Online Introduction to Creating Justice in a Multiracial Democracy

New Will for Evidence-Based Policies That Work

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Contents

Creating Justice is part of an evolving movement to heal America's divided society by creating new will to scale up proven, evidence-based, common-sense solutions that work for the poor, near poor, working class, and middle class.

The hard copy *Creating Justice* book contains a brief Introduction. But here we present the longer, complete online Introduction. We draw on the 36 chapters in *Creating Justice* and add more perspective. We first discuss the 2024 presidential campaign. Then we take lessons learned from the campaign and combine them with the vision and legacy of the 1968 presidential Kerner Commission to frame the future policy we believe is needed to reduce economic inequality, poverty, and racial injustice in America.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN AND ELECTION[1]

The 2024 presidential campaign and its media coverage spent almost no time on how federal, state, and local programs need to be based on facts, science, and evidence—not on supposition, denial, misinformation, and disinformation. There was minimal debate on how to significantly reduce misinformation and disinformation, even though the governments of a number of advanced industrial democracies have successful initiatives. No attention was paid in the 2024 campaign to proposals from citizens at the grassroots to create a federal Department of Democracy to reduce misinformation and disinformation, invest in nonprofit media, enhance civic education, develop methods of conflict resolution and create a new generation of public service programs for students and adults that carry out evidence-based policy.

There was little in the campaign and in media coverage on how to bring together the poor and the working class—people of color and whites. With misinformation and disinformation becoming more and more normalized in the United States, the media failed to give adequate attention to hateful rhetoric, vulgar expressions, and uncivil discourse—like calling Puerto Rico a "floating island of garbage," allegedly referring to armed service members as "losers," and joking about not minding if someone shot at the media. In many instances the campaign violated America's deepest moral values.

The campaign and its media coverage failed to point out in any serious way how poor, working-class, and middle-class Americans—people of color

and whites—have been exploited by the rich, the privileged, and corporations, especially since the nineteen eighties. Insufficient media attention was given to the dramatic reductions in taxes paid by the richest Americans and corporations since the Eisenhower Administration in the 1950s, and to the massive increase in wealth inequality and income inequality that resulted. The tax rate for the 400 richest Americans now is lower than the tax rate for the bottom half of income earners. Why wasn't that adequately debated—especially in light of how public opinion polls have shown that poor, working-class, and middle-class citizens are deeply concerned about the inequality? Why was little attention paid in the campaign and the media to how, in the 1960s, corporate CEOs received about twenty times as much as workers—while today they receive over 320 times as much? Why was there little debate over how the median wealth of white American families is about $188,200 while the median wealth of Black families is about $24,000?

The 2024 presidential campaign and its media coverage did not remind citizens of how trickle-down economic tax breaks to the rich and corporations, rationalized by the neoliberal myth of market fundamentalism, were responsible for the Great Recession of 2008. The myth of trickle-down market fundamentalism has been called "zombie economics" because tax breaks for the rich and corporations keep coming back again and again in spite of their documented past failures. The 2024 campaign and the media paid insufficient attention to zombie economics, even though such policy punishes the working class and the poor—people of color as well as whites. As a result of the 2024 election, zombie economics will emerge again.

During the campaign, most media failed to put in perspective misinformation and disinformation about the economy. Federal policy created full employment, economic growth higher than most industrialized democracies and a stock market boom—even though there was unacceptable inflation, in part because of corporate price gouging. Additionally, the most reliable evidence is that, for the most part, immigrants did not take jobs from Blacks and have not been criminals.

In the election, working-class citizens voted against inflation but, in effect, many also voted for tax breaks for the rich and corporations.

Fortunately, in recent years, a new economic mindset has been evolving. It is bubble up, not trickle down. The policy gives priority to low income, working-class and middle-class families. It is designed to bring manufacturing jobs back to America and is woven into new industrial and antitrust policy. There is some bipartisan support, but the presidential campaign did not host a much-needed debate on how to refine bubble-up policy for most Americans, rather than to continue trickle-down policy for the privileged, the rich and corporations.

The 2024 campaign and media coverage had little to say about how K–12 school segregation has increased since the 1970s, reading and math achievement gaps between whites and people of color have increased, absenteeism and the school to prison pipeline have grown, and school vouchers have failed based on careful evaluations, for example, by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. There was almost no dialogue on reauthorizing federal support for proven,

grassroots mentoring and tutoring to close the school achievement gap, reauthorizing the child tax credit legislation that reduced child poverty by half during the pandemic but then ignobly was not reauthorized, scaling up the early education and community school programs that have been rigorously evaluated as successful, reversing the national teacher shortage which grew worse during the pandemic, and reforming K–12 school financing based on the life status of students rather than on local property taxes. There was much talk by and about billionaires, but little interest in teachers serving the working class and the poor.

Neither the presidential candidates nor the media seriously discussed how evidence-based partnerships between police and nonprofit community organizations in low-income and working-class neighborhoods already have been demonstrated to work and need to be scaled up to reduce crime and increase trust. There was little discussion of or media coverage on how civilian gun ownership has increased from 80 million in the 1960s to over 400 million today and how, as a result of two presidential candidate assassination attempts in 2024, bipartisan legislative action has obviously been in order to again ban assault weapons.

There was scant campaign and media coverage on the failure of the nation to implement the Fair Housing Act of 1968, supply housing vouchers to all those eligible, and address the availability of affordable housing for working-class and low-income families. There was no discussion of how the white home ownership rate is 67% higher than the Black homeownership rate, 45% higher than for Latinos and 20% higher than in the Asian community. There was no debate or serious media coverage of how trickle-down "opportunity" zones and "empowerment" zones have been evaluated as failing in low-income neighborhoods. But as a result of the election, such failed initiatives again are being given priority.

In 2024, candidates and the media paid insufficient attention to how other advanced democracies have outperformed the United States in almost every measure of health and well-being. There was no acknowledgment in the campaign of how poor people in America can expect to die 12 to 13 years sooner than rich people. There was insufficient discussion of the importance of vaccines. Nor was there meaningful debate on how the United States is the only industrialized democracy without guaranteed universal health coverage for all citizens.

The 2024 presidential campaign did not acknowledge how issues of both class and race are in play when implementing economic, education, criminal justice, housing and public health policy and how that is why, before he was assassinated in 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was seeking to reframe the civil rights movement as an economic justice movement.

The 2024 presidential campaign did not articulate a strategy for how to generate "new will" in our divided America to scale up those policies that have proven to work, and to finance by scaling down what doesn't work. In terms of new will, for example, how can America return to President John Kennedy's vision for what we can do for our country? And how can universities create new degree programs that train students, in practical, common-sense ways, to partner with nonprofit organizations in poor and working-class neighborhoods to solve problems in their communities?

THE KERNER VISION AND FUTURE POLICY

Given these failures in the 2024 election campaign and in media coverage, future American policy for identifying what works and creating new will to scale it up needs, we believe, to be inspired and guided by the 1968 Kerner Commission. In response to disturbances in over 150 cities in the 1960s, President Lyndon Johnson formed the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. The Commission was chaired by then-Governor Otto Kerner of Illinois. Most of the commissioners were privileged white men. Yet the Commission concluded in 1968 that America was heading toward "two societies, black and white, separate and unequal" and warned against white racism. The Commission concluded, "It is time to make good the promises of American democracy to all citizens—urban and rural, white and Black, Spanish surname, American Indian and every minority group."[2]

It still is time. The recommendations in *Creating Justice* are long run, focusing on the birthday of America in 2026 and into the next decade. We offer a baseline against which to measure progress—or lack of progress—over the years to come. As with all Americans concerned about the future of our democracy and the reduction of inequality, poverty and racial injustice, we will continue to monitor those in power and communicate the common-sense priorities of people at the grassroots on how to reform the system, now increasingly dominated by billionaires.

As we monitor and assess, we will remember how both Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Senator Robert F. Kennedy endorsed the Kerner Commission Report in 1968—and then they were assassinated.

The Eisenhower Foundation periodically updates the Kerner Commission Report, and *Creating Justice* is the current update. Black Americans were disproportionately involved in the urban protests of the 1960s, and so the Kerner Report focused its recommendations on them. We do the same in *Creating Justice*—but, also following the Kerner Commission's respect for all people of color, we have included chapters in *Creating Justice* by and for Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. In addition, our publisher, Teachers College Press, is accompanying *Creating Justice* with republication of the original 1968 Kerner Report.

Why is it important to continue to update the Kerner Commission? Surely we can recognize progress since the 1960s—like people of color as president and vice president, a Native American cabinet secretary, 21 Latino cabinet members, the significant increase in Black and Latino elected officials, and the expansion of the Black and Latino middle classes. Yet in many areas there has been no or insufficient progress since the Kerner Commission—while in other ways things have gotten worse. What are some examples?

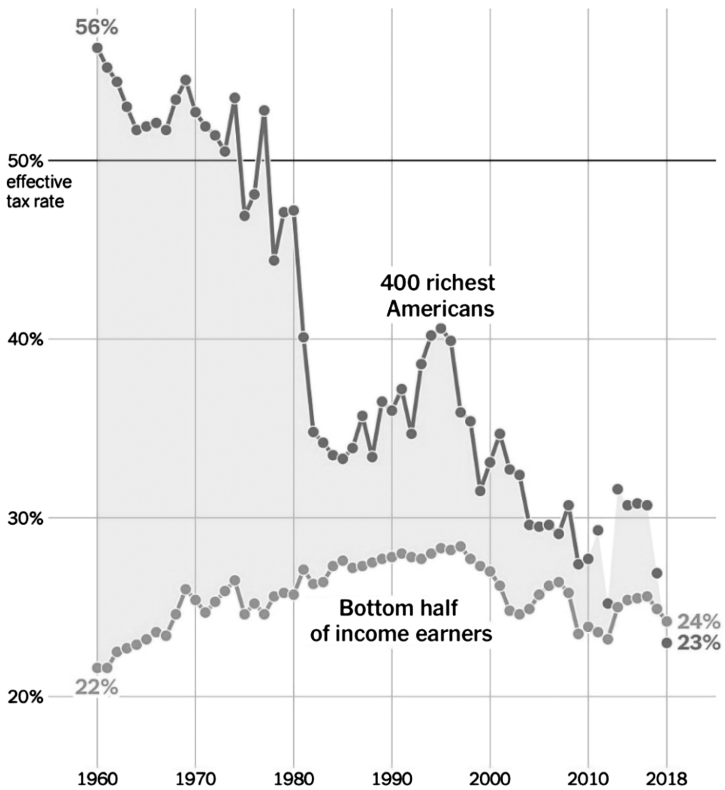
As we have pointed out, wealth and income inequality has soared since Kerner. Today, a Black family with a college-educated head of household is, on average, less wealthy than a white family whose head did not graduate from high school. And the median Black household income has been roughly 60% of the median white household income since the early 1970s.[3] The increase in wealth and

income inequality has been coterminous with the dramatic reductions in taxes paid by the richest Americans and by corporations—as Figure I.1 and Figure I.2 strikingly show.[4]

As estimated by official federal government poverty measures, there has been little sustained improvement in the poverty rate from Kerner to the present—with the rate moving up and down over the decades, through recessions and boom years and through the administrations of both major parties. (However, when one includes all cash and noncash benefits provided to low-income households, the poverty rate has fallen since the Kerner Commission.) In the United States, a larger share of working-age people (aged 18 to 65) lives in poverty than in any other nation belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).[5]

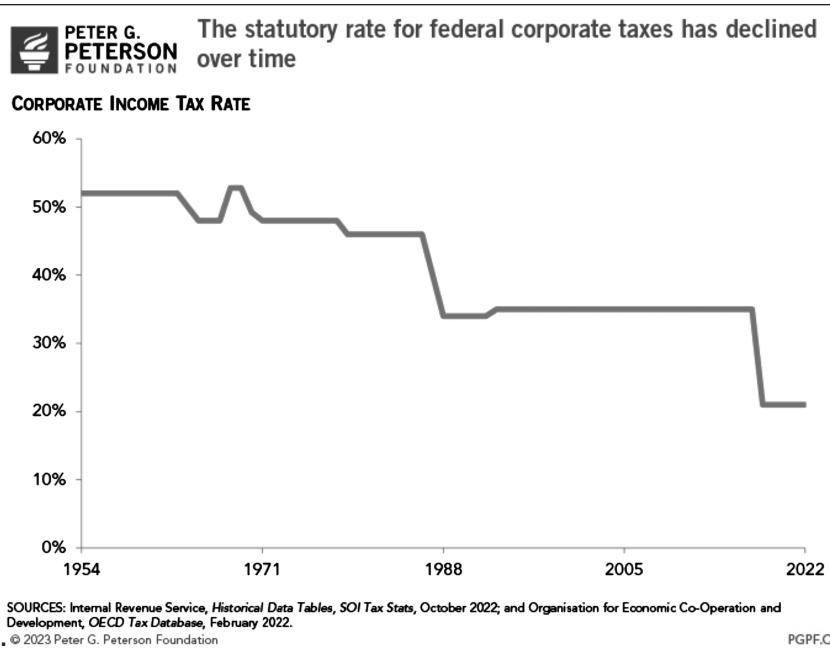
Corporate opposition to unions has had a powerful impact over the decades. The private sector union membership rate was 30% during the late 1960s and is 10% today, even though 68% of Americans approve of unions.[6]

Figure I.1. The Falling Tax Rate for the Richest Americans



Source: Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman • Note: Tax rates shown include levies paid at all levels of government. Government transfers such as Social Security benefits have not been subtracted.

Figure I.2 The Corporate Income Tax Rate, 1954–2022



Hourly wages for Blacks have been persistently lower than for whites since the Kerner Commission. Unemployment rates have been consistently double for Blacks compared to whites since the late 1970s.[7]

In discussing the 2024 election above, we have pointed to negative trends since Kerner in education (like the resegregation of schools), housing (like the crisis in the availability of affordable housing), and public health (like the failure to provide universal health coverage). In criminal justice since Kerner, beyond lack of police reform there has been a dramatic increase in mass incarceration that disproportionately targets people of color. We have a carceral environment in which one in three Black male children in America can be expected to spend time in jail or prison, a reported national homicide rate that is almost the same today as it was in the 1960s, and continued endemic violence in many poor urban neighborhood. Other illustrations of lack of progress or negative trends since Kerner include the white supremacist insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, the campaign to suppress voting rights, the politicalization of the U.S. Supreme Court and the failure to reform the Electoral College, gerrymandering, campaign finance and the U.S. Senate filibuster. An underlying theme has been denial by some naysayers that these failures even exist.[8,9]

Given the evidence, then, *Creating Justice* is about identifying what works and beginning to frame the new political will needed to scale it up.

Part I

WHAT WORKS—AND WHAT DOESN'T WORK

Table I.1 summarizes what works and what doesn't work among policies of relevance to the priorities of the 1968 Kerner Commission and the priorities needed today. We draw here from the recommendations on economic, education, crime prevention, criminal justice, youth development, housing, and public health policy from authors in this volume and also weave in other expertise on what works.

