Leadership
John Bouman, President
Kate Walz, Interim Vice President of Advocacy

Contributors
Sarah Cocco
Ailiana Denis
Jessi Dixon
Kayla Flanagan
Kelsie Landers
Kate Maley

Ivan Parfenoff
Michelle Nicolet
Marcus Samuel
Hannah Shireman
Ellison Snider
Nivedita Sriram

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ABOUT THE SARGENT SHRIVER NATIONAL CENTER ON POVERTY LAW
The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law provides national leadership in advancing laws and policies that secure justice to improve the lives and opportunities of people living in poverty.

ABOUT THE SHRIVER SUMMIT: THE FUTURE OF JUSTICE
As we face threats to important policies at the federal level, we must look at the imminent impact on workers, families, and communities across the country. The choices that states make will have monumental consequences on the ability of their residents to grow and learn, work, care for loved ones, and live in dignity.

The Shriver Summit, held on Friday, December 1, 2017, in Chicago, Illinois, brought together advocates and experts to explore what we need to secure justice, every day, for everyone.
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Fifty years ago, the Shriver Center was created as a central element of the War on Poverty. As part of the national legal services program, the Shriver Center worked to ensure that low-income people and communities had a voice in policy decisions that affected their lives and opportunities.

Today, advocates for people living in poverty find themselves at a crossroads. Federal threats to justice and civil rights are ever present. The news alerts we receive on our smartphones, while disheartening, are no match for the real injustices playing out in low-income communities of color across the country. Progress made over the last 50 years has in many ways been quickly upended. Worse, for many communities, what stated progress was made fell short of its promise.

But we continue to fight and to stay in the fight, no matter how tough.

We believe in the communities who not only demand a seat at the table, but real power and decision making over their futures. We believe that systemic change can advance racial equity.

We also believe that collective thinking and action is necessary to advance change. On December 1, 2017, the Shriver Center held its first summit—The Future of Justice—to explore what is needed to ensure justice every day, for everyone. Advocates, directly impacted communities, public officials, and foundations from around the country joined us to have a conversation about not only where we are now in terms of justice, but where we want to be in the future.

We spent the day tackling many of the issues confronting people living in poverty and communities of color, including education equity, health justice, criminal justice reform, the threats to immigrant communities, the right to a fair workplace, the foundation community’s role in justice, and the need for responsible state budgets. We also talked about building the capacity of advocates to advance the systems change necessary to dismantle systemic racism in this country.

This report provides a blueprint for the Future of Justice. Join us in this fight.
In addition to the panels and workshops described in this report, the Shriver Summit included three plenary addresses that explored the future of justice for workers, families, and communities. These addresses, given by national leaders, helped set the stage for a newly energized fight across the United States to advance progressive policies that protect people living in poverty.

**Dorian T. Warren,** President of the Center for Community Change Action and Vice President of the Center for Community Change, opened the summit by setting forth opportunities and responsibilities advocates have in this national moment to make progress on the state and local level. As residents of the United States face existential threats to human and civil rights, cities and states have the chance to lead the way to a future of freedom and justice. Warren argued that advocates must not only develop defense strategies for social programs being threatened at the national level, but also look to state and local communities to advance creative solutions and policies that help people grow and thrive. He emphasized the need to frame the fight against poverty as a moral fight concerning our core values as a country. Warren encouraged Shriver Summit attendees to develop messaging that highlights both the intent behind regressive policies as well as the real human impact of those policies. He argued that the beneficiaries of social programs, for whom the fight against poverty is a daily fight for survival, should be fortified with the tools and resources to be the leading voices in campaigns for economic, social, and racial justice.

**Lisa Marsh Ryerson,** President of the AARP Foundation, highlighted the cyclical and systemic nature of poverty. Looking at poverty through the lens of older adults and senior citizens in the United States, Ryerson asserted that the social safety net is clearly not meeting all the needs of older adults. Millions of older Americans do not have any money saved, do not have the resources to meet the most basic of needs, and are low-income earners. Ryerson said it is important to understand and recognize all the factors that contribute to poverty. This understanding puts advocates and organizations in a much stronger place to treat the root of the problem, instead of intervening amongst symptoms. Ryerson noted that advocacy plays a critical role in mitigating all the small catastrophes that occur when navigating a life in poverty. She urged everyone to come together and see poverty as a systemic issue, rooted in many kinds of oppression and discrimination.
Cristina Jiménez, the Executive Director and Co-Founder of United We Dream, tied the story of U.S. immigration policy to her own story as an undocumented immigrant. Jiménez’s family fled poverty and immigrated from Ecuador when she was thirteen years old. As soon as she arrived, Jiménez said, she had to learn what it meant to be an immigrant and person of color in the United States, and how to live under constant fear of being deported. The power of organizing only became clear to her years later when a friend was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Jiménez said the act of her friend sharing his story publicly, as well as the actions people took to support him, showed her the power of working together and moving from fear to courage. Jiménez noted that, although this is a particularly dark time for the country, she feels hopeful, as this national crisis has brought different groups from different sectors to work together to protect one another. Jiménez said that leaders now have the opportunity and responsibility to build an intersectional and multiracial movement for justice and dignity in all communities.
PANELS

The morning panel discussions at the Shriver Summit: The Future of Justice were divided into three tracks: The Future of the Worker, The Future of the Family, and The Future of the Community. Panelists discussed current and emerging strategies advocates and other stakeholders can use to ensure state and local governments continue to protect low-income people’s ability to thrive in the workplace, at home, and in their communities.
BEYOND THE COURTROOM: COMBATING THE INJUSTICES OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Panelists
Antoinette Dozier, Senior Attorney, Western Center on Law and Poverty
Merf Ehman, Executive Director, Columbia Legal Services
Sharlyn Grace, Staff Attorney and Criminal Justice Policy Analyst, Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice
Michelle Mbekeani-Wiley, Community Justice Staff Attorney, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Moderated by Quinn Rallins, Program Director, Illinois Justice Project

The Issue
The criminal justice system imposes life-long and life-altering burdens on the lives of people who come into its contact. Beyond the courtroom, jail, and prison, there is a far-reaching set of collateral consequences – often known as a civil death - that fall particularly hard on people living in poverty and communities of color. Systems change advocacy, with the leadership of directly-impacted individuals, has the power to create a fair chance for justice-involved individuals to meaningfully reconnect with their community and loved ones.

Discussion
Each person has a story. Each story highlights a different set of obstacles and opportunities. Blended together, they paint a picture of systemic change.

Sharlyn Grace shared the story of a former client of hers, an African-American single mother of two who spent 14 months in jail because she could not afford to post bail. Her client, who had no criminal history or experience with the criminal justice system, nearly lost custody of her children. More than 70,000 people pass through Cook County Jail every year, and nearly 450,000 people are incarcerated while awaiting trial in county jails across the country. Shockingly, more than 90% of these individuals are incarcerated merely because they cannot afford to post a monetary bond.

Michelle Mbekeani-Wiley shared stories of students pulled into the criminal justice system by school resource officers, who often lack appropriate training and accountability. As detailed in the Shriver Center’s report Handcuffs in Hallways, school-based policing is the fastest growing area of law enforcement. But research shows that the mere presence of police officers in school increases the likelihood that a student will be referred to law enforcement for adolescent behavior. Moreover, school-based arrests fall more harshly on students of color.

Antoinette Dozier and her colleagues at the Western Center on Law and Poverty found that many poor or homeless public school students in the Los Angeles Unified School District have been victimized by school resource officers. This issue is far too common nationwide, and the Shriver Center and the Western Center on Law and Poverty are working to bring attention to it.

