sectors.

Increase Access to Benefits & Information with New Platforms

With small businesses, which employ more than half of American workers, struggling to provide benefits, and a significant portion of American workers employed in either low-wage service jobs or contract and contingent employment, participants raised concerns about the American model of economic security that depends so heavily on employer-provided benefits. Must an employer committed to its community and employees provide a robust benefits package? What if it simply isn’t affordable in today’s economic environment? Jeremy Smith, director of the Aspen Retirement Savings Initiative, summed up the conversation, arguing “We can’t put it all on the backs of firms, we need a system that works for everyone.”

One solution that participants felt had strong potential to rebalance the risks and responsibilities among workers, employers, and government, was a system of portable benefits to which employers, employees, and government could contribute. The employee accounts would be managed through nonprofit fiduciaries that would help workers make good choices throughout their lifetimes regarding saving for the short term, investing for the long term, and managing risk through appropriate insurance.

“We know who speaks for gun owners, for civil liberties, for seniors, for women’s reproductive health,” but we do not know who speaks for workers in the US in the 21st century.”



David Rolf, President SEIU775

WASHINGTON STATE PROPOSES NEW MODEL FOR PORTABLE BENEFITS

Washington State introduced a portable benefits bill during the 2017 legislative session, and once again during the 2018



session.²³ The bill, which earned public support from Uber, Rolf, and entrepreneur Rick Hanauer,²⁴ establishes a portable benefits fund to cover any business that “facilitates the provision of services by workers to consumers seeking services and where the provision of services is taxed under 1099 status.” Businesses subject to the law would be required to:

- Contribute an amount determined by the state labor department for workers’ compensation;
- Contribute 15 percent of the total fee collected from a consumer transaction for a provided service, or \$2 for every hour that the worker provided services to the consumer, whichever is less; and
- Make monthly contributions to the fund.

In addition to workers’ compensation, the benefit providers could provide a range of other benefit options—determined with worker input—from health insurance to paid time off to retirement benefits.

of Aspen’s Future of Work Initiative (see sidebar on Washington State proposal). A similar idea has already taken root in Canada, according to Alex Mazer, founding partner of Common Wealth, a Canadian mission-driven business focused on expanding retirement plans. Common Wealth has worked with SEIU to develop my65+, a portable retirement plan aimed at low- and moderate-income workers. Union members and their families contribute directly through their bank account or a participating employer and build retirement security without losing access to government benefits. The plan is managed on a fiduciary basis and results in a retirement “bang for the buck” for these workers of three to four times that of a typical retirement savings plan in Canada.

This type of portable benefits scheme could, in the future, ensure all workers have access to benefits that provide economic security, regardless of their classification as employees, contractors, or temp workers. At the same time, participants observed, this new institutional paradigm ensures that businesses continue to share responsibility with government for widespread economic security.

SHARED OWNERSHIP MODELS

Participants agreed that expanding asset ownership has real potential to grow opportunity across the nation. But, as Ray Boshara noted, following the Great Recession, people are more hesitant to purchase homes or other generally appreciating assets, a barrier to financial security that needs to be addressed. “In the 20th century,” he explained, “we, as a nation, found ways to reduce the risk of income loss, through popular programs like unemployment and disability insurance, as well as Social Security. In the 21st century, perhaps we need to develop ways to reduce the risk of asset loss as well – why should families bear the full risk of losing the wealth when we don’t expect them to bear the full risk of losing their income? Both are necessary for economic security and opportunity, so why just insure one?”

One wealth-building tool, suggested Boshara, is “Child Development Accounts” or “Baby Bonds.” Depending on the family’s income or wealth, the government would make an investment at birth of anywhere from \$50 to \$1,000—even much larger under some proposals—set aside to grow for the next 20 years and generally restricted to post-secondary education or other forms of lifelong asset accumulation. With recent research showing that the rising costs of a college education is increasingly financed by student loans, Boshara argued that a boost in assets, especially early in life, could improve lifetime earnings and economic security.

Another means of reducing risk is to share ownership more broadly. Participants suggested expanding models such as land trusts and co-housing, in which groups of individuals share ownership in a small residential community, or expanding shared ownership of energy resources, similar to how European communities own local wind turbines or Alaska residents earn dividends from the state’s oil resources. Finally, participants saw tremendous opportunity in expanding opportunities for employee ownership to increase the share of capital wealth going to working families.