In our view, the evidence-based policies presented here will significantly reduce racial injustice, economic inequality, and poverty in America.

Table I. 1. A Summary of What Doesn't Work and What Does

What Doesn't Work	What Works
Basing policy on ideology, misinformation, and disinformation.	Basing policy on evidence and science.
Failing to recognize that Kerner is about both class and race.	Recognizing that the Kerner legacy is about both class and race.
Reducing taxes on the rich and corporations.	Increasing taxes on the rich and corporations.
Believing in the myth of market fundamentalism.	Exposing the myth of market fundamentalism.
Pursuing trickle-down policy that benefits the rich and corporations.	Moving forward with bubble-up policy that benefits the poor, workers, and the middle class.
Returning to zombie economics that build on past failures.	Continuing new industrial policy that builds on Franklin Roosevelt and John Maynard Keynes.
Claiming that trickle-down enterprise, empowerment, and opportunity zones work.	Scaling up nonprofit community development corporations to lead place-based economic and community development in the spirit of Franklin Thomas, Jane Jacobs, Geno Baroni, and Pablo Eisenberg.
Disempowering labor unions.	Empowering labor unions.

(*continued*)

Table I. 1. (*continued*)

What Doesn't Work	What Works
Reducing child tax credits.	Increasing child tax credits and legislating paid family leave.
Eliminating affirmative action.	Continuing reframed affirmative action.
Lobbying for private school vouchers.	Prioritizing public K–12 schools.
Failing to provide preschool to all eligible children.	Scaling up preschool for all eligible children.
Failing to continue investments in mentoring and tutoring that close the pandemic-created achievement gap between students of color and whites.	Continuing those investments.
Failing to acknowledge that school teachers should be valued more than hedge and equity fund billionaires.	Significantly increasing teacher salaries.
Failing to reform police culture in response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Sonya Massey.	Reforming police culture and significantly expanding evidence-based nonprofit organization and police partnerships.
Ending the present decline in the prison population.	Accelerating the present decline in the prison population.
Failing to address endemic violence in America.	Acting to prevent endemic violence in poor urban communities.
Failing to act on guns.	Banning assault weapons and limiting handguns.
Failing to implement the Fair Housing Act of 1968.	Significantly increasing low-income rental housing and providing housing vouchers to all eligible families.
Continuing the present public health system.	Reforming the public health system, giving priority to prevention, and providing adequate health insurance for all.
Continuing to exploit citizens and denying the exploitation.	Reversing denial and exploitation. Making the privileged uncomfortable.
Failing to recognize the need for moral fusion.	Investing in moral fusion and speaking with Birmingham-jail-like outrage.
Restricting voter rights.	Expanding voter rights.
Resisting partnerships among the poor, workers, Gen Z, women, and people of color.	Strengthening those partnerships.

What Doesn't Work	What Works
Ignoring the need for media reform. Lying—and allowing misinformation/disinformation to spread further.	Scaling up model programs that reduce misinformation/disinformation. Investing in nonprofit media.
Failing to challenge universities and students to do more for their country.	Encouraging universities and students to better ask what they can do for their country.
Failing to create new university degree programs that heal our divided society and partner with nonprofit organizations.	Creating such commonsense degree programs and community outreach partnerships.
Failing to recognize the importance of the visual and performing arts in motivating "new will" to scale up what works.	Embracing how the arts can better create "new will" and build on the examples of William Barber, Hank Willis Thomas, and Marc Bamuthi Joseph.

In what follows, we discuss in more depth what works and what doesn't work in economic, education, criminal justice, housing, and public health policy.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Economic policy was the highest priority of the Kerner Commission.

Even with its many privileged white members, the Commission recognized that, to counter centuries of laws, norms, and institutions that gave less opportunity to people of color than to white Americans, significant, scaled up, direct government intervention and legislative action was needed. The future, said the Commission, required "a commitment to national action—compassionate, massive, and sustained, backed by the resources of the most powerful and the richest nation on this earth."[10]

This was a Franklin Roosevelt–style commitment—to expand and fund the visible hand of governance and not rely on the invisible hand of the market, which had failed the nation in the 1920s and 1930s. President Roosevelt recognized there was little evidence that "small government" yields the best economic outcomes.[11]

These priorities helped make the 1968 Kerner Report a Bantam paperback bestseller in 1968. And for a few years there was some progress on Kerner-supported economic policy.

The Big Myth

Yet in the 1970s, Kerner priorities began to fade for many reasons—including stagflation and wars on crime and drugs designed to contain the rights of people of color. America experienced the full emergence of what Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway in Chapter 3 document as the big myth of market fundamentalism,

beginning in the 1980s. The myth embraced trickle-down, deregulated economic policy, primacy to profit-driven private sector companies, receptiveness to private equity and hedge funds, lower taxes for corporations and the rich, and hostility to labor unions. The trickle-down market fundamentalist myth lasted for 5 decades across the administrations of both major American political parties. The myth helped block Kerner civil rights priorities like full employment mandates and higher minimum wages. At the same time, the belief that corporations exist solely to increase the profits of shareholders resulted in corporations having a stronger imperative to cut wages, benefits, and jobs.[12]

To Oreskes and Conway, much of the myth that market fundamentalism and "corporate social responsibility" can solve Kerner-defined problems is based on corporate propaganda, fringe academic theory. and questionable morality. Historically, the lack of morality was perhaps best illustrated when a prominent trickle-down academic advised the government of South Africa to worry less about ending apartheid and concentrate more on expanding markets. It also was illustrated by a British prime minister who asserted, without evidence, that there was "no such thing as society." All of this may have influenced one otherwise mostly naysaying American candidate for president to label market fundamentalism "voodoo" economics. The term used by Nobel Laureate Paul Krugman is "zombie" economics—because policies proven not to work keep coming back from the dead.[13]

Evidence-Based Failure

The empirical evidence is that market fundamentalism does not work. Compared to New Deal policies, market fundamentalism did not create greater economic growth, more economic stability, or more income mobility. But it did generate dramatic increases in income and wealth inequality for people of color compared to whites.[14] These increases are exactly opposite to the recommendations of the Kerner Commission.

The failure of market fundamentalism has been most powerfully expressed in the tax rate cuts for the rich and for corporations shown in Figure I.1 and Figure I.2. Besides increasing income and wealth inequality, the tax cuts have greatly increased the federal debt, generated huge profits for large corporations and financial institutions, and created many new billionaires. But little trickled down to the poor, workers, or the middle class.[15] Evidence for trickle-down failure has been carefully documented by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.[16]

As Farah Stockman tells us, the unquestioning belief in the free market "created a globalism that funneled money to the one percent, which has used its wealth to amass political power at the expense of everyone else. It produced free trade agreements that sent too many U.S. factories to China and rescue plans after the 2008 financial crisis that bailed out Wall Street instead of Main Street."[17]

The failure of market fundamentalism also was illustrated by the 1996 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) "welfare reform" legislation. TANF work requirements, state block grants, and immigrant prohibitions radically reduced the

number of aid recipients and pushed low-income women of color, in particular, into long-term poverty. The evidence from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities evaluation was that, as a result of TANF, "the share of children below half of the poverty line rose from 2.1 percent to 3.0 percent between 1995 and 2005, and the number of children in deep poverty rose from 1.5 million to 2.2 million."[18]

Other examples of market fundamentalism initiatives that refuse to die and keep coming back have included "empowerment," "enterprise," and "opportunity" zones. Evaluation evidence from the National Bureau of Economic Research, the Urban Institute. and others have shown that tax breaks to corporations to invest in low-income neighborhoods have not attracted corporations and have not created jobs. An assessment concluded that enterprise zones "are often wasteful and tend to displace rather than create business activity."[19] On the other hand, beginning with the leadership of the Ford Foundation in the 1960s, funding to nonprofit community development corporations and related institutions has generated positively evaluated place-based success and therefore needs to be scaled up.[20]

As Felicia Wong concludes, the failure of market fundamentalism has hollowed out democracy. "As the 2008 financial crisis and the 2016 election laid bare, our economic and political systems are more fragile than we imagined."[21]

Why, then, did the myth of market fundamentalism last so long? Because monied interests benefited from it. And because an infrastructure of think tanks, economists, pundits, and media had been created to lobby for zombie trickle down, which, as a result of the 2024 election, will return again in the years to come.[22]

New Economic Policy That Invests in Workers

However, in recent years a new, more promising economic policy has begun to emerge. It is bubble up, not trickle down. It features significant Roosevelt-style government and Keynesian fiscal and monetary policy. The new frame is based on empowering the poor, the working class, and the middle class. The policy is a function of democratic values and public investment in workers.[23]

In response to the pandemic and the unemployment it created, the $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act provided direct payments and tax cuts—disproportionately to middle-class, working-class, and low-income Americans. It also extended unemployment insurance.[24]

The American Rescue Plan reduced the overall unemployment rate to around 4% over recent years. The 2023–2024 Black unemployment rate was the lowest on record. The Black–white gap (the Black rate minus the white rate) also was the lowest on record. Real wages increased faster than inflation. Low-income households experienced some of the fastest wage gains.[25]

Accompanying the full employment success, the stock market has soared while labor unions were strengthened. Even though the proportion of workers unionized is only 10%, the Pew Research Center reports that majorities of Americans continue to see union membership as a good thing for both the nation and for working people. Today, workers covered by union contracts earn on average about 10%

more than nonunionized peers, are more likely to be covered by employer health insurance and have greater access to paid vacation and paid sick days.[26]

The American Rescue Plan revived the economy faster than anyone could have imagined as America faced COVID-19 and a dramatic economic downturn. In the words of Krugman, "the U.S. economy is a remarkable success story."[27]

Beyond the full employment and the surge in the stock market, the International Monetary Fund has concluded that America's economic growth has been "remarkable vis a vis its peers." Consumer spending and business investment have been vigorous. Manufacturing construction spending has tripled since 2021.[28]

According to the World Bank, the global economy has been improving, thanks largely to the robust performance of the United States. As David Ignatius points out, "the United States is working seamlessly with an ever-closer set of allies in Europe and Asia, and our global financial, military and intelligence dominance has rarely been clearer."[29]

The pandemic hurt businesses and created unemployment. The unemployment impacted workers and low-income Americans more than people with higher incomes. Job losses then were reversed via monetary and fiscal policy. Because of the economic stimulus and the global supply chain that was interrupted by the pandemic, inflation rose in the United Sates and most other industrialized democracies. The inflation was unacceptable, but by 2024 price growth in the United States slowed significantly, and the Federal Reserve began cutting interest rates. The Fed achieved a rare "soft landing" in which inflation slowed. Public assessments of the economy eventually caught up with economic progress. The causes of the inflation were complicated, but significant numbers of observers believe that corporate greed played a role—with a surge in corporate profits notching record highs after the pandemic. The argument has been that many companies used the reopening of the economy to test how aggressively they could raise prices—for example, on groceries and gasoline. Polls showed that about 60% of voters agree that corporate price gouging has been significant.[30] In addition, 16 Nobel Prize–winning economists have predicted that a return to trickle-down market fundamentalism would again increase inflation.[31]

More effective messaging is needed to better convey to the citizenry how and why the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and Nobel Laureate Paul Krugman have called the economy a remarkable success story. There has been a gap between economic reality and public perception. The gap needs to be closed. Much of the problem reflects disinformation and misinformation on economic policy. And inadequate communication of how corporate greed helped generate inflation.

The needed economic reality check includes reminding Americans that the legislation passed to combat the pandemic is plowing billions into physical and green infrastructure—but that building the infrastructure, like bridge construction and semiconductor production, takes time.[32]

A vital component of the American Rescue Plan was the expansion of the Child Tax Credit during the pandemic. As a result, the expanded Child Tax Credit

reached 23 million children. Between 2020 and 2021, child poverty fell from about 17% to about 8%. Tragically, though, Congress let the act expire.[33]

Industrial Policy and Opportunity Youth. Industrial policy is integral to the new bubble-up economics that has been emerging. Industrial policy has been being implemented to create jobs and bring manufacturing back to America from countries like China. As part of industrial policy, the Inflation Reduction Act invested in clean energy and the CHIPS and Science Act is investing in semiconductor manufacturing in the United States, as well as in research and development. There is a need, however, to better insure that working-class and low-income Americans benefit from the jobs created by industrial policy.

While trillions of dollars have been authorized in the Investment and Jobs Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the CHIPS and Science Act, the legislation did not contain sufficient funding for job training and did not adequately address the recommendation of the Kerner Commission to create public and private jobs to empower young people of all races as contributing participants in the economy.

The Kerner Commission reported that the majority of young people involved in the protests of the mid-1960s were unemployed high school dropouts. In Chapter 9, MacArthur Award–winner Dorothy Stoneman points to unemployed high school dropouts as "opportunity youth"—because they are seeking opportunity for themselves and offering opportunity to America if we invest in them. There already are a number of nonprofit, evidence-based models for how to integrate opportunity youth into the economy. These training models need to be scaled up as integral components of industrial policy. Arguably the best-performing such model is the nonprofit YouthBuild organization, which Stoneman founded and for which she then secured federal authorizing legislation. As Stoneman explains, "Low-income 16- to 24-year-olds who left high school without a diploma enroll in YouthBuild full-time for about 10 months. They spend half their time working toward their high school equivalency in highly supportive classrooms. They spend the other half learning construction skills and playing a positive role in the community by building affordable housing for their neighbors. It is all knit together with deeply caring adults, personal and peer counseling, a stipend for their work, and a major emphasis on leadership development. At graduation, they are ready for college and/or employment."[34]

Especially with such targeting to low-income people and the working class, industrial policy holds promise as a real and lasting shift in how government views its role. Industrial policy should also include higher minimum wages, benefitting workers who have been disproportionately concentrated in low-wage jobs for generations. This is discussed by Valerie Wilson and Adewale Maye in Chapter 4. The new policy needed includes legislation to strengthen workers' rights to join unions and investments in child care and family leave.[35]

As well, new industrial policy has been building on antimonopoly and antitrust advocacy—designed to check against private and corporate domination over the public interest.[36]

Immigration. Industrial policy needs to be carried out with an awareness that the United States now is facing a dramatic labor shortfall and consequently must expand legal immigration in many geographic locations and many sectors of the economy—from construction to agriculture. We are a nation of immigrants, and they are an integral part of the American labor market.