Helping Justice-Involved Individuals to Come Home

Home is the cornerstone from which people build better lives for themselves and their families. But individuals with criminal records face particular barriers to securing safe and affordable housing. Housing discrimination against justice-involved individuals harms communities of color, reinforces patterns of residential segregation, and serves as one of the greatest potential barriers to successful re-entry. In response to advocacy by the Shriver Center and other partners, HUD issued landmark guidance in April 2016 explaining that denials, evictions, and other adverse housing decisions based on a person’s criminal record could give rise to a claim of race discrimination under the Fair Housing Act. This crucial guidance has set the stage for continued advocacy in support of just housing policies and practices for individuals with criminal records in both federally subsidized housing and the private market. Moving forward, the Shriver Center is forming a national collaborative of attorneys and advocates who will focus on two issues: the use of criminal records by housing providers for screening and eviction purposes and the rise of crime-free rental ordinances by municipalities as a response to the perceived threat of changing racial demographics.
Angeles area were consistently showing up late to school because they could not afford to pay for public transportation. This issue had a significantly negative impact on these students because, under California’s truancy law, students who have been tardy three or more times are considered truant. Dozier advocated for a law that gave low-income and homeless people free public transit passes. As a result, Dozier changed California’s truancy laws and advocated for free public transportation for low-income people.

Merf Ehman described how her own experience with the criminal justice system led her to career as a lawyer. When she was in her twenties, Ehman was arrested for drug use and possession. She was fortunate enough to be diverted from the criminal justice system, opening her eyes to the ways in which the criminal justice system works in favor of white people and to the detriment of people of color. As a lawyer, Ehman holds onto this experience and the need to have a race-equity lens in advocacy work.

There are many norms within the criminal justice system that are, for the first time, being challenged. Grace noted that the longstanding practice of cash bail, which forces people to languish behind bars pending trial because they can’t afford bail, has finally been exposed for its injustice. Unaffordable bail is correlated with a higher likelihood of conviction, which damages family relationships and steadily decreases housing and employment opportunities. She warned that perceived good alternatives to bail, such as electronic monitoring, often adversely impact individuals both emotionally and financially. Grace shared how the Coalition to End Money Bond, in collaboration with the Chicago Community Bond Fund, is addressing unaffordable bail practices. First, advocates filed a class-action lawsuit against Cook County for consistently setting unaffordable bonds. Advocates also organized to pressure the Chief Judge of Cook County to issue a general order requiring Cook County judges to set bonds affordable to the accused.

Mbekeani-Wiley talked about how individuals detained in jails prior to trial have for years been deprived of the ability to vote, even though they have the legal right to do so. Mbekeani-Wiley described how this realization led her to work directly with the individuals detained pretrial in Cook County Jail to inform them of their rights and to advocate for law changes so that they can exercise their right to vote.

Panelists also agreed that real systems change work requires challenging the criminal justice system itself and tackling the other systems that push criminalization. Mbekeani-Wiley shared the work she is doing to urge the Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Police Department, in collaboration with community stakeholders, to define the role of school resource officers in the context of what schools should really be focused on - a mission to educate student and build future leaders. Ehman described how Columbia
Legal Services tackled front end work by advocating for a recently passed local ordinance that gives people a private right of action to challenge police discrimination, initiating a sentencing project to address issues of racial disparities in the criminal justice system, and filing class action lawsuits against racialized policing and solitary confinement.

Community involvement and leadership is at the core of criminal justice systems change. Quinn Rallins discussed his background as a grassroots organizer, and how he remains committed to work that shifts power back to communities. Dozier sees her work’s focus is one of following the lead of youth organizers, as well as creating space for them to be leaders by, for example, speaking at hearings and in the media. Mbekeani-Wiley described her work with Voices of Youth in Chicago Education (VOYCE), a grassroots youth organizing collaborative for education and racial justice led by students of color. Ehman talked about Columbia Legal Services’ development of a racial equity analysis and toolkit that the advocacy team utilizes in order to meet community goals and needs.

**Recommendations**

*Challenge the criminal justice system itself – not just the collateral consequences.*

Until systems change advocacy can eliminate racial discrimination within the criminal justice system, there will be a host of collateral consequences. Advocates need to support and be a part of advancing meaningful criminal justice reform while at the same time working to disconnect the civil justice system’s blanket reliance on the criminal justice system.

*Directly impacted communities must lead this work.*

Directly impacted individuals and the communities must be at the forefront of this reform and lead the movement. Advocates, including lawyers, are there to contribute their knowledge and skills to support initiatives identified by the community and to enhance the community’s power.

*Systemic change means foregoing the quick fixes and compromises.*

Take the long road. Even compromises have consequences. Be willing to stay in the fight for meaningful systems reform.
DEFENDING AND BUILDING ON HEALTHCARE GAINS UNDER THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT AND MEDICAID

Panelists
Elena Saltzman, Midwest Regional Organizer, Indivisible Project
Ben Wikler, Washington Director, MoveOn.org
Amber Smock, Director of Advocacy and External Affairs, Access Living and Member, Chicago ADAPT
Audra Wilson, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of Congresswoman Robin Kelly (IL-2)
Moderated by Stephani Becker, Associate Director of Healthcare Justice, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

The Issue
The Affordable Care Act (ACA) was one of the most groundbreaking pieces of legislation in recent history. Since its passage in 2010, millions who had lived without insurance have now gained coverage, bringing peace of mind, reducing medical debt, and improving health. Following the election of President Trump, repeal of the Affordable Care Act was almost unanimously expected. However, the United States experienced a groundswell of activism throughout Trump’s first year in office, with grassroots energy focused around defending the right to healthcare. More Americans than ever now recognize the importance of the ACA and publicly support it. This session highlighted the intersection of policy, politics, and the power of grassroots activism to shape policy change, as evidenced by the recent fight over ACA repeal.

Discussion
The grassroots defense of the ACA succeeded due to massive political mobilization and engagement of people who had never been activists before. Elena Saltzman described how the group was exemplary of this energy as it grew from the ground up in response to the presidential election. Indivisible maintained momentum throughout the yearlong resistance to ACA repeal in part by creating structures that enabled participation from individuals who might otherwise feel helpless. For example, Indivisible set up phone banks that enabled people to call progressives in conservative areas to encourage them to urge their representatives to protect the ACA. Ben Wikler described the most effective activist tactics his organization fueled throughout the yearlong fight. Resistance actions such as sit-ins and die-ins were designed to maximize publicity and outrage by drawing attention to the devastating, widespread impacts proposed healthcare cuts would have.

Protecting Our Healthcare in the States
Everyone should have access to high-quality, affordable healthcare. In Illinois and throughout the country, the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid have helped ensure that tens of millions of people get the healthcare they need to lead healthy lives. Unfortunately, the Trump Administration has begun encouraging state governments to reduce access to care through harmful and counterproductive waivers of federal law, including adding administrative barriers dressed up as “work requirements” for Medicaid eligibility. In Illinois, the Shriver Center is advocating for model legislation that will ensure that any attempts to restrict access to healthcare are open to public debate and scrutiny. Moving forward, the Shriver Center’s Health Justice team intends to create a toolkit and webinar guide for our Legal Impact Network (LIN) partners, with practical strategies to show advocates across the nation how to move forward similar policy in their state legislatures.

The Shriver Center is also a leader of Protect Our Care Illinois, the largest statewide coalition to defend the ACA in the nation. Working with other advocates, providers, consumers, and workers to protect and expand access to quality, affordable healthcare for all, Protect Our Care Illinois has laid the foundation for a long-term campaign to hold elected officials accountable and protect Medicaid and the ACA at the federal and state levels, while ultimately advocating for bipartisan solutions and sound implementation of the ACA.
In addition to engaging those who were new to activism, creating inclusive movements with ongoing internal dialogue and reflection were also essential pieces of the ACA defense movement. **Amber Smock** was at the forefront of the healthcare fight, arrested and dragged away from congressional offices alongside other disability activists in highly memorable and effective acts of civil disobedience. Smock made the case for building a resistance movement that is accessible. She described how facilitating the involvement of disabled activists allows movements to both represent and draw upon the full richness and diversity of impacted communities. Building on this discussion, **Audra Wilson** discussed how to foreground people of color within movements and ensure that those who are underserved are on the front lines of the resistance. She argued that groups need not only to make space for these leaders to emerge, but also to ensure that people from marginalized groups are equipped with the skills they need to step into leadership positions. Wilson encouraged the audience to put dedicated focus and energy toward this aim and to hold themselves accountable for ensuring that those most affected are the voices of the movement.