This model is beginning to gain traction in several states (e.g., Washington, California, and New Jersey) as well as at the federal level, according to Alastair Fitzpayne, executive director



Ray Boshara, Senior Advisor and Director, Center for Household Financial Security

Employee Ownership and Profit Sharing

Joe Blasi, an Aspen Employment Opportunities Program fellow who is a professor from the Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations where he directs the Institute for the Study of Employee Ownership and Profit Sharing, noted that 36 percent of American workers already participate in some form of profit sharing. Alternatively, employees may own shares of the company where they work, through Employee Stock Ownership Plans, restricted stock plans, discounted stock purchase plans, or worker cooperatives. Today about 20 percent of employees own some company stock. Another 7 percent have stock options in their company.

The median value of this employee ownership is only \$10,000, said Blasi, but those employee owners with the top quarter of stakes have average stakes of \$174,000 including many members of the working middle class.

Pointing to the wealth CEOs and other top executives gain from equity compensation plans, Blasi said one policy option to address inequality was to expand Employee Shared Ownership Plans, or ESOPs. Through ESOPs, companies use credit to finance and buy shares that they grant to employees. Most importantly, employees do not have to use wages to buy shares, reducing the risk of ownership.

Worker-Owned Cooperatives

Another form of employee ownership is the worker cooperative. Hilary Abell, co-founder of Project Equity, observed that 2.34 million small business owners, with 25 million employees, are approaching retirement without a business succession plan. If all of these baby boomers simply shut down their businesses, communities could suffer severe economic consequences, she asserted.

Project Equity sees an opportunity in this transformative moment to convert more of these main street small businesses to democratically-governed cooperatives, ESOPs, or other forms of shared ownership. Examples of successful cooperatives include Equal Exchange, the fair-trade coffee and chocolate distributor, and Cooperative Home Care Associates, the nation's largest worker-owned cooperative, employing over 2000 home care aides. Democratic governance gives workers greater decision-making authority, primarily by electing the Board of Directors, as well as a share of the company's profits.

Worker Ownership Is Good for Business

Whether worker ownership takes the form of an ESOP, a cooperative, or profit-sharing, Blasi maintained, it expands access to income from capital and thereby provides a means of growing middle-class wealth. Moreover, his research finds that employee ownership is good for companies. Workers who own a share of the business are more loyal and more productive. Studies show that businesses with ESOPs are more stable and better able to withstand economic downturns. Therefore, argued Blasi, there should be a bipartisan commitment to expanding employee ownership programs through tax incentives and other government policies. There are policy options on the shelf, he noted, that could expand all forms of employee ownership: worker cooperatives, ESOPs, and equity comp plans in stock market companies.

Commitment to Equity and Inclusion in Asset Ownership

Waikinya Clanton, the executive director of the National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women, and Todd Greene, vice president of community and economic development at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, expressed some caution regarding the design of asset ownership in light of the history of uneven access to asset accumulation for communities of color. They argued for convening diverse voices to understand how to structure access to assets in ways that work for communities of color. Community leaders bring different voices to the table, said Greene. Understanding community concerns, the ways in which discrimination operates to deny ownership opportunities, and how opportunities are constrained in particular places—all are critical to designing the right products.

CONCLUSION

Louis Brandeis once said, “We can have a democracy in this country, or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of the few, but we can’t have both.” It is wise to reflect on these words, as we assess where we are as a nation. Economic inequality, which has grown exponentially over the last 40 years, is leading to a profound loss of trust in our most basic institutions. As the American Dream has been torn from the grasp of working families in rural, urban, and suburban communities, resentment has grown and the issues that divide us—race, class, gender—have been used to further disempower working Americans.

Reversing direction and recommitting to shared prosperity for all Americans will require not only hard work, but a realignment of power only possible if we reach across our differences and build a shared agenda. The Aspen Economic Security Summit provided a unique opportunity to begin that process, bringing together individuals and organizations from business, labor, government, and community organizations committed to restoring equal opportunity to Americans from all walks of life.





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