In 2023, the immigrant share of the labor force was over 18%, a record high. Without evidence, some naysayers have claimed that immigrants are taking jobs from Black workers. But the data shows that Black workers are faring exceptionally well. The Black unemployment rate remains near historic lows, and wage gains are at all-time highs. A new analysis by the Economic Policy Institute also has demonstrated that the American economy does not have a fixed number of jobs. What we see today is a growing economy that is adding jobs for both U.S.-born workers and immigrants.[37]

Accordingly, as Sindy Benavides recommends in Chapter 20, "Although many politicians have built their careers as immigration hardliners by focusing just on the 'wall' or the 'border' this is shortsighted and a short-term approach to a policy issue that has been untouched for nearly 3 decades and demands a real solution."[38] The United States needs to change immigration laws to adjust the number of people who can come to the country, using evidence-based estimates of how many are needed in the future—as the economy continues to expand.[39]

We also need to respect the evidence from David Leonhardt that immigration wasn't the main reason for wage stagnation among low-education workers over the last 50 years—but that it nonetheless was a significant secondary factor. That is why we need to accept only a fraction of those eager to come.[40]

In addition, contrary to disinformation that has been spread, there is solid evidence that immigrants commit less crime than U.S.-born people. For example, Stanford University research has found that since the time of the Kerner Commission, nationally, immigrants are 60% less likely to be incarcerated than U.S.-born people. A Cato Institute study found that undocumented immigrants in Texas in 2019 were 37% less likely than U.S.-born people to be convicted of a crime. The Marshall Project found that between 2007 and 2016 there was no link between undocumented immigrants and a rise in violent or property crime. Some of the studies suggest, reasonably, that immigrants fear getting into trouble and being deported. In their book, *Immigration and Crime: Taking Stock*, Graham Ousey and Charis Kubrin have surveyed more than 2 decades of research and concluded that "long-standing concerns about immigration as a major source of crime are unfounded."[41]

Taxing Market Fundamentalism. To continue moving from failed trickle down to promising bubble up, the tax code should be reformed. Prominent economists, including Nobel Prize–winner Joseph Stiglitz, have told us that untaxed wealth is so concentrated among the ultra-wealthy that taxation rate increases are needed—and that such a wealth tax would yield substantial revenues, help rebalance domestic economic power and reduce inequality while enhancing economic growth.[42]

Findings from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities have shown that the trickle-down tax cuts legislated in 2017 failed to deliver benefits, except for the rich and corporations. The legislation has been unpopular with the American public. The need now is to work toward a tax code that raises more revenues for working-class, lower-income, and middle-class Americans, is more progressive and equitable, further supports an industrial policy that makes the economy work for everyone, and reduces the deficit. Taxes on people making over $400,000 and on corporations should increase in the direction of the tax structure during the Eisenhower administration in the 1950s. We also "can generate positive revenues by extending and making permanent the mandatory IRS funding enacted in the Inflation Reduction Act, which supports revenues by increasing tax collections primarily from high income households."[43]

At the same time, we need to reinstate the Child Tax Credit that cut child poverty in half but then was allowed to expire after the pandemic.

Such tax restructuring will, of course, be opposed by corporations and the rich. But it needs to be pursued—and could finance many of the policies we advocate here.

As the Roosevelt Institute has concluded, this "is a contest for a new mindset—the idea that democratic governance must structure our economy toward the public good. Otherwise, private, profit seeking actors operating in unconstrained markets will exacerbate economic and racial inequalities simply by doing what they are designed to do best."[44]

EDUCATION POLICY

To the Kerner Commission, education policy was as important as economic policy. The nation made progress in Kerner-relevant K–12 education policy in the late 1960s and the 1970s. The War on Poverty, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, school desegregation, and school finance reform helped reduce educational inequality. Reading and math achievement gaps between students of color and whites diminished. Child poverty rates declined in the 1960s.[45]

By the mid-1970s, urban schools spent about as much as suburban schools and paid their teachers at about the same rates. Perennial teacher shortages nearly ended. Federally funded curriculum investments improved teaching in many schools. Innovative schools flourished, and in many cities achievement gaps in reading and mathematics shrank considerably more.[46]

Linda Darling-Hammond observes in Chapter 5: "Financial aid for higher education was sharply increased, especially for need-based scholarships and loans. For a brief period in the mid-1970s, Black and Latino high school graduates attended college at the same rate as Whites—the only time this has ever occurred before or since." Overall, the Black–white achievement gap was cut by more than half during the 1970s and early 1980s.[47]

The Reversal of Progress and the Increase in School Segregation

However, as trickle-down privatization, the myth of market fundamentalism, and opposition to Franklin Roosevelt–style governance took hold in the 1980s, federal support for public schools was reduced. In the 1980s and 1990s, federal courts released school districts from obligations to desegregate. School segregation increased steadily. Today, America's public schools are more segregated than any time since the late 1960s. The growing number of apartheid schools has almost exclusively served students of color from low-income families. Often these schools have been severely underresourced. The schools struggled to underwrite the additional costs of addressing the impacts of poverty.[48]

Not surprisingly, K–12 reading and math achievement gaps between people of color and whites began to grow again in the 1980s and, in the words of Darling-Hammond, "Stark differences reemerged between segregated urban schools and their suburban counterparts, which often spend twice as much on education." Today, the segregated urban schools tend to have larger class sizes, less developed curricula, fewer qualified teachers, less access to preschool, and more growth in the school-to-prison pipeline.[49]

Such disparities are not the norm in other developed nations. Whereas public schools are financed locally in the United States through property taxes, other developed nations typically and more equitably fund their education systems centrally—with more spending in places of greater need. These nations also focus on access to high-quality early education, high-quality teachers, and curricula that encourage ambitious learning by students and teachers. With the exception of just a few states, like Massachusetts and New Jersey, such high-investment priorities are not maintained in the United States.[50]

The pandemic exacerbated American education disparities, especially for low-income children and families of color. The share of families of color living in poverty increased. Families of color experienced greater infection and mortality rates compared to whites, higher unemployment, and more food instability. Schools serving lower-income populations and people of color often were least prepared for remote learning. In 2022, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) documented drops in achievement scores for all students over the pandemic. But the declines were most severe for low-income students and students of color. The achievement gap between Black and white students grew wider. The NAEP report described the findings as "almost two decades of educational progress washed away."[51]

Related to the expanding school achievement gap, public school absenteeism has increased alarmingly since the pandemic. Nationally, for the K–12 student population as a whole, chronic absenteeism increased from 15% before the pandemic to 26% after. For the poorest school districts, the increase was from 19% to 33%. For the majority nonwhite districts, the increase was from 17% to 30%. This absenteeism is a leading obstacle to recovery from pandemic learning losses. Some experts warn that "missing school is both a symptom of pandemic related challenges and also a cause. Students who are behind academically may not want

to attend, but being absent sets them further back." Intertwined with absenteeism, discipline problems have increased.[52]

Schools received $190 billion in federal funding to help students recover from learning loss during the pandemic. Among other uses, the funding was for tutoring and mentoring during school hours, after school, and in the summer to catch students up and try to prevent long-term drops in earnings. But the federal funding is running out and reauthorization is imperative. Even with new federal funding, as well as state resources, it will take 4 or more years to return to prepandemic achievement levels, based on estimates by Harvard and Stanford researchers.[53]

Diversion of Public Funding: Vouchers and Charter Schools

Ninety percent of K–12 students in America attend public schools. However, especially since the 1980s and through the pandemic, market fundamentalists, some backed by billionaire funders, have pushed for K–12 tuition vouchers and charter schools.[54]

In opposition, as Randi Weingarten concludes in Chapter 7:[55]

> We know that these programs actively destabilize our public schools. Private schools are exempt from federal accountability for students. They can—and many do—discriminate, especially against LGBTQ+ students and students with special needs, because private schools are not required to follow most federal civil rights laws protecting students. They drain funds from public schools. On average, vouchers negatively affect achievement. In fact, vouchers have caused "some of the largest academic drops ever measured in the research record." After decades of experiments with voucher programs, the research is clear: They fail most of the children they purportedly are intended to benefit, children who are disproportionately Black, Brown, and poor.
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> Yet, today, voucher programs are proliferating. Proponents of vouchers used to argue that they were a way for low-income and minority families to transfer out of low-performing schools. No longer. Today most vouchers go to families who already send their kids to private schools.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities concurs: "School vouchers raise the risk of harm to students, do little to expand opportunity, and cut funding to public schools."[56] State-level school voucher bills are opposed by nonprofit organizations like the American Federation of Teachers, the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools, HEAL Together, the Public Interest, and the Schott Foundation for Higher Education.

In a supportive way, a 2023 national poll by the Progressive Policy Institute of working-class voters found that 60% were for tax dollars being allocated to public schools and against voucher subsidies to send their children to private and religious schools.[57]

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Charter schools are privately run—but receive public funding and operate independently from traditional state school systems. There is evidence that some charter schools perform well. Some have suggested that perhaps 20% of charter schools outperform traditional public schools. A good example is in Boston. A rigorous randomized control evaluation examined Boston's "high expectations, high support" charter schools. Boston charter schools devote more of their resources to classroom teaching than traditional public schools and less to almost everything else. Students are kept in class for longer hours. The evaluation showed that high school students in Boston charter schools scored much higher on SAT math and reading tests and attended 4-year colleges at much higher rates than students not in Boston charter schools.[58]

Yet, the Boston experience is not the national norm. For example, in one of the most significant national randomized control evaluations of charter schools, by Mathematica, 36 charter middle schools were selected from 15 states, covering a broad geographic area. The major finding was that, on average, charter schools had no significant effect on student achievement in math and reading.[59]

In terms of race, charter schools have been more segregated than public schools in their communities.[60] Data from the UCLA Civil Rights Project shows that charter school enrollment patterns display high levels of minority segregation, especially for Black students.[61]

Most importantly, the public funding for privately run charter schools siphons resources from public school budgets and reinforces failed market fundamentalism. Charter schools undermine the very idea of public education as a universal investment that everyone deserves equally.

Just as trickle-down economics is supported by powerful monied interests, so school privatization and anti-public education advocacy is being underwritten by well-resourced foundations in what is a form of zombie education policy. As Randi Weingarten warns, the plan is to: "Starve public schools of the funds they need to succeed. Criticize them for their shortcomings. Erode trust in public schools by stoking fear and division, including attempting to pit parents against teachers. Replace them with private, religious, online, and home schools. All toward their end goal of destroying public education as we know it, atomizing and balkanizing education in America, bullying the most vulnerable among us, and leaving the students with the greatest needs in public schools with the most meager resources."[62]

K–12 Policy and Kerner Priorities

Here, then, are K–12 federal, state, and local education policy reforms set forth by Linda Darling-Hammond, Randi Weingarten, John Jackson, and Zakiyah Ansari in Chapters 5–7 of *Creating Justice*:

School Finance. We need educational funding based on student life status—like poverty, homelessness, and English learner status—rather than as a function of property tax wealth in local communities.[63] Contrary to the ideology of privatizing

market fundamentalists, there is comprehensive evidence that increased education funding "significantly improves student academic performance and rates of college attendance, and that additional resources have the greatest positive effect for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds."[64]

A Holistic Framework. A new national education policy framework therefore needs to not just carry out reform within the learning space of schools. A more refined Kerner-supportive, evidence-based frame also needs to implement reform more holistically in terms of the living experiences faced by people of color—incorporating the kind of economic, criminal justice, housing, and public health policies advocated in *Creating Justice*. As John H. Jackson and Zakiyah Ansari warn, "[D]isparate student outcomes identifiable by race and ethnicity are the symptoms of larger local, state, and federal systems failures."[65]

Desegregation. Federal leadership is needed to reverse growing school segregation. We need to build on the evidence that desegregation has been extremely important in advancing student achievement. The educational starting point for diversity in America is at the K–12 level. Perhaps the most rigorous evaluation to date on school integration showed that Black students who attended desegregated schools over their K–12 years were more likely than control group students to graduate from high school, attend college, attend a more selective college, and complete college.[66]

Yet in a recent national poll, a majority of whites incorrectly said schools are less segregated today than 30 years ago. Majorities of Blacks and whites polled agreed that more should be done to integrate schools. But 80% of white adults polled and 50% of Black adults polled also said it was better for children to go to neighborhood schools rather than diverse schools. And some Black leaders have concluded that the most important policy is more funding for high-poverty schools serving students of color. There is, however, at least strong public opinion support for multicultural magnet schools. That argues for scaling up initiatives like the federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program.[67]

Given present public opinion and in spite of the ideology of the present Supreme Court, federal leadership would do well to embrace the recommendations of Stefan Lallinger and the Century Foundation: "We must create space in our social discourse for a vision of the future that both promotes integrated schools for Black students and empowers Black students to lean on the scaffolds of uplifting and powerful all-Black spaces, be they outside-of-school institutions, or within-school structures. Just as we see no contradiction in students of different religions worshipping in a mosque, church, and synagogue on the weekend and then returning to learn in the same classroom on Monday, all renewed, affirmed, and better equipped to participate in its messy affairs, there is no conflict here."[68]

Early Education. There is unequivocal evidence from rigorous evaluations that high-quality early education programs targeted to disadvantaged children yield positive educational, economic, and health outcomes along with reduced remedial

education, health, and criminal justice costs. For decades, Head Start stood virtually alone in terms of public investment in early childhood. Today there are publicly funded prekindergarten programs in most states. The need is for universal prekindergarten for 3- and 4-year-olds.[69]

Evidence-Based Community-Learning Models. The achievement losses created by the pandemic also can be reversed by scaling up well-evaluated community schools—that wrap health care, mental health services, food assistance, child care, tutoring, after-school activities, meaningful partnerships with families, and effective strategies to mitigate chronic absenteeism. Similarly, we need to scale up variations on the evidence-based and holistic Harlem Children's Zone and the evidence-based Quantum Opportunities mentoring, tutoring, life skills training, and youth leadership model led by nonprofit organizations after school. More broadly, states need to follow the evidence-based education policies of Massachusetts and New Jersey.[70]

Teachers. National, state, and local teacher policy reform needs to substantially increase teacher recruitment incentives, increase teacher pay, provide high-quality mentoring for all beginning teachers and improve teacher preparation in an ongoing way. America needs to address the national teacher shortage, which grew worse during the pandemic, and to recognize the evidence that teacher pay continues to fall relative to other professions[71]—even though, arguably, teaching is the most important job in the world.

Social Media and AI. Social media and AI have the potential for further deepening the digital divide and disproportionately impacting Kerner constituencies. The public sector needs to implement new regulations to prevent such outcomes. Racial and cultural bias is a well-documented problem in AI algorithms.[72] In the discussion of media, below, we also support a ban on smartphones in school.

Guns. When it comes to gun violence, we need to reject "target hardening" that builds on greater police presence in schools. As Darling-Hammond tells us, the evidence is that target hardening is likely to increase gun casualties, not decrease them. Instead, among many other interventions, we need to focus advocacy on banning assault rifles, enacting "red flag" laws, and additional scrutiny of gun buyers under the age of 21, as the Learning Policy Institute has encouraged and as we discuss more completely later.[73]

Books. In some states, there is public school controversy over the banning of books that mention racism. The banned book authors tend disproportionately to be people of color. This skews the teaching of history and the understanding of students. As PEN America has warned, "The freedom to read is under assault in the United States—particularly in public schools." From a Kerner perspective, such policy distracts the education policy debate away from scaling up what works.[74] Further on in *Creating Justice* we discuss how book banning is a form of denial by naysayers.