ACA defenders prioritized internal coherence and a strategic, unified front to build a broad base, rooted in the universality of the issue at hand. The burgeoning idea that “healthcare is a human right” powered the movement. Several panelists pointed out that because healthcare is a cross-cutting issue that affects everyone in very personal ways, the fight for the ACA was able to draw wide support and engage unexpected allies. Everyone had a stake in the fight, and advocates and movement leaders consistently raised outrage over the broad, sweeping impacts that any changes to the ACA would have on a number of populations.

Although resistance to healthcare cutbacks is ongoing (as seen most recently in opposition to attempts to impose work requirements on Medicaid recipients), the panelists encouraged the audience to expand their vision beyond a defensive stance. They suggested advocates and activists begin to ask what they want in the longer term and how to lay the groundwork for those goals now in anticipation of the day when we again have power to set the agenda.
Recommendations

Think broadly.
Public narratives are changing—build upon this moment to continue normalizing the ideas that are forming in response to the Trump administration's agenda. For example, use and further the idea that healthcare is a human right and that everyone deserves healthcare. Frame issues broadly, considering how they affect everyone, to draw the widest possible support, and engage people who are new to activism.

Prioritize inclusivity.
Social movements must be accessible and inclusive. This does not happen without time, thought, planning, investment of resources, and ongoing dialogue around how to do better. Space must be intentionally held for these priorities.

Consider long-term goals and vision.
Although grassroots movements often form from a need to fight against bad policy, it is important to devote time and thought to what the movement can accomplish after its immediate defensive goals have been met.
THE FUTURE OF FAIR WORKPLACES

Panelists
Heidi Shierholz, Senior Economist and Director of Policy, Economic Policy Institute
Sophia Zaman, Executive Director, Raise the Floor Alliance
Preston Van Vliet, National Campaign Organizer, LGBTQ Work-Family Project, a joint initiative of Family Values @ Work and A Better Balance
Melisa Acoba, Legislative Coordinator, California Work and Family Coalition
Moderated by Wendy Pollack, Women’s Law and Policy Initiative Director, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

The Issue
Labor markets in the United States have dramatically changed since the enactment of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938. However, fundamental labor protections have not been updated to reflect these changes, such as increased participation by women in the workforce, immense growth in part-time and temporary work, and the increasing growth of the gig economy. These changes have wide-ranging implications for all workers, but especially for low-wage workers, who are the most vulnerable to stagnating wages and abuses like wage theft, unfair scheduling practices, and misclassification.

Panelists in this session explored key changes in the workplace and the nature of work; the challenges these changes present to workers; and how workers, organizers, advocates, and researchers are joining forces to ensure the future of fair workplaces.

Discussion
Discussion began with a broad overview of national economic trends and an examination of workplace practices and their impacts on low-wage workers. Heidi Shierholz noted that the federal minimum wage is more than 25% below what it was in the late 1960s (adjusted for inflation). Shierholz asserted that the single biggest factor contributing to this wage stagnation is the decline in unionization. Unions set industry standards by increasing wages and improving working conditions for all workers; this proved especially important to low-wage workers of color by helping to close the racial wage gap. Noting that wages will rise when there is a worker shortage, Shierholz argued that when you hear an employer complain “I can’t find the workers I need,” it is important to finish their sentence with “at the price I am willing to pay.”

Because it is outdated, the federal overtime pay threshold is currently below the poverty level for a family of four. In fact, if the overtime pay threshold had been adjusted for inflation since 1975, it would be well over $50,000. Shierholz noted, however, that the threshold is unlikely to improve under the current administration.

Protecting Domestic Workers’ Rights
Domestic workers play a critical role in the U.S. economy. They care for the elderly, clean homes, and nurture children, freeing others to work outside the home and ultimately making all other work possible. Despite the value of their work, domestic workers have historically been excluded from protections under laws extended to workers in other industries. In 2016, the Shriver Center, as a member of the Illinois Domestic Workers Coalition, spearheaded a successful advocacy campaign for legislation to protect domestic workers rights. The Domestic Workers Bill of Rights amended four state laws—the Minimum Wage Law, the Illinois Human Rights Act, the One Day of Rest in Seven Act, and the Wages of Women and Minors Act—to afford domestic workers the same employment protections as other workers in Illinois, regardless of immigration status. Thanks to the Shriver Center’s work, Illinois became the seventh state to pass a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. The advocacy campaign is part of a larger national movement to provide domestic workers protections at both the state and federal level.

The Illinois Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, which went into effect on January 1, 2017, is a major step toward protecting the 35,000 domestic workers in Illinois, who are largely women of color or foreign-born. To ensure domestic workers’ rights and interests are protected under the new law, the Shriver Center has launched a project to protect domestic workers rights and interests through a combination of direct outreach and litigation.
A growing trend towards irregular and unpredictable scheduling has also led to irregular and unpredictable earnings for low-wage workers, according to Shierholz. Women are particularly harmed by this trend because they take up a disproportionate amount of child rearing.

Workers’ rights are further threatened when they are misclassified as independent contractors. This misclassification creates questions about who controls working conditions, what grievance procedures are available to support and protect the workers, and with whom they should bargain. In addition, workers are more often asked to sign away their rights by committing to noncompete and mandatory arbitration agreements.

Temporary workers are used as tools not only to outsource labor, but also to outsource responsibilities. Sophia Zaman, who works closely with temporary workers in the suburbs of Chicago, noted that temporary workers are injured twice as much on the job as and get paid 22% less than their direct hire counterparts. Additionally, African American workers are systematically barred from temporary warehouse work because of employers’ perception that Latino workers are less likely to claim their rights due to language barriers. This is often compounded by a question of documentation status. Ultimately, according to Zaman, the more exploitable that you are as a worker, the more desirable you are as a worker.

The vulnerability of low-wage workers makes organizing work especially challenging. In California, Melisa Acoba campaigns on issues that especially impact low-wage working women, such as paid family leave, paid sick days, lactation accommodations, and family-friendly workplaces. In her experience, the most vulnerable workers are the most difficult to reach. Acoba works closely with immigrants, the population with the lowest awareness of paid family leave laws in California. Language barriers and threats based on documentation status decrease these workers’ ability to assert their rights.

Preston Van Vliet also advocates for paid leave, specifically for expansion of the definition of family to one that is inclusive of LGBTQ workers. People across movements are beginning to look at how to redefine family in paid leave policy in a way that allows workers to take care of the people most important to them. Van Vliet also emphasized the importance of advocating for paid safe time for survivors of sexual and domestic violence and their family members.

Working alongside diverse populations of workers and advocating for fair workplaces to recommend improvements to outdated labor standards is important. However, Shierholz emphasized how labor standards are only as strong as enforcement, and injustices such as wage theft, which is disproportionately experienced by low-wage workers of color, minimum wage violations, and safety and health regulation violations especially need enforcement attention.
Recommendations

*Enforcement needs strengthening.*

Enforcement is complaint driven, and the workers who can afford to make a complaint tend to be more privileged. Each state should start collecting and analyzing data to determine where complaints are coming from and move preemptively to avoid future violations of workers’ rights.

Strong enforcement mechanisms, including provisions that give agencies specific responsibilities and budgets, should be included in labor bills. In addition, because multiple types of retaliation and discrimination act together within the workplace, enforcement should be collaborative between appropriate agencies when necessary.

*Workers’ wages need to be protected.*

The minimum wage should be updated at federal and state levels, and the subminimum wage should be eliminated. It is up to the states to increase overtime thresholds, since federal action is uncertain under the current administration. To ensure predictable wages for workers, states should require advanced scheduling and extra compensation for last-minute schedule changes or on-call schedules.

*Advocates, researchers, and organizers should empower workers.*

When workers organize, we win. It must be easier for workers to join unions, and penalties for employers who retaliate against workers who engage in collective action should be increased. Advocates should oppose “right to work” laws in the states and encourage nontraditional forms of workers, such as domestic workers, into collective action to increase their power.

Workers should be empowered so that they can advocate for themselves. This means reducing barriers so that everyone can be involved in advocacy—flexible event scheduling, daycare, and transportation stipends. Peer-education, clinics run by well-connected and trusted community members, and other organizing methods to educate, connect, and organize workers are central to improving labor protections for low-wage workers.

*It takes a coordinated effort.*

The panelists were clear—it takes a coordinated effort of lobbying, social media storytelling, petitions, floor alerts, and letters of support to form a fair workplace. Advocates should collaborate with workers, attorneys, legislative experts, and other stakeholders to ensure that laws reflect and protect the changing face of the workplace and address the challenges low-wage workers face.
PROTECTING IMMIGRANT RIGHTS
TO THE SAFETY NET

Panelists
Stephanie Altman, Senior Director of Policy/Director of Healthcare Justice, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Graciela Guzmán, Coalition Manager, Protect Our Care Illinois
Sonya Schwartz, Sonya & Partners LLC and Consultant to National Immigrant Law Center
Iris Gomez, Senior Staff Attorney, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Karlo Ng, Supervising Attorney, National Housing Law Project
Moderated by Kevin Herrera, Legal Impact Network Staff Attorney, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

The Issue
By providing food, shelter, healthcare and other critical supports, safety net programs help families avoid the harms of poverty and pursue opportunity. These programs make our communities stronger and advance our collective well-being. Like others, many immigrant families are eligible to participate in these vital programs, including over 13 million Lawful Permanent Residents living in the United States, and 5 million citizen children with at least one parent who is an undocumented immigrant. Although many individuals and families in these situations are eligible for safety net programs, they face a number of barriers in seeking to do so. Emergent threats and heightened fears in the current political climate have made it even more difficult for immigrant families to access services to which they are entitled. This panel discussed the importance of the issue and how advocates are taking action to address associated challenges.

Discussion
Immigrants’ eligibility for federal benefits is based on their immigration status and, sometimes, how long they have had that status. Eligibility has shifted over time as the laws and political atmosphere have changed. In 1996, so-called “welfare reform” rolled back eligibility, but advances have been made since to gain it back. For example, the 2002 Farm Bill, the 2009 Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act, and the Affordable Care Act all expanded eligibility for immigrants. Many federally funded housing programs have restrictive eligibility requirements, though exceptions are available for certain programs deemed to protect life and provide resources for safety. For example, Rapid Re-Housing, a program designed to help individuals and families quickly exit homelessness, is among the programs that have no immigration requirements.
Advocates Respond to Threats to Immigrant Communities’ Access to Benefits

Immigrants entitled to safety net benefits should be able to access those benefits without fear of jeopardizing their or their family members’ ability to remain safely in the United States. The Shriver Center, in collaboration with partners in the Legal Impact Network (LIN), is working to ensure this. In January 2018, LIN organized a strategic convening of experts at the intersection of immigration, public benefits, and privacy policy. The convening focused on policy and advocacy to ensure that state and local actors are minimizing the risk of exposure to enforcement while accessing programs that are vital to health and opportunity.

Currently the Shriver Center and its partners are playing a significant role in the Protecting Immigrant Families, Advancing Our Future campaign, which is focused on fighting impending regulations that would deny entry and/or permanent residency to immigrants who use, or whose children use, benefits programs in vital areas such as food, housing and healthcare. The mere threat of these regulations is already leading families to make devastating choices between their security and their children’s well-being. In furtherance of the campaign, the Shriver Center is helping to organize opposition from the civil legal services community through administrative advocacy and a communications strategy focused on illustrating the grave harms that would result from this action.

Modeled on successful legislation advanced by our California LIN partner and others, the Shriver Center is also part of an effort in Illinois to pass legislation that would prohibit landlords and their agents from using a tenants’ actual or perceived immigration status to exploit them, for example by threatening to call immigration enforcement on tenants who exercise their housing rights.

The current political climate has led to significant threats and fears that force immigrant families to choose between using vital safety net supports and avoiding immigration enforcement. Iris Gomez spoke about the chilling effect increased immigration enforcement has had on access to benefits, including the federal administration’s intention to deny admission and/or residency to immigrants who take advantage of safety net programs for themselves or their children. This threat first manifested with a draft White House Executive Order that leaked in January 2017. More recently, the administration signaled its intention to issue regulations this spring or summer. Sonya Schwartz is working with the National Immigration Law Center and the Center for Law and Social Policy to fight back against these proposed changes through the Protecting Immigrant Families (PIF) campaign. Among other things, PIF is building a network of state, local, and national organizations to oppose these impending regulations through administrative and other advocacy.

This climate of uncertainty and fear has impacted immigrants’ perception of whether it is safe to renew or apply for public benefits. In the past, Stephanie Altman confidently assured clients that they could safely enroll for public benefits, but she feels unable to do so now. Graciela Guzmán emphasized that this fear can have concrete effects, as people are afraid to send their children to school or forego medical services at a hospital for fear of being deported. Altman has had clients ask for help disenrolling from medical benefits, which had never happened before last year. She has also heard from hospitals that are worried about their patients - asking if they should advise people to disenroll from medical benefits, or work under Social Security numbers that are not their own, in order to protect themselves from immigration threats.

Anti-immigrant sentiment has emboldened landlords to exploit immigrant tenants, illegally evicting them and threatening to report them to enforcement officers if they complain about their housing conditions. Karlo Ng discussed this phenomenon and the National Housing Law Project’s efforts to address it through passage of the Immigrant Tenant Protection Act (AB 291) in California, which prohibits landlords and their agents from disclosing or threatening to disclose a tenant’s immigration status if they exercise their housing rights. AB 291’s protections apply to all tenants in California, whether the landlord’s conduct is based on actual or perceived immigration status.
There are other longstanding barriers to safety net programs for immigrants and their families, according to Guzmán, that also warrant advocacy. For example, many immigrant families have limited English proficiency, or live in communities that are geographically isolated from enrollment offices they would need to visit to apply for benefits. Others may not fully understand how enrollment in government programs works, and staff at local agencies may not be equipped to help. For example, a healthcare facility staff member may not know how to answer questions from immigrants who want to understand the risks of enrollment such as to why certain information is gathered, how data is retained, and when and with whom it can be shared.

**Recommendations**

**Work together.**
Legislation like the Affordable Care Act, Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) authorization, and California AB 291 are important policy changes that illustrate the need for advocates to collaborate across areas of expertise. To ensure that policy initiatives advance and protect immigrants’ well-being, stakeholders and advocates with many different issue backgrounds must be engaged in the planning and implementation stages.

**Emphasize clients’ system literacy.**
Advocates are uniquely situated to help families and individuals navigate these complicated systems and make decisions that are right for themselves and their families. This means understanding the risks and protections that exist in using a specific benefit, helping families assess the pros and cons, ensuring clients have access to materials and information in appropriate languages, and learning to be transparent about what an advocate does or does not know.