Higher Education Policy and Kerner Priorities

Just as in the late 1960s and early 1970s the backlash against civil rights legislation was led by the criminalization of drugs and the beginning of mass incarceration, so today we are experiencing another backlash—after our first African American president, the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. The new backlash has been expressed by the Supreme Court's 2023 ruling denying race-based affirmative action at universities.

Based on existing evidence from, for example, the University of California and the University of Michigan, the 2023 Supreme Court decision is producing powerful negative impacts on admissions to top colleges, reducing the numbers of Black, Latino, and Native American students admitted.[75] The Court's rationale—that racism must be ignored for racism to be overcome—is illogical and not based on scientific evidence or lived experience. As Dr. King asserted in support of affirmative action, "It is impossible to create a formula for the future which does not take into account that our society has been doing something special against the Negro for hundreds of years."[76]

We can work toward future Supreme Court majorities reversing the 2023 decision. For now, what immediate strategies are possible to increase diversity and prevent racial imbalances born of historical and current injustices from going unchecked? Colleges can intensify outreach to obtain diverse applicants from high schools. Admission decisions can better take into account grit and resilience—an individual's capacity to overcome complex challenges and an applicant's potential for generating benefits for society. Universities can admit more highly talented community college graduates, vigorously recruit outstanding low-income achievers, and accept students with the highest grades in state high schools. Legacy admissions, preferences for the children of donors, and preferences for children of professors and other university staff members can be eliminated. Early decision and admission options can be discontinued.[77]

Most important, we need to consider using socioeconomic disadvantage as a basis for preferences in competitive college admissions. Recent polls have shown that the public supports class-based preferences by 61% to 39%. Some of the early evidence from the University of California and the University of Michigan suggests that using income as the measure of economic disadvantage in admissions may not increase diversity by much—right now, the evidence is unclear. Nonetheless, colleges need to factor in a more complete set of socioeconomic factors—including family net worth and the neighborhood and school conditions of applicants.[78]

But there also is a need for other new and imaginative solutions. For example, instead of defining greatness by their exclusivity, high-ranked educational institutions need to explore how to invest some of their endowments in increasing the number of regular students they accept, expanding summer programs for low-income high school students in the cities where they are located (like the Harvard Phillips Brooks House Summer Urban Program model), opening new campuses,

and offering credit-bearing courses at other educational institutions. Leading institutions need to consider setting aside a portion of their endowments for creating a network of middle school and high school feeder academies modeled in part on the Harlem Children's Zone. The academies would be for talented students who otherwise lack access to high-quality secondary education.[79]

Dwayne Kwaysee Wright and Michael Feuer suggest other promising options in Chapter 8.

Most students attend colleges where three-quarters of all applicants are accepted. That means the pressing need for Kerner constituencies is to invest in facilities at these institutions, improve the quality and number of teachers, and expand Pell Grants to all students who qualify, among a host of reforms. This strategy holds the possibility of advancing racial equity and addressing Kerner priorities more than admission decisions by top-ranked schools.[80]

For such a strategy, we need much greater federal, state, and philanthropic funding of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Recent Bloomberg Philanthropies endowment funding of Black medical schools is an outstanding example of what is needed. The 2021 American Rescue Plan Act increased federal investment in HBCUs, but it is not nearly enough. Historically, after World War II the G.I. Bill seeded white veterans with grants and lending products allowing them to attend college, start businesses, and buy homes—while Black veterans faced college admission obstacles, pervasive discrimination, and redlining into dilapidated neighborhoods. This policy was largely responsible for the emergence of the asset-based white middle class that exists today and for the tremendous white–Black wealth gap. HBCUs emerged as a movement in response to a national conscience hostile to educating Black people.[81]

The 2023 Supreme Court decision against affirmative action has encouraged campaigns and lawsuits to roll back diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs at universities, in state and local government and in the corporate world.[82] In the case of DEI programs and training in higher education, our position in *Creating Justice* aligns with Shaun Harper, executive director of the Race and Equity Center at the University of Southern California, who provides evidence that students of color and white students alike say in surveys that, on balance, they presently don't learn enough about racism and other dimensions of DEI—they need more information. In addition, the fact that some billionaires have campaigned against DEI is, in our view, all the more reason to continue it.[83]

CRIME PREVENTION, CRIMINAL JUSTICE, AND DRUG POLICY

Rising reported crime rates were a major concern of the Kerner Commission. In the United States, the FBI publishes annual data on crime reported to police. Crime also is estimated via annual victimization surveys by the Department of Justice—citizens are asked whether they have been victims. And homicide is reported annually by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the Department of Health and Human Services.[84]

Homicide is the most accurately reported crime. Reported homicide rates rose for the most part over the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s—but began to drop in the 1990s. (See Chapter 13.) Then the reported homicide rate increased rapidly during the pandemic. Most recently, the reported homicide rate has begun to drop again.[85]

There is spirited debate on what has caused these trends. Was the drop in the reported homicide rate beginning in the 1990s a function of mass incarceration, with its deep racial inequities? Was the drop in the 1990s and beyond influenced by the increasing number of community-based nonprofit organizations in cities? Was the rapid rise in the reported homicide rate during the pandemic a result of the initial unemployment that occurred and the breakdown of support systems at the time? Is the recent post-pandemic decline in homicide a reflection of the highly successful Rooseveltian and Keynesian bubble-up economic policies of recent years that have dramatically reduced unemployment, begun to reverse market fundamentalism, and focused more on the poor, the working class, and the middle class?

Answers to such questions are highly politicized in America today. What we do know is that reported homicide rates over the last few years have averaged out to be roughly in the same ballpark as reported homicide rates around the time of the Kerner Commission in the late 1960s, when there was so much concern over crime. In addition, the reported homicide rate today probably would have been higher were it not for significant improvements in the emergency treatment of violence since the Kerner Commission. Whatever the exact level, reported homicide rates in the United States are much higher than in other industrialized democracies.[86] Overall, in the 55-plus years since the Kerner Commission, it is reasonable to question the effectiveness and morality of the billions of dollars spent on the racially biased criminal justice and mass incarceration system.

The Deepened Risk Among Vulnerable Populations

Based on reported homicide data from the CDC, we know that, during the pandemic, America became both a deadlier and less equal place. In particular, as Elliott Currie very carefully documents in Chapter 14:[87]

> Both the sheer level of death by violence among young Black men in America, and the gap between them and their white counterparts, grew sharply in the [pandemic] years from 2019 through 2021. In the process, young Black men in America further cemented their status as among the most endangered groups for violent death anywhere on the planet. . . . In 2021, Black men aged 15 to 29 died by homicide at a rate of 121 per 100,000 population, up from 84 per 100,000 in 2019. . . . [I]t is important to bear in mind that the earlier number vastly exceeds anything outside of the most volatile societies of the Global South.

And so Currie's evidence-based, place-based, and Kerner-relevant warning:[88]

> The pandemic era saw unprecedented surges in violence, notably gun-related violence, which was concentrated overwhelmingly in places, and among people, where

it had been concentrated for decades and indeed generations. It took place in context of sharply rising unemployment, sharply reduced access to critical educational, health care, and mental health services and supports, and radically disrupted personal and communal lives. While these adversities affected many people across the social spectrum, they hit most devastatingly at places that were among the most racially and economically deprived and marginalized, exacerbating already existing disparities and both broadening and deepening risk among the country's most vulnerable populations.

The Evidence-Based, Crime Prevention Policy Needed for Marginalized Communities

Given this evidence, Currie concludes that the nation needs what the Kerner Commission called a "massive, compassionate, and sustained" response from the public sector. Yet we are not necessarily hearing that response in the current debate, often ideological, on crime prevention, handguns, assault rifles, police, drugs, sentencing, and mass incarceration:[89]

> [F]ar too often, what we've seen in response to recent trends in violence is a tired and a counterproductive replay of attitudes we've encountered again and again in the past, and of "solutions" we've heard many times before—ones that seem almost schizophrenically disconnected from what we've learned about the roots of this ongoing American emergency. In the face of the troubling rises in violence in the pandemic era, the most common response has been what Brookings [Institution] researchers call the "punitive turn"—a renewed call for getting "tough" and rolling back the limited but important reforms in the criminal punishment system we've achieved in recent years. This attitude has shown remarkable staying power despite the fact that we were already increasingly "tough" on serious violent offenders during the years that preceded the recent rises in violence. As a recent report from The Sentencing Project points out, a significant decline in incarceration for less serious offenses has gone along with increased sentences for serious crimes of violence, including life or "virtual" life in prison—a trend that has disproportionately affected Blacks. . . .
>
> Another common response is to call for a range of essentially cosmetic reforms—more interagency cooperation, the addition of more sheer numbers of bodies to urban police forces, exhortations to besieged communities to take more control of their quality of life—that may be well-intended, but for which there is, unsurprisingly, scant evidence, at best, of effectiveness in the face of a deeply entrenched, enduring problem that reflects generations of social and economic abandonment. But probably equally destructive in the long run is a surprisingly tenacious denial that the problem actually exists. Not for the first time in our recent history, one common response to the endemic violence in America is to claim that its seriousness is exaggerated and that focusing overly on urban violence is little more than a pretext for justifying repressive measures against marginalized communities. That view may be well-meaning too. But it also has no answers for those who are genuinely—and

rightly—concerned about violence, and as a result, hands this critical social issue to the people who caused it in the first place.

In effect, just as we can identify zombie market fundamentalism and zombie education vouchers, so we can identify zombie crime prevention—with failed policy returning again and again.

At least, however, Currie observes that the federal initiatives passed since 2020, like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, and more generally the new economics discussed above, are "going in the right direction" given the evidence on the structural roots of violence in America. Similarly, Charles Coleman concludes that, in the debate on crime, the nation has failed "to recognize the myriad ways in which issues like the economiy, education, health care and employment have unique and disparate impacts on Black people and, more specifically, Black men."[90]

Currie's worldview and critique of denial was the Kerner Commission's frame in 1968—that violence, crime, and fear of crime can best be reduced in low-income neighborhoods of people of color through the kind of economic, youth employment, education, mentoring, criminal justice reform, housing, public health, and community development policies set forth on these pages.

The Reversal of Racism in the Juvenile Justice System

Complementary to Currie, Kim Taylor-Thompson reminds us in Chapter 12 of the academic who advanced the "superpredator" theory in the 1990s. Young superpredator Black men in "wolfpacks," we were told, would soon target "upscale central-city districts, inner-ring suburbs, and even the rural heartland." The media blindly seized these claims and stoked public fear, helping to generate the mass incarceration and related draconian policies begun in the 1990s. However, that juvenile crime wave never appeared, and the academic later admitted being wrong. But the myth of the Black superpredator had joined the myth of market fundamentalism and the myth of education voucher effectiveness. Warning that racism is trumping science, Taylor-Thompson tells us how, today, "[E]very state prosecutes middle schoolers as adults, exposing them to adult prosecution and punishment. Children as young as 9 have been prosecuted as adults. Black youth—particularly young Black men—are disproportionately . . . sentenced either to lengthy prison terms or death . . . Disparities in treatment affect all people of color in the justice system, but the stark divide between Black and white adolescents best illustrates the depth of the problem in youth justice."[91]

Recognizing how the Kerner Commission criticized the media for generating false narratives, Taylor-Thompson urges advocacy today to debunk the narrative of the Black man as villain. "To interrupt this racialized and persistent pattern of mistreatment, we need to adopt a bright line rule prohibiting the prosecution of anyone under 21 in the adult criminal justice system." Taylor-Thompson also warns that we need to eliminate the school-to-prison pipeline through, for example, school-based mentoring, tutoring, and mental health interventions.[92]

Community-Based Nonprofit Solutions

Rather than criminal justice solutions, there has been emerging evidence documented by the Brookings Institution, John Jay College, The Sentencing Project, the Eisenhower Foundation, and others on the effectiveness of community-based nonprofit organizations in reducing crime and violence. The evidence includes nonprofit programs focused on workforce development (like YouthBuild, above); drug abuse prevention; and mentoring, tutoring, and life skills training as illustrated by the Quantum Opportunities youth development model.[93] For example, in Chapter 22, George Huynh shares his experience in the successful Quantum-related Dorchester Youth Collaborative program in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston. And he explains how the Dorchester Youth Collaborative organizing led to his creating the VietAid youth development initiative, which is a multicultural model for how Asian Americans can integrate with Kerner priorities at the grassroots.[94]

Taylor-Thompson recognizes 2 decades of data indicating that "for every 10 nonprofits focused on reducing violence and building stronger communities, there has been a 9% drop in the homicide rate, a 6% reduction in violent crime, and a 4% reduction in property crime per 100,000 residents." Similarly, in his book *Uneasy Peace*, Patrick Sharkey documents evidence that the growth of nonprofit organizations was at least as important as—if not more important than—the explosion of mass incarceration over recent decades.[95]

There has been advocacy for nonprofit organizations since the 1960s, but the accumulating evidence on their effectiveness today needs to motivate a stronger movement to scale up the role of nonprofits and seriously expand their funding through federal, state, and local government as well as through philanthropy. Federally, the departments of Justice, Housing and Urban Development, Labor, and Health and Human Services need to undertake a great deal more. At HUD, the Office of Neighborhoods begun by the iconic priest and community organizer Geno Baroni in the 1970s needs to be reconstituted to help inspire the nonprofit movement and fund it to scale. Similarly, we need to follow the vision of the passionate nonprofit organizer Pablo Eisenberg as he led the Center for Community Change in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Nonprofits need to be chosen carefully based on evaluated track records, and more technical assistance needs to be provided to new and existing organizations to strengthen their capacities.

The currently popular "violence interrupter" model being implemented by community nonprofit organizations and government agencies might at some point be considered for scaling up. The model employs former gang members as outreach workers to mediate disputes among conflicting criminal groups. However, at present, the model has not produced consistently positive impacts on public safety. More evidence is needed—as illustrated by a recent review of efforts to evaluate a Baton Rouge violence interrupter initiative.[96]

In perspective, we need to acknowledge that new community-based crime and violence prevention strategies have been inspired by the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many others. Federal funds from the pandemic American Rescue Plan and from the 2022 bipartisan Safer Communities

Act have been available to states and localities for community-based nonprofit organizations to pursue new crime and violence prevention programs and for tutoring and mentoring to close the pandemic school achievement gap. This federal funding needs to be reauthorized, especially given the dramatic increase in school absenteeism in low-income communities discussed earlier.