**Advocate with state agency leaders to protect privacy and ensure public benefits applications are as protective as possible.**
Agencies often collect and retain more data than is necessary for the programs they administer, creating unnecessary risks for immigrant families. Advocates should review current laws, regulations, ordinances and agency guidance on data sharing practices with federal agencies. Identify what information about program applicants is collected at enrollment (demographic information like race or ethnicity, income, immigration status, etc.) and retained by the agency, and what information is actually necessary to determine eligibility. Examine the populations covered by the program and how they are affected by the collection and retention of this data. Where necessary, advocate to ensure that agencies collect and retain only essential information.
THE STATE OF EDUCATION: ENSURING OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERY CHILD

Panelists
Olivia Abrecht, Youth Organizer, Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
Rick Glazier, Executive Director, North Carolina Justice Center
Rosazlia Grillier, Co-Chair, Community Organizing and Family Issues’ POWER-PAC coalition
Stephanie Rubin, CEO, Texans Care for Children
Carla Shedd, Associate Professor, The Graduate Center at the City University of New York

Moderated by Jennifer Doeren, Senior Policy Specialist, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

The Issue
Too often, our public schools fail vulnerable children. Disinvestment in public schools, barriers to high-quality, early learning, and rollbacks in student civil rights have led to an education system that often leaves students of color, students living in poverty, and students with disabilities behind. Panelists discussed what opportunities exist, particularly through the Every Student Succeeds Act, to change public policies that have a significant impact on education success. The panel also examined efforts across sectors to ensure that vulnerable children have excellent learning opportunities and that every family and community has great neighborhood schools.

Discussion
The change public systems are experiencing and the decline in high-quality public education is concerning. Carla Shedd attributes these failures to the “confluence of many.” Schools should be a portal of opportunity, the great equalizer, yet institutions and policies are currently neglecting students. Education has become another way to further stratify Americans, specifically through disinvestment in poorer neighborhoods’ public schools. Rick Glazier recounted how North Carolina’s public schools are experiencing resegregation due to disinvestment in the state’s neediest schools coupled with the lack of policy aimed at improving the opportunities of students living in poverty.

In addition to bad policies, poor policy implementation affects education quality. Stephanie Rubin urged all advocates to think about changing processes instead of just fixing policies. Overhauling an entire system is a much more daunting task than correcting adverse policy, but tackling the root cause is more effective than alleviating the symptoms. Advocates cannot consider only the outputs of schools, such as student success. Students’ backgrounds and attitudes and school conditions also need to be taken into account. When both school inputs and outputs are examined, it becomes easier to assess public education and create effective, positive policy to ameliorate school failures.

Getting Kids Off to a Great Start
Integral to the fight against poverty is investment in children across the United States, allowing them plenty of opportunities to learn and grow to their full potential. Children aged three and under are among the hardest hit by poverty, and the effects are compounded for children of color. The Shriver Center’s Early Childhood Justice Initiative focuses on children from birth to age three, exploring ways to make resources like prenatal and pediatric healthcare, infant and toddler child care, and education more accessible to low-income families. Alongside our emphasis on early-in-life investment, our advocacy work aims to highlight and reduce racial disparities that create barriers to accessing public services for infants and toddlers.

Exploring Racial Equity for Infants and Toddlers: The Case for Justice from the Start demonstrates the need for increased implementation of effective programs that mitigate the negative effects of poverty on a child’s well-being and the need to fight against systemic barriers that prevent access to these programs. The Shriver Center’s Early Childhood advocacy efforts will continue to support smart, equitable policies and practices, at the local, state, and national levels, to build a better future for all children and their families.
Federal and local governments are misleading Americans on the state of public education. Olivia Abrecht described how governments use smoke and mirrors to undermine traditional neighborhood schools and to bolster the resources of charter schools. Families are being told their local schools are unsuitable for their children and cannot ensure success, creating a flight of advantaged families to charter schools. Glazier echoed Abrecht’s assessment of the cycle of educational deficits and highlighted the incredible lack of confidence in public schools. When public schools are stymied by the existence of charter schools, students remaining in public education are further disenfranchised.

As a coalition leader and community organizer, Rosazlia Grillier recognizes the importance of educating and empowering community members in order to affect change. Through the POWER-PAC coalition, Grillier has seen how informing parents of their rights and guiding them to become advocates improves communities. The involvement of residents helps bring services to communities and enhances the services that already exist. In addition to increasing parent involvement, expanding student advocacy is critical to improving public education. Students are directly impacted by the failures of the public school system. Therefore, they need a seat at the table to be decision makers, negotiators, and problem solvers in the fight for equitable education.

**Recommendations**

*Arm students with the resources needed to advocate for their own needs.*

Students’ education is under attack, so it is important for them to be at the forefront of change. Space and capacity need to be created for student-led advocacy. Given the resources, space, and trust, students will create new ways to advocate for quality education that older and more experienced advocates would have never considered.

*Encourage collaboration among all advocates.*

Bad policy is currently being exacerbated by bad implementation. To counter this, early childhood, health, and education experts and advocates must collaborate to educate the public on the severely negative impacts of funding cuts to public education.

*Ensure transparency of information.*

Parents need to be informed of resources available to them, such as coalitions and advocacy campaigns, that will further involve them in decision-making regarding their children’s education.
STATE FISCAL POLICY: THE ROAD TO PROSPERITY FOR ALL

Panelists
Annie McKay, President and CEO, Kansas Action for Children
Nan Madden, Director, Minnesota Budget Project
Michael Leachman, Director of State Fiscal Policy, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Ralph Martire, Director, Center for Tax and Budget Accountability
Moderated by Daniel Lesser, Director of Illinois Policy/Director of Economic Justice, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

The Issue
State fiscal policy—how states tax their residents and spend that revenue—has a profound effect on the lives of people living in poverty. Among other things, the decisions states make about budgets determine the availability of jobs, work supports, and services needed to address barriers to employment. States with comparatively higher tax rates and government spending levels, like Minnesota, are thriving, while states with lower tax rates and government spending levels, like Kansas, are struggling. Panelists in this session discussed what states must do to grow their economies and create jobs while ensuring services and supports to those in need.

Discussion
Deep tax cuts at the state level have had a negative impact in several states. Annie McKay saw this firsthand after sweeping tax cuts urged by Kansas governor Sam Brownback led to deep cuts in government, infrastructure, education, and social services funding. Though Brownback and Kansas legislators had claimed there would be no adverse impact on state revenue because the tax cuts would stimulate the state's economy, that wasn't the case. Within three years, Kansas had nine consecutive budget cuts. These cuts meant that children in the public school system were unable to finish the school year, and infrastructure projects came to a screeching halt. Before the budget crisis, the state had a system in place that would allow for roads and highways to be repaired every nine years. Now, due to budgetary constraints these repairs are only possible every fifty years. The Republican-controlled legislature finally returned Kansas to fiscal sanity by over-riding the Governor's veto of a partial restoration of the state income tax.

Unlike Kansas, Minnesota made choices that allowed the economy to thrive. According to Nan Madden, one contributing factor to Minnesota's economic health is its tax structure. Minnesota has relatively higher taxes than most states, a new income tax bracket on the top 2% of earners, and a relatively more progressive tax structure that does not burden families earning low and middle incomes. Revenue from state taxes has allowed Minnesota to expand free all-day

Campaigning for a Fair Tax
States need fiscal policies that ensure all communities in the state can thrive. But unfortunately, Illinois's regressive, unfair tax system and recent record-long budget crisis have devastated the state, harming most the millions of Illinoisans living in or on the brink of poverty. Illinois is one of only eight states that have a flat income tax structure, and one of only four states that constitutionally require a flat income tax. The Fair Tax Now campaign, spearheaded by the Shriver Center-led Responsible Budget Coalition, is working to amend the state constitution to allow for the imposition of a graduated income tax. By enabling individuals with higher incomes to pay higher income tax rates while middle class and middle-class residents pay lower rates, a Fair Tax would help raise the revenue needed to stabilize Illinois's finances, repair the damage produced by the state's recent budget impasse, and make smart investments in Illinoisans' collective future. This advocacy is a model for how advocates working on a range of anti-poverty issues in a state can unite around one central premise: more state revenue means a healthier and better state for all.
kindergarten to all school districts, and to provide greater access to quality early childhood education for at-risk children. Legislators also were able to enact a tuition freeze at public universities and to fund additional financial aid for higher education. As a result, Minnesota has the fastest growing economy in the Midwest.

Some argue that state economies will grow or improve following significant tax cuts. However, Michael Leachman debunked this myth, noting that the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities’ research has found states that have made deep cuts to taxes saw slower economic growth compared to states that were more prudent. Leachman also countered the idea that legislators should incentivize companies to relocate to their states to bring growth to the state economy. He instead urged states to invest in “disruptors”—people who are trying to create new companies—who have the potential to create new jobs. Ralph Martire explained that any state with inadequate resources on the front end will see inadequate outcomes on the back end. States should make sure that they are making equitable tax-related decisions that enable the state to meet the needs of their communities.

**Recommendations**

*Implement a progressive income tax.*

Instead of imposing a flat state income tax, states should implement a progressive income tax. This type of tax structure equitably distributes tax burdens and generates more tax revenue from earners within the top income brackets.

*Establish sound tax policy that invests in the community.*

State governments that enact sweeping tax cuts without considering the fiscal impact on revenue risk damaging vital community services. State legislatures and advocates should propose and support the implementation of tax structures that allow for investment in communities. Governments should resist making sweeping tax cuts for individuals and instead increase financial support for education, infrastructure, human services, etc. Some states have built upon progressive income tax structures by creating additional tax brackets on the highest earners, bringing in additional revenue to state programs and services.

*Focus support on local economies.*

State governments and leaders should focus efforts on building support for small businesses, startups, and companies that have the capacity to create new jobs. Governments that spend a lot of time attempting to attract large companies to their state risk neglecting local economies and losing out on opportunities to strengthen and build a diverse pool of businesses across their state.
WORKSHOPS

The afternoon workshops at the Shriver Summit: The Future of Justice were divided into two tracks: Framing Your Work and The Next Generation of Advocates. Workshop participants discussed how the current political and legal landscape guides their approach to their work on national, state, and local levels, and how that framework can lead national advocacy forward.
STRUCTURAL RACIALIZATION

Panelists
Kate Walz, Interim Vice President of Advocacy, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Merf Ehman, Executive Director, Columbia Legal Services
Patty Hernandez, Senior Attorney, Advocates for Basic Legal Equity (ABLE)
Moderated by Kimberly Merchant, Racial Justice Network Director, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

The Issue
Structural racialization provides a framework for understanding the institutional and public policies that, whether intentionally or not, create and perpetuate fundamental barriers to economic and social equality for persons and communities of color and opportunities for white individuals and communities. This workshop stressed the importance of using a race-equity lens when engaging in poverty advocacy and provided an overview of concepts and tools useful in structural racialization analysis.

Discussion
The fight against racism is at the heart of the fight against poverty. For anti-poverty advocates, employing a structural racialization analysis is critical to identifying and remedying racial inequities that lead to poverty.

Kimberly Merchant opened by outlining four levels of racialization: individual (or internal), interpersonal, institutional, and structural. Advocates have two primary mechanisms for mitigating racism along these levels: using psychological de-biasing tools and practices to reduce an individual’s cognitive biases, and identifying decision points in a system that places power in the hands of few and intervening in the systems to promote a more equitable distribution of resources.

Patty Hernandez shared a personal experience and internalized struggle navigating the education system as a young Latina American woman. She outlined various critical points in her journey, detailing where interpersonal interactions with biased individual actors, policies, and structures precluded her and other people of color from accessing opportunities for academic and professional advancement.

Through a story about her partnership with public housing residents in East Chicago, Indiana, Kate Walz discussed how applying a race-equity lens to her practice was essential in enabling her to identify root causes of inequity and pursue more effective remedies with her clients of color. Local residents of a lead-ridden private housing complex had been offered substandard interventions by the city and were virtually neglected by the state. Residents

Equipping Advocates to Pursue Race Equity

The fight against racism is at the heart of the fight against poverty in America. The Shriver Center’s Racial Justice Training Institute (RJTI) is a groundbreaking national leadership program, rooted in a commitment to race equity as an integral and essential part of anti-poverty advocacy. Entering its fifth year, with guidance from a diverse array of faculty and coaches, RJTI has equipped 160 advocates, representing 81 organizations in 28 states, with the resources to understand and address issues surrounding race and implicit bias. RJTI alums learn to ground their advocacy, legal aid, or community organizing work in the affirmative advancement of racial equity. Through RJTI, the Shriver Center is building a growing network of equal justice advocates committed to advancing a coordinated racial justice advocacy agenda. As race equity is a central component of our mission, the Shriver Center’s advocacy team is committed to applying a racial equity lens to their work in dismantling the structural racism deeply embedded within this country.
were given public housing vouchers outside of their community, and no provisions were made to have their housing crisis rectified by accountable parties. Walz’s analysis on both institutional and structural racialization refocused and amplified the impact of her clients’ case, enabling them to secure a declaration of a state of emergency and acquire relocation assistance under Title VI and Title VIII.

Advocates have a common tendency to conflate serving people of color with engagement in racial justice work. Merf Ehman called on advocates to recognize that they are working in an “inherently racist system with racist standards.” She emphasized that race-equity work involves explicitly taking strides to dismantle and disrupt the systems and policies that disproportionately perpetuate poverty, discrimination, and disparities for people of color. She discussed a variety of steps that legal advocacy organizations need to take in order to equip their staff to effectively advance racial justice and ensure that their organizations are internally aligned with their race-equity values.

Advocates should also acknowledge that white ally organizations are often more readily heard. Panelists highlighted the importance of pushing people of color to the fore and discouraging predominately white organizations from using victories as opportunities for visibility and recognition.

Other panelists offered insights into how to cultivate inclusion through race-equity advocacy and mentioned the tools and resources available through the Shriver Center’s Racial Justice Training Institute as being particularly useful in these endeavors. Panelists emphasized the vital need to engage in race-equity dialogues with a willingness to learn and a sense of humility.

**Recommendations**

**Cultivate inclusion in the external work.**

Advocates should develop a thorough understanding of the history of the communities they are serving when engaging in race-equity work. When input is being gathered and decisions are being made, ask, “Who is missing from the room?” to ensure that all affected populations are included. Advocates should also be mindful of the black/white binary racial narrative. “People of color” is an assimilationist term that can impair advocates from recognizing and addressing the unique needs of individual and racially diverse communities of color.
Align an organization’s internal culture with its external work.
Establish a protocol around conducting a race-equity analysis that identifies opportunities to challenge structurally racialized practices and policies within the organization and through external advocacy. Practically, this requires an analysis of internal policies around hiring, onboarding, promotion, and retention with a race-equity lens. Advocacy organizations should also adopt a restorative-transformative justice approach to resolving conflict that includes accountability measures and allows individuals to exercise some power to respond to grievances when they occur.