The Reduction of Gun Violence

When it comes to the endemic gun violence in the poor urban locations that Currie so passionately describes and that "violence interrupter" programs especially seek to address, the most straightforward evidence-based policy is to admit that, in the words of Andrew McKevitt in his book *Gun Country*, "Fewer guns mean fewer gun deaths."[97]

But guns are "normal" for so many in America. The United States is home to nearly half of all the civilian-owned firearms in the world. Firearms violence is the leading killer of children and teens under the age of 18, according to the CDC. Black Americans are 10 times as likely as white Americans to be victims of gun violence and homicides, and Latino Americans are twice as likely.[98]

After Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy endorsed the Kerner Commission and then were assassinated with guns in 1968, President Lyndon Johnson formed the bipartisan National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, chaired by Milton Eisenhower, then president emeritus of Johns Hopkins University. The Eisenhower Violence Commission recommended confiscation of most handguns, restrictions on new handgun ownership to those who could demonstrate reasonable need, and identification of rifle and shotgun owners.[99] These recommendations are not currently possible in our divided and violent society.

What evidence-based policy is possible—especially with regard to gun homicide in poor Kerner-relevant urban neighborhoods of people of color where guns are readily available? In an editorial titled "The Evidence Is Clear: Gun Control Saves Lives," the editors of *Scientific American* conclude:[100]

> Science points to laws that would work to reduce shootings, to lower death. Among the simplest would be better permitting laws with fewer loopholes. When Missouri repealed its permit law, gun-related killings increased by 25 percent. Another would be to ban people who are convicted of violent crime from buying a gun. In California, before the state passed such a law, people convicted of crimes were almost thirty percent more likely to be arrested again for a gun or violent crime than those who, after the law, couldn't buy a gun.
>
> Such laws, plus red flag laws and those taking guns out of the hands of domestic abusers and people who abuse alcohol, would lower our gun violence rate as a nation. But it would require elected officials to detach themselves from the gun lobby.

California and New Jersey have the strictest gun laws in the nation[101] and are among the states with the lowest gun homicide rates—and so policy with Kerner

priorities needs to support the scaling up of these evidence-based state models, which include bans on assault weapons.

We hope that, as a result of the 2024 presidential candidate assassination attempts, the ban on assault weapons that was in place between 1994 and 2004 can be renewed and improved upon. Sixty-one percent of Americans support an assault weapons ban. It is imperative to also keep in mind that most people killed by guns are killed by handguns. This is very much the case in poor urban areas. Handguns will be significantly impacted by new regulations recently finalized by the Department of Justice. The new rules close a loophole that allowed people to sell firearms online, at gun shows, and at other informal venues without conducting background checks on those who purchase them. The Justice Department has estimated that over 20% of Americans have obtained guns without a background check. The Justice Department stresses, "Under this regulation, it will not matter if guns are sold on the internet, at a gun show or at a brick-and-mortar store: If you sell guns predominantly to earn a profit, you must be licensed and you must conduct background checks."[102]

In addition, a White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention has been created to help build a stronger national gun control infrastructure, and new nonprofit firearms control organizations have been created in recent years. Maxwell Alejandro Frost, the first Gen Z member of Congress, was an organizer for March For Our Lives, which was formed by students after the gun massacre in Parkland, Florida. The need now is to mobilize Gen Z citizens with Kerner priorities and other groups impacted by gun violence to elect a new evidence-based generation of candidates for public office who want genuine progress on gun control. In spite of Congressional bans on gun research, there have been some recent appropriations for such research. Funding needs to be significantly increased.[103]

The Need for Police Reform and Partnerships With Nonprofits

The Kerner Report concluded in 1968 that police had often sparked the protests of the 1960s and overreacted after the protests began. The Commission found that racial tensions frequently reflected low-income community grievances with the police and the rest of the criminal justice system: "The police are not merely a 'spark' factor. To some Negroes police have come to symbolize white power, white racism and white repression. . . . The atmosphere of hostility and cynicism is reinforced by a widespread belief among Negroes in the existence of police brutality and in a 'double standard' of justice and protection—one for Negroes and one for whites."[104]

Decades later, in *America on Fire: The Untold Story of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s*, Elizabeth Hinton has re-reminded the nation that police brutality and racism were the immediate causes of the protests in the 1960s.[105]

Among other recommendations, the Kerner Commission advised that police departments provide better protection to minority community residents, set up mechanisms for grievances against police and other city employees, eliminate abrasive practices, adopt guidelines to help officers make critical decisions at times when

police conduct could create tension, innovate initiatives to ensure broad community support for police, recruit more minority officers, ensure fair promotion for minority officers, and create community service officer positions for young women and men of color. Nonetheless, in the decades after Kerner was released, a policy of zero-tolerance policing developed in many police departments. Today, there is broad evidence that zero tolerance was ineffective in reducing crime and destructive to low-income communities of color—from Rodney King's Los Angeles to Michael Brown's Ferguson, Missouri, to George Floyd's Minneapolis to Breonna Taylor's Louisville to Sonya Massey's Springfield, Illinois.[106]

A model more responsive than zero tolerance to the Kerner Commission's calls for reform was community-based, problem-oriented policing, which began evolving in the 1970s and 1980s. A key theme underlying community policing is that law enforcement should not just be reactive, responding to calls, but also proactive, working with community nonprofit organizations and citizens to reduce crime, reduce fear, and increase trust.[107]

Today, most police departments in large and medium American cities assert that they have some manner of community policing, problem-oriented policing, or both. There are many names for these initiatives across the nation. Some of the initiatives genuinely try to involve the community and to address the causes of crime in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Some are focused on high-risk individuals, while others are focused on high-risk hotspot locations. However, most local police-led innovations have been poorly evaluated. When they have been evaluated, findings from studies with quasi-experimental designs have been mixed, though some of these findings show reductions in violent crime, property crime, and fear.[108]

We need to acknowledge that there are few evaluations that address both individual and community-wide change in low-income neighborhoods of color, where police partner with nonprofit youth and community development organizations.

How has police violence against civilians complicated such partnerships?

In 2020, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives. It was designed to increase accountability and reduce unnecessary use of force. But the legislation was never passed by the Senate. The Department of Justice has pursued "patterns-or-practice" investigations of police departments and entered into several consent decrees with police departments to secure reforms. Yet there has been no nationwide, common denominator change across the 15,000 state and local police agencies in the United States. After the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, police reform legislation also was introduced in all 50 states—but much of the legislation was only symbolic. As a consequence, police reform has faded from the national agenda.[109]

Why is police reform so difficult? One reason is that, with so many separate state and local police jurisdictions, it is hard to agree on a unified direction. More important is police culture—the norms, values, and worldview of the police. As Neil Gross

assesses in Chapter 10, among the features of police culture are an us-versus-them attitude, as well as "suspiciousness, a strong sense of duty, a belief in the need to display toughness on the street, doubts about rights protections for suspects in criminal cases, and subscribing to stereotypes about racial or ethnic minority groups."[110]

Much of the debate on police has centered on "qualified immunity." Americans were first empowered to challenge police conduct in 1871, when Congress passed a law allowing lawsuits against state and local authorities that refused to protect Blacks from acts of terror and racial violence. In the 1960s, the Supreme Court limited the law by issuing a legal doctrine of qualified immunity—which effectively protected government employees from frivolous lawsuits. However, over the years, Supreme Court precedent has effectively created, as one associate justice has put it, "an absolute shield" against accountability for police officers accused of using excessive force.[111]

In response, Michelle A. Williams tells us in Chapter 17 that:[112]

> [A]ny efforts to hold officers accountable must begin with the end of qualified immunity, which has long been used to shield law enforcement officers from consequences, preventing departments from weeding out the "bad apples" that are spoiling the bunch. When citizens watch acts of brutality go unpunished, their faith in the police and in the justice system suffers. Doing away with qualified immunity and ensuring that a badge does not place an officer above the law will go a long way to both prevent bad behavior and rebuild trust with the community.

At the present moment in time, with the nation so divided, it is difficult generate dialogue on how the police and the community can increase trust. However, one reality to build on is greater racial diversity. In 1968, for example, 6% of officers in major city police departments were Black. Today, in cities with populations over 250,000, 18% of officers are Black and 19% are Latino. The evidence available suggests that, all else being equal, problems associated with policing seem to diminish when the composition of a police department is representative of a city's population. So progress on diversity needs to be reinforced.[113]

Then, too, there are some positively evaluated evidence-based models that demonstrate how partnerships between nonprofit organizations and police can reduce crime and fear in low-income and working-class urban neighborhoods. For example, evolving from variations on Japanese community-based police mini-stations, the Eisenhower Foundation Youth Safe Haven model has demonstrated crime reduction success in a variety of locations—from San Juan to Boston to Columbia, South Carolina, to San Francisco. Safe havens operated after school in nonprofit youth and community development organizations or in schools. Civilian nonprofit staff and specially selected police officers or police cadets mentored elementary and middle school youth and helped with homework. Police and civilians undertook outreach with parents and other community members. In San Juan, the community nonprofit organization taught a course at the police academy.[114]

Because of zero-tolerance policing and fear generated by police violence against civilians, the potential to scale up this kind of model has never been realized. But innovative police chiefs who earn the trust of their communities need the courage to try, and new evaluations need to be undertaken.

Deincarceration, the Reduction of Racial Disparities, and Public Health–Framed Drug Policy

According to a top White House aide, in the late 1960s and early 1970s the White House "had two enemies: the anti-war left and Black people." Politically, the criminalization of drugs became a way to discredit both groups—creating the War on Drugs and mass incarceration.[115]

Between 1972 and 2009, the prison population in the United States increased by almost 700%—from about 200,000 to over 1,400,000. This dramatic increase occurred while reported crime rates were increasing into the 1990s and for years after as reported crime rates dropped. A key part of mass incarceration has been the rapid increase in extreme sentences, including life sentences.[116]

Then, from the peak incarceration year of 2009 to the present, the United States experienced a decline in its prison population of well over 20%. While notable, the prison population decline is insufficient—given the dramatic increase in the prison populations between 1972 and 2009. So, for example, the prison and jail incarceration rate in the United States today is between five and eight times the rates in France, Canada, and Germany.[117]

Evidence from the most comprehensive evaluations have concluded that mass incarceration can explain little of the reported crime drop from the 1990s. For example, the National Research Council has concluded that "the magnitude of the crime reduction [due to mass incarceration] remains highly uncertain and the evidence suggests it was unlikely to have been large." Other explanations of the reported crime drop up until the pandemic have included low unemployment rates, the waning of the crack epidemic, and the growth in community-based nonprofit organizations.[118]

As Nazgol Ghandnoosh explains in Chapter 13, while mass incarceration has not worked as an effective system of crime prevention, it has been "an extremely effective system of racial social control. Large numbers of people of color have been placed under the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system and saddled with criminal records for life." In 2021, Black Americans were imprisoned at 5.0 times the rate of whites, Native Americans 4.2 times, and Latinos 2.4 times.[119]

Sentencing policy has in large part been a function of drug policy. Beginning in the get-tough-on-crime 1970s, the racially laden War on Drugs focused on criminal justice measures rather than on public health solutions. Over decades, this policy was followed by presidents from both major political parties.

Today, the evidence is clear that criminal justice–based drug policy has failed. A Pew Research Center study found that states with more drug arrests and

incarceration don't have less drug use. With the highest rates of incarceration in the world, the United States still has the world's highest rates of illegal drug use along with the highest rates of illegal drug–related death and disability.[120] Nearly half of the people in federal prisons are held on drug charges. Those in prison are disproportionately people of color, as we have seen. Michelle Alexander concluded in *The New Jim Crow*, "Nothing has contributed more to the systemic mass incarceration of people of color in the United States than the War on Drugs."[121]

However, given the failures of criminal justice drug policy, the impact of opiates on both the white population and people of color and the advocacy of nonprofit organizations, policy has begun, modestly, to shift over recent years—away from the most punitive policies, like mandatory lengthy prison sentences for nonviolent drug users. Critics assert that the failed criminal justice model does not address the need for health care, jobs, and safe housing as components of a strategy to combat addiction. The director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse concluded, "The best outcomes are when you treat substance use disorders [as a medical condition] as opposed to criminalizing that person and putting them in jail or prison."[122] There has been a substantial growth in public funding for health care and treatment for people who use drugs, due in large part to passage of the Affordable Care Act. The emerging public health policy framework has helped reduce the prison populations over recent years. Half the states have decriminalized possession of small amounts of marijuana. Up until 2018, the disparity between sentences for crack cocaine (used disproportionately by Blacks) and sentences for powder cocaine (used disproportionately by whites) was 100:1. Then the First Step Act of 2018 reduced the disparity to 18:1.[123]

In 2021, for the first time in decades, the federal Office of National Drug Control Policy began spending slightly more on treatment and prevention than on law enforcement and interdiction, America now needs to build on this leadership. Our drug policy needs to:[124]

- continue to decriminalize drug possession and scale up successful drug treatment models and harm reduction models, like OnPoint in Harlem;
- continue to roll back harsh mandatory minimum sentences and repeal sentencing disparities, and pass the Equal Act;
- continue to eliminate policies that exclude people from rights and opportunities—including barriers to voting, employment, public housing, other public assistance, and financial aid; and
- better base policy on evidence.

Evidence is doubly important here because, as Elliott Currie reminds us, a great deal of what passes for drug treatment is unevaluated. And it is a losing game to just pour money into unevaluated treatment without creating any sort of future awaiting people who do receive decent treatment. Strategically, we need to link careful investments in good treatment to reliable, permanent investments in jobs, education, housing, and health.[125]

In all of this, the nation needs to integrate public health drug policy with both the priorities of people of color and the priorities of whites:[126]

> To fully replace the War on Drugs with something more humane or more effective, the public will have to come to terms with the prejudices that war helped instill. That means accepting that people who use drugs are still members of our communities and are still worthy of compassion and care. It also means acknowledging the needs and wishes of people who don't use drugs, including streets free of syringe litter and neighborhoods free of drug-related crime. These goals are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they go hand in hand. But to make them a reality, lawmakers and other officials will have to lead the way.

As some racial disparities have been reduced for drug policy, so there also has been measured progress in recent years in reducing other racial disparities within the criminal justice system. There is a modest movement to reduce monetary bail requirements and pretrial incarceration through the use of updated risk assessment tools. Some states and the federal government have begun to improve access to mental health care and drug treatment both during and following incarceration. Jurisdictions around the nation have initiated policies to reduce the harm of criminal convictions and ease reentry—with, for example, a majority of states removing questions about conviction history from initial job applications. However, while there are proven non-profit evidence-based models, reentry programs are severely underfunded.[127]

Complementary to our recommendations on education, above, one of the most promising reforms is college-in-prison. For years, college-in-prison programs were popular in the United States. With the creation of the federal Pell Grant program of financial assistance to low-income students in the 1970s, hundreds of college-in-prison programs began to emerge. For some initiatives, there was solid evidence of success. For example, a RAND Corporation evaluation showed the risk of recidivism by college-in-prison students was cut by over 40%. In spite of the evidence, during the tough-on-crime and racially biased ideology of the 1990s, Pell Grants were eliminated for persons in prison. But in 2020 they were reinstituted. With evidence that college-in-prison saves money and reduces crime, there now is some bipartisan support for scaling up.[128]

Continued progress on decarceration and reduction of racial disparities is precarious, given the current retreat back to the failed punitive policies of the past. America remains in an era of mass incarceration. While we have reduced the number of people put behind bars for drug offenses, we also have ratcheted up sentences for other offenses—and that helps maintain the racial disparity in incarceration. Nazgol Ghandnoosh concludes in Chapter 13, "Excessive levels of control and punishment, particularly for people of color, are not advancing community safety goals and are damaging families and communities."[129]

HOUSING POLICY

In 1968, the Kerner Commission affirmed, "Today, after more than three decades of fragmented and grossly under-funded federal housing programs, decent housing remains a chronic problem for the disadvantaged urban household. Fifty-six

percent of the country's nonwhite families live in central cities today, and of these nearly two-thirds live in neighborhoods marked by substandard housing and general urban blight. For these citizens, condemned by segregation and poverty to live in the decaying slums of our central cities, the goal of decent homes and suitable environments is as distant as ever."[130]

The Commission recommended that the federal government "provide home ownership opportunities for low-income families. The ambition to own one's own home is shared by virtually all Americans, and we believe it is in the interest of the nation to permit all who share this goal to realize it."[131]

The Commission also recognized it was more immediately feasible to press for construction of rental housing for low-income citizens—though, of course, such units did not provide equity. A crash 1-year program was recommended to construct 600,000 new low- and moderate-income rental units to relieve overcrowding of segregated Black households. The Commission recommended that a total of 6 million such units be built by 1973. Regrettably, these recommendations were not implemented. Today, 56 years later, we have barely reached the 6-million-unit goal.[132]

Reversing Affordable Housing Failures

Although housing assistance for low-income renters never has reached all who qualify, housing aid did in fact increase for a time after the Kerner Commission. More than 200,000 new rent-subsidized units were built a year on average from 1975 to 1985. Institutions like ShoreBank, the Community Preservation Corporation, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and Enterprise Community Partners focused on lending to community-level actors who could take advantage of federal programs and create positive impacts in their neighborhoods. The subsidized rental housing for low-income households was mostly in urban areas and largely in formerly redlined neighborhoods. As a result of the partnerships, most subsidized affordable housing today is privately owned.[133]

Lamentably, in the 1980s, the federal government stopped building affordable rental housing and instead turned to distributing housing vouchers on a very limited basis to low-income households. The vouchers helped cover the costs of the rental housing. As a result, the gap between the availability of affordable housing and low-income need widened dramatically. Federal funding for new rent-subsidized housing units has never again reached its pre-1980s level.[134]

The federal policy changes of the 1980s left the country far short of what it might have produced in terms of sufficient affordable housing for households at every income level. The results of this dramatic change in policy are still being experienced today.

By 2024, a new report by the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies documented how rental housing assistance is at the lowest level in 25 years. Nearly two-thirds of renters in the bottom fifth of the income distribution now face "severe cost burdens"—meaning they spend more than half their income on shelter. This is a record high, and it coincides with record levels of homelessness.[135]

What are the reasons for the weakness of the American housing safety net? Some naysayers are opposed to "welfare" for the poor (though not opposed to housing tax breaks for the rich). Housing aid is increasingly expensive and lacks corporate supporters. Assistance suffers from the stigma left by management problems in public housing. And, as Jason DeParle observes, "Resistance to housing aid also involves race. Assistance disproportionately serves Black households because they are disproportionately poor: And opposition to integration has concentrated low-income housing in Black neighborhoods, adding to its stigma. . . . Research suggests that the more that programs are thought to favor minorities, the less political support they attract." The 2024 election likely made such attitudes worse. Political support is especially important because, unlike entitlement programs like food stamps and Medicaid, which automatically grow with need, housing rental aid is set by Congress each year as part of discretionary funding.[136]

The myth of market fundamentalism pervades. The private market is for the most part unable to produce new rental housing affordable to extremely low-income renters. This is because the rents these household can afford to pay usually do not cover the development costs and operating expenses of such housing. The federal government has historically not subsidized the development costs of new housing for extremely low-income renters nearly enough. There presently is enough funding for housing vouchers for only one in four households that qualify—and not all owners accept vouchers.[137]

In 2020, there was discussion of national housing rental assistance "for every eligible family," but there was relatively little federal legislative progress. Congress rejected a bill that included expansion of housing rental assistance. There was little discussion of significant housing progress in the 2024 campaign.[138]

The evidence is clear: The nation needs to begin building affordable rental housing again. The shortage now is 7.3 million affordable and available homes. There are only 34 affordable and available homes for every 100 extremely low-income renter households in the United States. The shortage increased over the pandemic. Disproportionately, people of color are extremely low-income renters. Nineteen percent of Black households, 16% of American Indian or Alaska Native households, and 13% of Latino households are extremely low-income renters—compared to 6% of white non-Latino households.[139]

The need is to preserve the affordable housing rental homes that already exist, build new housing, and significantly expand vouchers to all eligible households to bridge the gap between incomes and rent. Legislation needs to better protect voucher holders from discrimination and to require local governments to eliminate restrictive zoning rules that increase the cost of development and limit housing supply.[140]

To build that housing, we need to return to the kind of pre-1980s partnerships that were successful among federal programs, Shore Bank, the Community Restoration Corporation, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and Enterprise Community Partners. Most of the private sector actors are still present today, waiting to fulfill this potential.

The power grid to supply capital to build affordable housing needs to be turned back on, improved, and made universally available to all who qualify for it.

The banking system needs to be held more accountable for its legal obligations in housing. Through government-sponsored entities like Fannie Mae, the secondary market must become much more of a factor in producing and preserving affordable rental housing, in addition to supporting affordable homeownership. The housing goals need to be integrated with the goals of the new bubble-up economic, employment, and industrial policy focused on the poor, working class, and the middle class, as discussed above.[141]

Adequately supplying affordable housing to Kerner constituents also means creating viable interventions, to ensure that homeless Americans have the support they need to sustain their lives. There are models to scale up. For example, since 2009 the federal government has reduced by half homelessness among veterans, and the Realization Project in California tracks at-risk people into jobs that pay enough to live a self-supporting life.[142]

The financing of affordable housing needs to begin by again acknowledging the nation's class- and race-based inequality. The federal government today spends less on subsidizing housing for low-income Americans than on subsidizing housing for better-off Americans. The federal government spends $36 billion annually on housing assistance for households earning up to $40,000 a year while spending almost $44 billion annually on housing assistance for households earning $200,000 or more, including the mortgage-interest deduction, real estate tax deduction, and other deductions related to real estate. Annual federal housing spending per household is $1,529 for households making between $0 and $20,000 in annual income, compared with $6,076 per household earning $200,000 or more. The mortgage-interest or real estate tax deductions are pure entitlements: If you qualify, you get access to those deductions freely, without absolute limits. This inequity is indefensible for the richest country in history and its reform can help generate the resources needed for affordable housing.[143]

Reversing Fair Housing Failures

Dr. King was deeply aware of how race and class reinforced one another in low-income neighborhoods. Before his death, he had become certain that a fair housing policy barring housing discrimination and integrating neighborhoods was critical. He was aware that governmental action, private prejudice, and suburbanite desire for homogeneous affluent environments contributed to segregation. Dr. King believed that racial discrimination in housing made it possible for city officials to create different levels of service for people of color and for whites—in everything from schools and hospitals to policing and recreation.[144]

Today, we know that Dr. King was right to say that the most powerful cause of metropolitan segregation nationwide was federal, state, and local government policy.

Many explicitly segregationist governmental actions ended in the late 20th century. Yet they continue to determine today's racial segregation patterns. Such patterns have included zoning rules that classified white neighborhoods as residential and Black neighborhoods as commercial or industrial; segregated public housing projects that replaced integrated low-income areas; federal subsidies for suburban

development conditioned on Black exclusion; federal and local requirements for property deeds and neighborhood agreements that prohibited resale of white-owned property to or occupancy by Blacks; tax favoritism for private institutions that practiced segregation; municipal boundary lines designed to separate African American neighborhoods from white neighborhoods so as to deny necessary services to the former; support for real estate, insurance, and banking regulators who tolerated and sometimes required racial segregation; and urban renewal plans whose purpose was to shift Black populations from central cities to inner-ring suburbs. In Chapter 15, Lisa Rice, Michael Akinwumi, and Nikitra Bailey spell out these realities.[145]

The sheer weight of the evidence that this occurred is overwhelming. In his powerful bestselling book *The Color of Law,* Richard Rothstein demolishes the myth that government played a minor role in creating racial ghettos. He has uncovered conscious, purposeful policy of government segregation in metropolitan areas in the South, North, East, and West.[146]

White flight existed, and racial prejudice was certainly behind it. But the cause was not racial prejudice alone. Governmental policies turned Black neighborhoods into overcrowded slums. Government racial housing policies were complemented by governmental actions in support of segregated labor markets—policies that prevented minorities from acquiring the economic strength to move to middle-class communities, even if they had been permitted to do so.[147]

The failure to implement solutions to overcome centuries of race-based, discriminatory policies and practices also meant that when the nation experienced macrolevel crises, like the Great Recession of 2008 and the COVID-19 pandemic, communities of color were disproportionately impacted—further widening inequality.[148]

Discriminatory policies created distinct advantages for white families, leading to massive homeownership, wealth, and credit gaps that persist today. Because home value has been the cornerstone of intergenerational wealth in the United States, historical housing practices have had long-term effects in creating current wealth inequalities, where white wealth has soared while Black wealth has remained stagnant. In 2019, median white family wealth was $188,200, while median Black family wealth was $24,100. These wealth disparities reflect intergenerational transfer disparities: 30% of white families have received an inheritance, compared with only 10% of Black families.[149]

As a function of the racial wealth gap, today the white ownership rate is 67% higher than the Black homeownership rate, 45% higher than for Latinos, and 20% higher than the rate for the Asian community.[150]

In turn, governmental racial housing segregation policies created education segregation. Schools are segregated because the neighborhoods in which they are located are segregated.

The Kerner Commission emphasized that "areas outside of ghetto neighborhoods should be opened up to occupancy by racial minorities," and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 was designed to end racial discrimination in housing. But meeting fair housing goals has been well down the priority list of most presidents and housing secretaries since 1968, and in vital ways the law has not been enforced.[151]

For the first time, the federal government, therefore, now needs to comprehensively enforce the Fair Housing Act of 1968. The potential for such enforcement was at least maintained in 2015, when the Supreme Court, in *Texas Department of Housing and Urban Affairs v. The Inclusive Communities Project*, preserved a well-established and critical tool in the battle to ensure a more integrated society. The ruling was that the law allows plaintiffs to challenge government or private sector policies that have a discriminatory effect, without having to show evidence of intentional discrimination. This "results-oriented," or outcome-based, language supports what the law calls "disparate-impact liability," which has been part of the accepted meaning of the Fair Housing Act for decades. In the majority opinion in the case, the Court acknowledged that "much progress remains to be made in our Nation's continuing struggle against racial isolation."[152]

The federal government needs to require state and local governments that receive federal money to direct significant housing into healthier neighborhoods where residents are provided access to transportation, jobs, and decent schools. Enforcing the law and making sure that state and local governments actually pursue racial and economic integration will help poor whites as well as poor people of color. Low-income whites make up more than a third of the 4 to 6 million poor families who receive federal housing assistance. They also will benefit from broader access to housing in healthier communities and consequent access to better schools and improved job opportunities.[153]

The 1968 Fair Housing Act needs to be bolstered to bar exclusionary zoning laws that prohibit townhouses or apartments in single-family neighborhoods. Incentives should be provided to communities. For example, in neighborhoods where housing exclusion is reduced, federal and local funds should be directed to security-creating community-based nonprofit organizations, as we have discussed earlier. In addition, penalties should be considered when municipalities continue to engage in discriminatory zoning.[154]

One excellent model has been in Montgomery County, Maryland. Montgomery County requires developers to set aside units for low-income families. Disadvantaged students from those families are able to attend local schools. In a RAND Corporation evaluation of the program, the math achievement gap between the lower-income youth and their middle-class peers was reduced by half in the early part of the 21st century. The Montgomery County findings have been reinforced by Harvard University findings in other locations. Children whose families received federal assistance to move to better neighborhoods were more likely to attend college, attend better colleges, and earn higher incomes as adults than children whose families had not received the assistance.[155]

We now need to scale up the Montgomery County and the Harvard-evaluated models nationally. The goals of the replications should be housing integration, improved school performance for low-income youth who move with their families, more economic opportunities for their parents, no increase in crime and fear in the neighborhood, and no decline in property values. The goals, therefore, require close coordination among housing, education, and law enforcement agencies.

Ideally, such scaling up needs to be carried out in locations with coalitions of supporters on both the right and the left. Advocates on the right might include developers who chafe at restrictions on building density. Advocates on the left could include civil rights organizations, public school systems, and affordable housing advocates. In addition, the federal government should:[156]

- Scale up other successfully evaluated mobility programs—like the Chicago Gautreaux program and the federal Moving to Opportunity program—to encourage low-income families and people of color to move into better neighborhoods.
- Provide financial incentives to much more widely replicate other inclusionary zoning programs already in effect in over 100 jurisdictions nationwide. In these jurisdictions, developers have been offered incentives to set aside a specific number of housing units for lower-income and minority families.
- Adjust existing housing subsidies so they are sufficient to allow low-income residents to rent housing in better neighborhoods.
- Reform the Community Reinvestment Act and the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act to subject private mortgage lenders and homeowner insurance companies to regulatory oversight—on issues like predatory lending and redlining.
- Pass federal legislation that prevents use of federal funds (like Community Development Block Grants) to promote involuntary displacement of low-income households.
- Explore how to scale up the success of social housing in European cities—for example in Paris, which has successfully tripled the number of social housing units since the 1990s.