Build capacity within the organization to address race equity.
This may involve hiring a race-equity director and consistently allocating staff time to participate in regular race-equity capacity building and engagement. Creating spaces, such as racial identity caucuses and affinity groups, where individuals can explicitly and communally process and address structural racism, internal or implicit bias, and white privilege gives advocates an opportunity to address race within their organizations.
ADVANCING POLICY THROUGH JOURNALISM AND COMMUNITY STORYTELLING

Panelists
Greg Kaufman, Editor-in-Chief, Talk Poverty
Yana Kunichoff, Investigative Journalist, City Bureau
Lauren Cross, Reporter, The Northwest Indiana Times
Melissa Sanchez, Reporter, ProPublica Illinois

Moderated by Ambar Mentor-Truppa, Vice President of Communications, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

The Issue
Journalists are often called upon to hold people in positions of power accountable and to inform the public on important issues, particularly public policies that are complex and highly contested. Advocates and policy experts can be a key resource for journalists to uncover injustice and understand what policies mean for the millions of people they will affect. Journalists and advocates are especially important for people living in poverty, who are often forgotten in public discourse and shut out of rooms where decisions that shape their lives are made.

Discussion
Advocates and journalists find themselves in a political environment marked by unprecedented attacks on the media and particularly high levels of hostility toward people experiencing poverty and people of color. Panelists discussed how they are approaching their work in this environment while continuing to lift up the stories of low-income communities and the policies that affect their lives.

Greg Kaufman explained that his objective is to speak directly to the public and to teach and enlighten people who may not know much about poverty about policy issues and solutions. Kaufman noted that his main audience is white progressives, who often talk about structural racialization without understanding the deliberate policy choices that have led to racial disparities.

Nikole Hannah-Jones observed that the current political climate can actually make it more complicated to tell stories about entrenched issues of race equity and injustice. Ironically, during the Obama administration, many editors and news consumers believed we were living in a post-racial society and had less interest in stories about the intentionality of policies that perpetuate segregation and discrimination. Conversely, the open racism of the Trump administration gives these stories a villain but makes it harder to explain the history and impact of long-standing policy choices. To help readers better understand how we arrived here, Hannah-Jones urged journalists to weave personal stories of people
experiencing poverty and discrimination into stories about policies and their history. She warned against telling personal stories in isolation of the history that underpins individuals’ circumstances, because that can serve to confirm false narratives (e.g., the narrative that individuals can escape poverty if they just work harder or make better choices).

The goals of journalists and advocates may align, but they are not always the same. Journalists work to tell stories, while advocates work to get their clients justice. Lauren Cross shared her experience working with the Shriver Center to tell the stories of residents of the West Calumet Housing Complex in East Chicago, Indiana. Cross’s series of investigative reports on the housing authority’s and other officials’ response to the environmental crisis in East Chicago, combined with advocacy work by the residents, the Shriver Center, and others, led to improved outcomes for the tenants and exposed the systemic racism that led to the siting of the public housing development where a lead refinery once sat. Yana Kunichoff, a Chicago-based investigative journalist, spoke about working on parallel investigative tracks with Shriver Center advocates to expose failures to adequately train and supervise school resource officers in the Chicago Public Schools. Kunichoff’s Chicago Reader story told the story of Darren Wright, a school resource officer who killed a student while he was off duty, but was still allowed to work in the school. The Shriver Center’s research and subsequent report uncovered a lack oversight or accountability for school resource officers’ actions that causes students to be unnecessarily swept into the criminal justice system.

Relationship building and cultural competence are important. Melissa Sanchez explained how critical community groups are to her work with immigrant communities. She has observed growing fear and hesitation among immigrants to come out and tell their stories, and she stressed how important it is to pay attention to ethnic media and speak the language of the community. She also noted the responsibility of journalists to share information with community members.

The panelists closed with some thoughts on the state of journalism and how the struggles that news media face in the digital era affect coverage of poverty and race. Sanchez and Hannah-Jones spoke about the importance of diversity in the newsroom. Emerging models for nonprofit and public interest journalism were lauded. Kaufman noted the importance of local journalists and freelancers who are interviewing the people living in poverty and making sure their voices are heard.
Recommendations

**Build relationships with key journalists.**
Advocates should use the media strategically and build relationships with local journalists who share their agenda. Policymakers pay attention to local media. Strong press relations and strategic use of storytelling in the media are important tools for advocates as part of their work.

**Use journalism to tell your clients’ stories.**
Journalists know how to tell stories that will pique the public’s interest in your policy agenda. Help them to find the people and communities that are affected by the policies you seek to change and to understand the systemic causes of poverty and racial inequity.

**Support your local news media.**
Local and nonprofit media have a critical role to play in holding people in power accountable. Through storytelling, journalists humanize the impact of complex policies on people and communities.
COMMUNITY LAWYERING

Panelists
Antoinette Dozier, Senior Attorney, Western Center on Poverty Law
Emily Coffey, Staff Attorney, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Akeeshea Daniels, community leader and former resident of the West Calumet Housing Complex in East Chicago, Indiana
Anita Earl, Executive Director, Southern Coalition for Social Justice
Moderated by Ellen Hemley, Vice President of Advocate Resources and Training, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

The Issue
Community lawyering is a process through which advocates combine their legal knowledge and skills to support initiatives identified by low-income communities that enhance their power. Its goal is to solve significant community problems while building community leadership and institutions that can continue to exert power after the current campaign ends. In practice, community lawyering is harder than it sounds. Advocates must engage in a range of activities that run contrary to their traditional legal training, while drawing deeply from their legal expertise. Panelists in this workshop discussed what advocates really mean when they talk about community lawyering, and how lawyers practically exercise community lawyering tools to advocate for and alongside communities.

Discussion
Community lawyering involves engaging directly with people impacted by particular problems and working with them to develop solutions. Antoinette Dozier noted that community lawyering is about building “relational power” instead of “unilateral power.” Unilateral power is power that is imposed on others. For example, courts exercise unilateral power when issuing rulings that require individuals or institutions to do something they would otherwise not do. This kind of power is limited, in that court decisions can be overruled or new laws repealed. Community lawyering involves building relational power, the kind of power used in community change processes. It is the power that comes when community people know about and learn from one another, identify common concerns and develop the will and motivation to take action together. This power is more deeply rooted in a community’s consciousness, and not quickly undone by power changing hands at the top.

Dozier shared the story of a California advocacy campaign challenging automatic driver’s license suspensions for unpaid tickets, a practice that disproportionately affected low-income people of color. Initially, a coalition of lawyers and legal aid organizations achieved a significant win when the Governor announced a statewide amnesty program which reduced traffic fines
by fifty to eighty percent based on income. However, consulting after the fact with affected parties, they realized there were still a significant number of people – primarily people of color – who still could not afford to pay off outstanding fines and thus could not get their licenses reinstated. While the policy win helped many, it did not reduce racial disparities in license suspensions or provide a remedy that helped everyone. Had the coalition worked directly with affected communities from the beginning, they could have come up with a more far reaching and equitable solution. In addressing this problem, the coalition committed to build relationships with affected Californians and invited them to lead the work by testifying at hearings, leading and setting meetings, and preparing for meetings with politicians. Involving the community on the base level leaves more capacity for lawyers to do work that non-lawyers cannot do. They also do not have to waste time trying to seek out clients – with a community lawyering and advocacy reputation, clients will know to come to them.

For Emily Coffey, community lawyering was essential to beginning work in East Chicago, Indiana, after the residents of a public housing complex discovered that their homes had been poisoned by lead for decades. At the beginning of their involvement in East Chicago, Shriver Center advocates held community listening sessions to find out what residents were being told about the lead in the soil near the West Calumet Housing Complex, and what they wanted to do moving forward. This early engagement informed the future work that occurred between advocacy groups and the West Calumet Housing Complex Residents. The advocates took time to visit homes, meet families, and listen to what they had to say. This was essential to discovering the root of the problems and devising a plan to move forward toward a permanent solution. Coffey did her best to ensure everyone in the community was included and felt comfortable in decision-making processes on every level. She and her colleagues supported the community and built up community leadership even after their immediate legal needs were met. Today, Akeeshea Daniels and other former residents of the West Calumet Housing Complex and Shriver Center advocates share a relationship fostered by mutual effort and trust that cannot be broken.