In terms of the vision needed to move forward in these and related ways at the present time, Leah Rothstein and Richard Rothstein give us their bubble-up local-based strategy in *Just Action*, the book sequel to Richard Rothstein's *The Color of Law*. The Rothsteins summarize their *Just Action* strategy in Chapter 16. They endorse both "place-based" and "mobility" efforts led by citizens and nonprofit organizations at the grassroots:[157]

> There is yet no public or political will to adopt national remedies that are commensurate with the enormity of the damage segregation has caused. Yet although federal policy played an important role in the imposition of racial segregation, its sustenance is now often maintained and even exacerbated by local programs and practices. The 20 million Americans who participated in racial justice protests and marches in 2020—Black, white, and of other ethnicities, from low-income as well as middle-class and affluent neighborhoods—are a potential base for a reinvigorated activist Civil Rights Movement that could begin the redress of segregation in their own communities. After the demonstrations were over, however, too many went home, put Black Lives Matter signs in their windows and on lawns, and did nothing further to make

> their posters' call a reality. In large part, they did not know what to do, and nobody asked them to do anything.
>
> Our 2023 book *Just Action* describes many local programs and practices that reinforce racial segregation and suggests how community groups could challenge them to win significant victories. We begin by noting that few Blacks and whites now have the biracial and multiethnic social relationships that could undergird a reinvigorated activist Civil Rights Movement. Many Americans interact with other races in their workplaces but then return to segregated neighborhoods where their conversations about personal, social, or political issues almost exclusively take place with people of similar racial and ethnic backgrounds. This makes building the relationships needed for an effective movement seem daunting, but it is not impossible. . . .
>
> Local groups can undertake many other policies described in *Just Action* that begin the process of redressing segregation and fulfilling a promise at which the Kerner Commission's report only hinted. But its warning that if we did not take such actions we would become two racially distinct (and frequently mutually hostile) societies has not only become reality but been surpassed. Although progress has been made in some areas of American life, most notably in the growth of a well-educated black middle-class that has desegregated many workplaces, we are more segregated residentially than we were in 1968. Civil rights advocates devote too much of their time and effort proposing federal reforms with little chance of enactment. The place to start is local, mobilizing neighbors to act to redress segregation in their own communities.

This, of course, will not be easy, especially after the 2024 election. But nowhere else do we need as much the new will strategies discussed below in *Creating Justice*. One way to support the Rothsteins' grassroots mobilization is to recreate and expand the HUD Office of Neighborhood Development led by Geno Baroni in the late 1970s, as we already have advocated earlier when it comes to crime prevention. Importantly, the community organizing should build on Baroni's success in creating dialogue among poor and working-class people of color and white urban ethnic groups. See below for how Baroni's actions are complemented today by William Barber's organizing across class and race.

PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY

The Kerner Report did not include a section on public health policy. But it did conclude, "The residents of the racial ghetto are significantly less healthy than most other Americans. They suffer from higher morality rates, higher incidence of major diseases and lower availability and utilization of medical services."[158]

Here is evidence on how things have changed since the Kerner Report:[159]

- The life expectancy of Black Americans was 6.5 years lower than that of white Americans in 1967 and was 5.5 years lower in 2022.

- The infant mortality rate of Black infants was 1.9 times higher than that of white infants in 1967 and was 2.4 times higher in 2022.
- The maternal mortality of Black mothers was 3.6 times higher than that of white mothers in 1967 and was 2.6 times higher in 2022. The Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe vs. Wade* in 2023 is likely to increase the 2022 ratio.
- The mortality rate from all causes for Black Americans was similar to that of White Americans in 1967 and was 26.7% higher in 2022.
- Chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer, cerebrovascular disease, diabetes, and HIV impact Black Americans at higher rates than white Americans at all ages younger than 65 years.

There is extensive evidence on the dysfunction of the American health care system. Eighty-five million Americans are either uninsured or underinsured. Tens of millions cannot afford the mental health treatments they may need. In 2022, U.S. health care spending was $4.5 trillion, about 17% of GDP. This averages to $13,493 per person. By comparison, the average cost of health care per person in other industrialized democracies is less than half as much. Yet American health outcomes lag far behind those industrialized democracies—for example, in terms of avoidable deaths, obesity, and infant mortality. Poor people can expect to die 12 to 13 years sooner than rich people in the United States, with the death rate gap between rich and poor increasing by 570% since 1980.[160]

As Michelle Williams, Herbert C. Smitherman, and Anil N. F. Aranha discuss in Chapters 17 and 18, to make American public health policy much more cost-effective and cost-beneficial, we need to shift our mindset from treatment to prevention and primary care. They define public health as including not only care in doctor's offices and hospitals but also in terms of making sure that all people can live in safe communities, access sufficient nutrition, attend good schools, and pursue gainful employment—among other critical factors that contribute to our overall health. The goal is to holistically improve the well-being of all people.[161]

Universal Health Care for All Citizens

Today, all industrialized democracies have guaranteed health care for all citizens—except for the United States. This evidence provides solid ground to advocate for guaranteed health care in America.[162]

Historically, federal health care policy has been designed, implicitly and explicitly, to exclude Black Americans and other people of color—who, as we have seen, face shorter, sicker lives compared to whites. In the 20th century, medical care was designed as an employer-based insurance system that was difficult for people of color to access. There has never been any period in American history where the health of Blacks was equal to whites.[163]

By the 1950s, the National Medical Association (the leading Black medical society) was advocating for a federal health care system for all citizens. This was opposed by the American Medical Association (the largest medical society), which,

among other assertions, called a national medical care system un-American. However, Medicaid insurance for low-income people and Medicare insurance for seniors were passed in 1965 as part of a plan to bring the legal segregation of hospitals to an end. Still, citizens who did not fit into specific age, employment, or income groups had little or no access to health care.[164]

In 2010, the Affordable Health Care Act brought health insurance to almost 20 million previously uninsured adults—with the biggest beneficiaries being people of color, who obtained insurance coverage through the law's Medicaid expansion. The evidence is that states that accepted the Medicaid expansion saw a drop in disease-related deaths, and there were measurable decreases in some racial health disparities. The percentage of Americans without health insurance has fallen by almost half since 2010.[165]

Nonetheless, some states have refused to participate in Medicaid expansion. And some naysayers who originally opposed the Affordable Health Care Act continue to try to repeal the legislation. This is one of the clearest examples of how, notwithstanding overwhelming evidence of success, many in the Kerner- and *Creating Justice*-related policy debate in America base assertions on ideology, supposition, and denial.[166]

As of 2022, there were over 25 million nonelderly uninsured Americans, almost 10% of the population. Over 41% of the American population consists of people of color, but they account for over 58% of the uninsured population.[167] Many proposals for health insurance reform have been made, but the most comprehensive and Kerner-relevant proposal is universal coverage that is automatic and free, providing basic medical care (rather than a high-end experience).[168] According to 2023 Gallup polling, 57% of U.S. adults believe that the federal government should ensure that all Americans have health care coverage. (Fifty three percent prefer that the system be based on private insurance, and 45% support a government-run system.)[169]

The Social Determinants of Health

Beyond universal health care coverage, Kerner-relevant policy needs to fully incorporate the broad definition of public health by Williams, Smitherman, and Aranha, above. They build on the Social Determinants of Health as defined by the World Health Organization. Research has divided the Social Determinants of Health for a person into medical factors and nonmedical factors. It has been estimated that medical factors account for about 20% of health outcomes in the United States—including access to care, the type and quality of medical care received, affordability of care, appropriateness of care, and effectiveness of care. Nonmedical factors account for about 80% of health care outcomes for a person. They include individual income, education, employment and job security (40%); health behaviors like diet and physical activity (30%); and physical environment and housing (10%).[170]

Income is especially important. Williams observes:[171]

> The old saying tells us that "health is wealth"—shorthand for the idea that no amount of money can substitute for physical, mental, and spiritual prosperity. That's true, of course, but an inverse formulation is equally important: "wealth begets health." The

> presence of wealth allows individuals to invest in building blocks of life that define 80 to 90% of our health. They can eat good whole foods, maintain a stable home in a non-polluted neighborhood, and avoid financial stresses that undermine mental health.

As Smitherman and Aranha underscore, race interacts with all of the other socioeconomic factors. "This is partly because of the lasting effects of historical and present-day oppression, discrimination, and government policies on the financial/economic and, thus, health outcomes of Black Americans and other communities of color. Black Americans continue to face more barriers to education, credit, economic opportunity, and healthy environments than their white counterparts."[172]

Given the determinants of health, most of the economic, employment, education, youth development, crime prevention, criminal justice, and housing recommendations in *Creating Justice* have the power to improve public health outcomes for Kerner constituencies—as well as for the working and middle classes. New bubble-up economic policies focused on these populations can, if implemented wisely, reduce income and wealth inequality—generating income that can be used to address the nonmedical determinants of health. Insuring that all children who qualify are served by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is crucial for improving their nutrition. Making sure that all children receive preschool, providing enough funding to catch up post-pandemic students who need mentoring and tutoring, and scaling up college education in prison will build on the evidence that education is correlated with health. Police reform, elimination of qualified immunity, and genuine gun control can lower violence, fear, distrust, and mental stress in low-income communities. Expanding the availability of affordable housing and scaling up reformed rental housing vouchers can help create more safe and secure neighborhoods and reduce chronic homelessness, with all its pressures. Reforming social media and reducing misinformation and disinformation can positively impact the mental health of youth.

While some deniers actually oppose the words "public health," we believe these words can, as necessary, be easily reframed as improving the lives of children. Some governors have successfully used such alternative wording.[173]

STATE AND LOCAL POLICY

As a result of the 2024 election, we are in a time not necessarily receptive to evidence-based policy that works and receptive to what doesn't work. While it is important to oppose this frame at the federal level, we also need to seek out and partner with governors and mayors more committed to evidence-based policies and *Creating Justice* priorities.

Part II

NEW WILL

To legislate, fund, and implement policies like the ones just reviewed, the Kerner Commission cautioned that "new will" was needed from the American people.

To create new will as America approaches its 250th birthday in 2026, and over the next decade, *Creating Justice* recommends that we:

- strengthen the democracy of voting;
- integrate both class and race into election campaigns;
- strategically mobilize Kerner constituencies in those campaigns;
- advance underlying structural reform to the democratic system;
- establish a federal Department of Democracy;
- create a third wave of moral fusion and coalition building;
- expose exploitation and denial with more intensity;
- fortify the movement for evidence-based policy;
- combat disinformation and reinforce nonprofit media;
- mobilize universities to more effectively ask what Americans can do for their country; and
- enhance how the visual and performing arts can better support Kerner-aligned action.

STRENGTHEN THE DEMOCRACY OF VOTING

When she received the 2024 Radcliffe Medal, Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor reminded us, "It's the voice of people, of constituents, that can change laws that you think are unfair."[174] It follows that, if more people with Kerner priorities vote and elect more Kerner-supportive candidates, new will potentially can be generated over time by the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. More and better trained nonprofit and related organizations are needed to strengthen the voting process.

Yet, over recent years, lawmakers in 39 states have introduced more than 400 bills designed to restrict, dilute, and undermine the votes of people of color—along with the votes of poor and low-income people, women, youth, and seniors, among others. For example, early voting and mail voting have been attacked and diminished. In some places it was made illegal to provide food and water to voters waiting in line. Another 150 bills introduced in 27 states would allow partisan interference

in elections.[175] As MacArthur Award–winner Rev. William Barber II warns in Chapter 23, "[M]assive voter suppression and election subversion campaigns have been conducted over the past decade. Through gerrymandering, voter purges, voter ID requirements, and cutbacks to voter access programs, incumbents in some of the poorest states in the nation are trying to make it more difficult to vote."[176]

A naysaying coalition has continued to pass significant voter restrictions. Billionaire-backed advocacy groups have been lobbying for new state level legislation. The legislation has been characterized as "radical incrementalism." It is a step-by-step approach, often under the radar, that is trying to be more politically acceptable than the broader legislation that provoked widespread protests against voter suppression in 2021.[177] In 2024, the well-funded movement to restrict voting rights gained new momentum via a powerful network of lawyers and activists that planned to contest elections, delay vote counts, allow changes after votes are cast and refuse certification if the results were not in their favor.[178]

The Voting Rights Lab warns that now it is "increasingly the case that your zip code determines your level of access to democracy. It's really a tale of two democracies . . ." Nonetheless, as the Voting Rights Lab also has documented, a counter movement with new laws making voting more accessible has emerged in some states since 2020. Examples of new state laws increasing accessibility include restoring felon voting rights, expanding early and mail voting opportunities, and providing more time for voters to fix errors on ballots. These are new will–generating changes that could allow for more legislation in support of the priorities in *Creating Justice*.[179]

As Robert Kuttner concludes, on balance electoral democracy is better defended today than in 2020, as the 2024 election demonstrated, even though voting rights activists need to be vigilant. [180]

The thousands of sophisticated nonprofit and related organizations needed for continued voting rights advocacy nationally and locally include long-standing groups like Common Cause and the League of Women Voters, relatively new nonprofit entities like Black Voters Matter (see Chapter 26) and organized labor. In coordination, the Department of Justice needs to use all its authorities to combat the new wave of restrictive voting laws—and every level of government needs to reinforce voter rights.

INTEGRATE CLASS AND RACE IN ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

As we continue to make voting more accessible, what messaging can best increase the likelihood that citizens will vote for Kerner priorities?

In Chapter 25, Anat Shenker-Osorio sets out a grassroots evidence-based campaign messaging and Kerner reinforcing strategy that she developed in Minnesota. Shenker-Osorio calls the strategy the Race Class Narrative. In polling trials, she and her colleagues, including Heather McGhee, author of *The Sum of Us*,[181] found that campaign messaging worked best with voters when it integrated both class and race.

This is especially powerful for *Creating Justice* because such integration validates what Dr. King was advocating in 1968 at the time of the Kerner Commission—that the Civil Rights Movement needed to transform into a movement for economic justice.[182]

Shenker-Osorio found that campaign messages integrating *both* class and race were more likely than other messages to mobilize voters with Kerner values and to persuade unsure voters. This held for people of color as well as for whites. The class and race messaging was based on several principles. One was to be positive—to set forth very specific policies in a campaign. Another principle was to paint a "beautiful tomorrow," offering people a sense of what the world would be like if Kerner and related policies were put into practice. This was a narrative clearly identifying outcomes that the evidence-based policy would deliver. A final principle was to identify who was responsible for the problem that the policy was trying to solve. "When we fail to make clear that a problem is person-made, it becomes challenging or even impossible to demand it be person-fixed. When we fail to correctly identify who is responsible, we risk feeding the all-too-ready assumption that people experiencing poor outcomes are the ones responsible for this."[183]

Shenker-Osorio points out that such messaging and these principles were what the Kerner Commission used when it said: "It is time to make good the promises of American democracy to all citizens—urban and rural, white and Black, Spanish-surname, American Indian and every minority group."[184]

Once a message was fully developed by Shenker-Osorio in Minnesota, it was implemented in campaigns by getting disparate groups to repeat the same message ("building the choir") and by mounting a multimedia production. The result was "an affirmative values-based narrative that calls out the other side for their politics of cruelty and entices a multiracial coalition to come together for better."[185]

Details of this John Lewis–style "good trouble" strategy that preaches to the choir and draws in undecideds are found in Chapter 25. Given the results of the 2024 presidential election, the strategy of Shenker-Osorio is even more relevant and required in the future. Many other complementary, common-sense, *Creating Justice*–relevant voter strategies are in Anand Giridharadas' book *The Persuaders: At the Front Lines of the Fight for Hearts, Minds and Democracy*. To illustrate, Giridharadas encourages "deep canvassing" by campaign workers going door to door. In some campaigns, deep canvassers have taken time with people willing to talk to them—not just for 3 minutes but for 30 minutes or more, if allowed. The canvassers take time to listen—and to build rapport, trust, and relationships with the people they are canvassing. There is evidence that, as a result, attitudes can change. In addition, newer, long-term sustained outreach to voters appeared to hold promise in the 2024 campaign. All such messaging strategies need to be tested as ways that increase voter turnout. A large number of Americans who could have voted in 2024 did not vote—either by choice or because they thought it would not have made a difference. We need to motivate them for Kerner priorities in future elections.[186]

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STRATEGICALLY MOBILIZE KERNER CONSTITUENCIES IN ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

National polls show that, today, majorities of Americans across classes agree on a good many Kerner priorities. For example, majorities believe the privileged and corporations haven't paid their share of taxes for many decades. National polls show that child tax credits, preschool for all children, paid family leave, women's reproductive rights, expansion of labor unions, and a $15 per hour federal living wage are policies approved by majorities. In some polls, well over 50% of Americans say book banning is a major problem.[187]

Based on such evidence and on her experience in Minnesota, Shenker-Osorio has shown that substantial support can be generated within the American middle class for the class and race messaging she successfully tested in Minnesota.[188] What other overlapping voter constituencies are especially important for advocating Kerner and *Creating Justice* new will? Poor and low-income voters, the white working class, interracial coalitions of poor and working-class people, coalitions of people of color, younger voters, and women voters are among the most important leading constituency groups needed.