When Anita Earl of the Southern Coalition for Social Justice (SCSJ) worked with The Beloved Community Center to improve police relations in Greensboro, North Carolina, it was important to understand how the organization’s history of activism informed its current organizing work. The SCSJ staff visited Greensboro to learn about issues to address...
together to improve relations between minorities and law enforcement. Through listening and working together, they decided to file a Title VI complaint instead of a lawsuit to challenge police practices—a strategy that worked for the community and met their needs, while also requiring an attorney’s expertise at navigating complex bureaucracy.

**Recommendations**

**Lawyers cannot be the star of the show.**
Lawyers, especially legal advocates who advocate for marginalized communities, should embrace their role as a player in someone else’s fight. They must listen to what the community tells them, and work with them to achieve goals they have identified. It’s important to help the community grow leaders and group consciousness that exists long after the legal work is over.

**Show up.**
It is easy to identify a social problem in a community, but harder to convince community leaders to put themselves at risk to work with advocates to solve them. Part of community lawyering is engaging with communities, earning their trust, and gaining a familiarity with the community’s end goal and an understanding of how to get there together.

**Draw power from the community.**
Community lawyering takes a lot of energy and determination. Key to staying motivated and optimistic is to stay grounded in the movement that the community and advocates are working to build. Rely on organizers, community members, and leaders as a part of a team working toward a larger campaign.

**Recognize a win for the community.**
Some community lawyers consider themselves “general counsel for social change movements.” This means being available to serve a community group’s legal needs even when not necessarily part of a larger social change campaign. Often, what would be a win for an attorney—such as winning a lawsuit or passing a new law—is not what a community wants or needs. Understand that achievement is measured not by the number of cases won, but a deeper and more sustained impact that includes building the community’s sense of its own power through targeted, sometimes shorter term wins.

**Build more capacity for community lawyering.**
In order to engage successfully in community lawyering, legal aid and other advocacy organizations, as well as their funders, need to recognize the impact and importance of community lawyering efforts and provide the training, time, and resources necessary to engage in this critical practice.
THE FUTURE OF GIVING IN AN ERA OF CRISIS

Panelists
Candice Jones, President & CEO, Public Welfare Foundation
Betsy Krebs, Vice President of the Poverty Program, JPB Foundation
Valerie Chang, Managing Director of Programs, MacArthur Foundation
Grace Hou, President, Woods Fund Chicago
Moderated by Joseph Antolín, Executive Director, Asset Funders Network and Governing Board Member, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

The Issue
National and local foundations provide crucial institutional support for the national anti-poverty agenda in the United States. Every foundation is diverse in its goals and priorities, and each foundation is responding to the new political context in its own way. What issue areas have foundations chosen to fund in the present political climate, and how have their interests have shifted since the 2016 elections? How do funders balance the desire to create systemic change with the need to support work that responds to immediate threats to economic justice and civil liberties? This panel explored these issues and how foundations are uniquely positioned to be thought leaders and organizers on global and national issues such as poverty.

Discussion
Philanthropies are strategic thought leaders in the anti-poverty field because they hold a position of authority and are able to connect ideas and trends to the work of organizations on the ground. They can frame issues and messaging to inform systemic change throughout the United States. In this post-election period, many local and national entities are thinking about their role as funders, and some foundations are becoming more interested in investing additional resources. With the new political climate, philanthropies are faced with the possibility of greater public-sector funding gaps in the anti-poverty field and possible threats to the work of their grantees and community partners.

In general, the panelists agreed that foundations have not found it necessary to pivot from their original funding tactics post-election, but they have learned to be more flexible in their response to crises. Valerie Chang suggested that the MacArthur Foundation has become more responsive in certain cases, but that overall the election created a broader opportunity for the foundation to adjust its course for the future. The 2016 election pushed some foundations to find ways to build rapid response grants into their existing portfolios. Betsy Krebs shared that the JPB Foundation has mainly stayed the course in the new political climate and kept to its primary funding goals and areas. Krebs said that JPB has asked grantees what they needed, strengthened their funding when necessary, and created more rapid response grants in recent months.

Preparing for a New Era of Advocacy
In the last year, the Shriver Center has evaluated how to more effectively deliver justice in the future with the support and leadership of the communities we support. We have restructured our advocacy department to ensure that we continue to play a vital role in key fights effectively and powerfully.

We are focusing on issues that have the greatest impact for people living in poverty. Our core issue areas of economic justice, health justice, housing justice, and community justice, all with a racial justice lens, will continue to explore poverty across systems.

The Shriver Center’s advocacy practice—built on litigation, policy advocacy, and multistate advocacy—provides a multifaceted approach to ending poverty and racial injustice. Through litigation, we will combat mounting state and federal threats while also tackling systemic racism and discrimination head on. Through aggressive policy advocacy, we will uncover systemic inequities and create new pathways for opportunity through legislation and system changes. We will harness the litigation and policy expertise of our in-house advocates with the power of our growing networks of state advocates across the country to support multistate advocacy.
Data is an essential tool for foundations to define and fill in the facts when new situations or issues arise, especially in this digital age. The panelists acknowledged that data and research are central tools for most foundations in the current political climate. Chang noted that the **MacArthur Foundation** has recently placed a greater emphasis on investing in independent journalism and media to inform and engage the American people.

The question of how to engage communities is often at the forefront of funders’ minds. Foundations to look to grantees to see what is needed on the ground. **Grace Hou** suggested that inequities are the byproduct of system failures and that individuals who are most impacted by systems need to have a voice in the progress being made. Consequently, the **Woods Fund** places a special focus on supporting community organization and community-driven solutions. Cities and states are labs of innovation and it is important to look at the tough questions, especially regarding poverty, and bring together a diverse set of allies to drive solution-oriented change.

Though the primary goal for many foundations is to support and craft long-term solutions, immediate threats are bound to arise in the process of creating systemic change. **Candice Jones** of the **Public Welfare Foundation** noted that solutions-oriented problem-solving can be difficult to engage in because there is rarely a consensus about the core issues in any given field. Policy transformation is a long game with many moving parts, and intentionality is always important in the work of national and local foundations. Because systemic change often takes decades to achieve, foundations need to be strategic and responsive at the same time. It is important to get the voices of people in poverty out to the public and for foundations to be thought organizers and vehicles for the work of their grantees.

**Recommendations**

**Be storytellers.**

Foundations and philanthropies need to tell the story of the work being done on the ground by their grantees. Measuring impact along the way is crucial to this process. When organizations take foundations on the journey with them, funders are better able to partner with them and supporters on-the-ground work, especially when problems arise.

**Systemic change is a long-term game.**

Generating systemic change and policy transformation often takes decades to achieve. Inspiration should be drawn from the stories of organizations on the ground and the high-level and long-term adjustments that they are able to create in collaboration with foundations.
Foundations cannot replace public sector funding.
National and local foundations cannot and should not be expected or relied on to replace public sector funding. Even in times of upheaval, foundations are not able to replace the funds or services provided by government. Instead, funders act as accomplices to organizations doing the work on the ground. Together, individuals, foundations, and organizations are able to address crucial national issues such as poverty. The first step in this process is to have a clear vision of where the process will lead.

Data & research are critical tools.
In the digital age, research and data are indispensable. Funders are often able to act as thought organizers for advocacy organizations and by offering research, policy advice, and help filling in the facts of a given situation. Findings from data gathering and research can inform a more objective conversation about the issues that concern both foundations and their grantees.

Maintain flexibility in strategy and funding.
Foundations should talk about strategy in a more flexible way in order to be both strategic in the long-term and responsive to present concerns. Foundations should also be open to more partnerships to align their efforts. To foster transformation and create a community of learning, funders must execute strongly and forge collaborations among organizations. Funders are not solely a revenue source; they also have an important role to play as strategists and thought-leaders who shape the conversation on poverty throughout the country.