Poor and Low-Income Constituencies

In Chapter 23, William Barber views both poor citizens and near poor low-income people of color as mass mobilizations catalysts for new will. The poor and the near poor make up a third of the U.S. electorate and 40% in swing states. But their voting turnout has been disappointing because, says Barber, "they have not had many politicians from either party . . . willing to speak directly to them for decades." Hence, those who are suppressing the vote "wouldn't be fighting us this hard if they didn't understand our power. It is essential that all of us who want to create a new will and revive the heart of American democracy also understand our power. In many parts of this nation, we still have more eligible voters sitting on the sidelines than active voters backing either side in political races. This means if we organize and mobilize poor and low-income voters, they have the power to be decision-makers in every election. We must reclaim the moral leverage of a movement that votes, continues to organize, and then keeps showing up to vote again." As part of that leverage, polling shows that in national elections people of color are especially interested in higher wages, better schools, effective gun control, and police reform.[189]

Working-Class Constituencies

Given the outcomes of the 2024 election, new energy and organizing strategy obviously is needed to increase support for *Creating Justice* values from the white working class, which, especially beginning in the late 1960s, began to diverge from Kerner as a result of campaigns ostensibly focused on rising crime and drugs. One way to begin is via the new bubble-up economic policy, above, with its

priority on creating opportunities for all workers and its support for small business development.

Based on a 2023 YouGov national survey of noncollege voters, working-class Americans are in fact supportive of a number of policies that fit with Kerner and *Creating Justice* priorities. For example, there is enthusiastic working-class approval of more public investment in apprenticeships as career pathways to help noncollege workers acquire better skills—as well as support for "affordable short term training programs that combine work and learning." A majority polled agreed on a pragmatic position to "reduce illegal entry and increase legal immigration to bring in workers because our economy needs to grow." There was substantial alignment with reproductive rights and abortion access. Sixty percent of those polled supported public schools and were against voucher legislation for subsidies to send children to private and religious schools. There was deep concern over attempts to ban books from school libraries. Working-class voters approved funding more mental health crisis first responders. The need for strengthened voter rights was recognized, and considerable concern was voiced over the disproportionate influence of the rich and corporations in the American system. Overall, there was support for commonsense alternatives to stridently ideological views from either the political left or the political right. Other attitudes, for example, on the role of government, were less aligned with Kerner priorities. But the point here is that the YouGov poll identified many evidence-based opportunities for more convergence on Kerner and *Creating Justice* priorities by working-class Americans, many of whom were left behind when manufacturing jobs declined and many of whom are homeless and addicted.[190]

Another recent poll of working-class voters in the Midwest by In Union and the Factory Towns Project of American Family Voices found a number of complementary findings—especially anger over how corporations undertook price gouging, how wealthy corporate CEOs and billionaires aren't paying what they should in taxes, and how the richest 1% of Americans is gaming the system. There also is working-class concern over defining the right to a secure retirement. The In Union/Factory Towns survey calls on unions and other movement activists to get canvassers talking to working-class voters in ways not dissimilar from the practical recommendations made by Anat Shenker-Osorio and Anand Giridharadas.[191]

More extensive and reality-based organizing, then, is needed to better translate all of these grassroots polling opinions into legislative action at the local, state, and national levels. And, with the same sincerity and respect given to lower-income Americans, *Creating Justice* argues that the underlying issue for working class constituencies is exploitation by the rich, the privileged, and corporations.

Coalitions of People of Color and Whites

As co-chair of the continuation of Dr. King's Poor Peoples Campaign, William Barber has made great progress in coalition-building among poor, low-income, and working-class voters—people of color and whites. For example, he has underscored how the poverty rate is higher for Blacks than for whites, but how the

number of people in poverty is higher for whites than for Blacks. In the important new book *White Poverty*, William Barber, with Jonathan Wilson-Hargrove, address how the reality of extensive white poverty can be used to mitigate racism and bring together poor, near poor, and working-class Americans.[192]

Barber reminds us that, as he began to build the economic justice movement, Dr. King was identifying common ground between people of color and whites. Today, most of the economic and employment policies recommended in *Creating Justice* are applicable to *both* poor, low-income, and working-class people of color and whites. There also is common ground on many of the education, criminal justice, housing, public health, and housing policies advocated here. Black–white housing integration coalition-building is identified by Richard and Leah Rothstein in Chapter 16 and in their book *Just Action*.[193] There is nothing more important for the creation of Kerner new will than organizing these constituencies to solve their common problems created by those who exploit the system.

We need to replicate the Barber model much more widely. The 2024 election campaign suffered from lack of long-term resources to scale up the model.

Creating Justice includes chapters with Black, Latino, Native American, and Asian American perspectives, and we call for these constituencies to better partner. Through Kerner events like one that was keynoted by a high Native American public official, the Eisenhower Foundation has begun to seek such partnerships.[194]

In the Kerner year of 1968, Senator Robert F. Kennedy was, to a significant extent, able to bring such constituencies together as he ran for president.[195] Today we need more national, state, and local candidates with his kind of chemistry and skill in championing equality without elitism and populism without racism.

Youth

Younger Americans need to be challenged to model some of their intensity on the pro–Great Society advocacy of youth in the 1960s. Candidates are needed who can communicate in the language and with the metaphors of youth today. Youth also may need to better understand the evidence-based success of bubble-up economics and industrial policy, especially in comparison to the failed economic policy that led to the 2008 Great Recession. Still, polls show that Gen Z is receptive to Kerner-related priorities like the need for public sector leadership, investments in human capital, strengthened voter rights, replication of education models that work, expansion of affordable housing, and control of guns. As noted earlier, the first person from Generation Z elected to Congress has evolved through his gun control advocacy and personal experience with gun violence.[196]

Our racially diverse and younger electorate needs to expand advocacy against generational voter suppression. College campuses often are split into congressional districts in efforts to gerrymander the youth vote. Students often face an array of impediments to vote simply because they are young—like voter registration obstacles and inaccessible polling places. All of this means that the youth constituency is crucial for creating new will.[197]

Women

The 2022 Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Woman's Health Organization* to overturn *Roe v. Wade* has resulted in pro-choice victories in referendums in many states, strongly supported by women.[198] Pew Research Center polling shows that, nationally, abortion is supported by 73% of Blacks, 59% of Hispanics, 76% of Asian Americans, 60% of whites—and 64% of women.[199] Abortion rights are congruent with the priorities and the needs of poor and low-income women of color. Restoring *Roe v. Wade* is a women's, Kerner, and *Creating Justice* issue. The multipronged attack on reproductive rights in the naysaying Project 2025 report is deeply unpopular among the American people.[200] In light of the 2024 election results, the question is what action women will take over future election cycles.

Other Constituencies

There are many other constituencies that need to be mobilized to create new will for Kerner and *Creating Justice* priorities—including senior citizens (especially on health policy and social security), the LGBTQ+ community, and political independents and moderates. On the latter, some moderate candidates make promises but then become silent when elected. In his classic letter of civil disobedience from the Birmingham jail, Dr. King expressed frustration with moderates. He warned, "Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will." We now need to explore how moderates can better support Kerner, even if they don't agree on everything.[201]

Mobilizing all of these constituencies means not just persuading people to vote and getting nonprofit and other organizations to increase advocacy for Kerner priorities—it also means motivating more *Creating Justice*-supportive citizens to run for office. In the decades after the Kerner Commission, one of the most effective national nonprofit organizations training Kerner-supportive people for public office was Wellstone Action, formed by the late Senator Paul Wellstone. Wellstone Action created "leadership pipelines" by partnering with local nonprofit organizations to recruit indigenous community leaders to run for office. A high priority was placed on recruiting people of color, women, young Americans, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Wellstone Action sought out individuals who were effective in building trust. Candidates and their teams were equipped with the skills, tactics, and confidence to run and win. The training combined grassroots organizing, public policy, electoral strategy, and digital technology. Wellstone Action trained thousands.[202] However, in a setback to progress on new will, the Wellstone legacy has gone dormant because of internal disputes at the organization, which has changed its name.[203] Some of the organizations that today are continuing stellar work to train candidates with Kerner values include Arena, Run for Something, the Zinc Collective, Higher Heights for America, the Latino Victory Project, and EMILYs List. Yet the need exists for American philanthropy to substantially increase support for the Wellstone Action vision and for leadership development. A sea change increase in resources could make a big difference in enhancing new will.

ADVANCE UNDERLYING STRUCTURAL REFORM TO THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM

To encourage more people to vote—and to vote in concert with Kerner priorities—we need to abolish the Electoral College, pass the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, legislate automatic and compulsory voting, eliminate gerrymandering, modify the Senate filibuster, reform campaign finance, and create regular turnover on the Supreme Court. These are difficult issues, especially given the outcome of the 2024 election, but the generation of new will depends on upgrading advocacy, however long it takes.

Abolish the Electoral College

The Electoral College has led U.S. presidential candidates to focus on battleground states. This neglects noncompetitive states and the concerns of Kerner constituencies in them. It undermines the democratic ideal of representing the interests of all citizens, irrespective of their backgrounds. The need to fairly represent all the people in national elections has led to long-standing advocacy to abolish the Electoral College or to modify it with a more democratic system. Abolishing the Electoral College already has considerable support. A 2023 Gallup poll found that 65% of U.S. adults believe the way the president is elected should be changed so that the winner of the popular vote nationwide wins the presidency. Eighty-two percent of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents had this view and 47% of Republicans and Republican leaners. In the last quarter century, the winner of the presidential election has often lost the popular vote. That is not democracy. "In a healthy system, one based on majority rule, the candidate with the most votes wins, and voters don't struggle to understand how the process works." On a hopeful note, nonprofit organizations like Common Cause are pushing ahead on the National Popular Vote Compact—in which states agree to give their electors to the winner of the *national* popular vote in presidential races, rather than the state's own popular vote. This would fix the problems of the Electoral College without needing to amend the Constitution.[204]

Pass the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act

The 1965 Voting Rights Act required that counties with a history of racial discrimination at the polls needed to obtain permission from the U.S. Justice Department before changing local voting laws or procedures. In 2013, in its *Shelby County v. Holder* decision, the Supreme Court effectively killed this part of the Voting Rights Act. The Supreme Court said that the once troubling turnout gap between white and Black voters in counties with histories of discrimination at the polls had disappeared. But that opinion was not evidence-based. In an important study, the Brennan Center for Justice presented evidence on how the *Shelby* decision

negatively impacted people of color. The racial turnout gap in the counties originally addressed by the 1965 Voting Rights Act has grown by 11 percentage points since the *Shelby* decision. Compared to whites, relative voter participation by people of color has declined. At the national level, the Brennan Center has concluded that over 9 million more people would have voted in the 2020 election if nonwhite voters had participated at the same rates as white voters. Moreover, as a result of the *Shelby* decision, about 1,700 polling places have closed around the country. Disproportionate numbers of those closings happened in communities of color. The data therefore argues for reinstatement of the original Voting Rights Act. That is what the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act does.[205]

The Brennan Center also warns that state voter suppression laws often have had a disproportionate impact on Native American voters—frequently by design. "Many Native American communities find voting difficult and inaccessible, often due to inadequate investment in voting resources and infrastructure on reservations. And some laws take direct aim at services Native American voters rely heavily on to remove existing barriers." Consequently, one part of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act allows tribes "to determine an assortment of items pertaining to voting, including the number and location of voter registration sites, polling places, and drop boxes on their reservations. It would also require states to accept tribal ID as voter identification." This is all the more reason for Congress to pass the John R. Lewis Act.[206]

Judith LeBlanc stresses in Chapter 21 that, as a section of the John R. Lewis Act, the Native American Voting Rights Act is a crucial piece of legislation aimed at addressing the unique challenges faced by Native American voters. Through enactment, the federal government would take a significant step toward reversing historical injustices that hinder full participation by Native Americans in the democratic process. The legislation is especially needed, LeBlanc tells us, because the Kerner Report fell short of recognizing the systemic issues faced by American Indians: "In its analysis, the Kerner report overlooked the historical trauma stemming from hundreds of years of policies that continue to reverberate through Indian Country. A more cross-cultural analysis was needed at the time to fully grasp the intricacies of the challenges faced by American Indians and to formulate effective solutions that respect and uplift Tribal sovereignty and cultural identity."[207] Such cross-cultural analysis still is very much needed.

LeBlanc quotes from President Johnson's 1968 message to Congress on Indigenous people being Forgotten Americans: "The words of the Indian have become our words—the names of our states and streams and landmarks. His myths and his heroes enrich our literature. His lore colors our art and our language. For two centuries, the American Indian has been a symbol of the drama and excitement of the earliest America. But for two centuries, he has been an alien in his own land." In a welcome reform, LeBlanc reports that the appointment of a Native American as Secretary of the Interior from 2021 to 2024 "spurred record numbers of Native candidates to run for office and has increased grassroots involvement in the electoral process."[208]

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Legislate Automatic and Compulsory Voting

The overall percentage of Americans who vote is lower than in many industrialized democracies. To help increase turnout, 24 states and the District of Columbia have automatic voter registration. There is evidence that automatic voter registration boosts turnout rates.[209] Potentially, automatic registration in all states could work to better support Kerner priorities, and so we support advocacy in this direction.

But in Chapter 24, Cornell Brooks is persuasive in arguing that we need to consider making voting compulsory. "Massive amounts of money are spent monitoring and protecting elections by civil rights groups without the government having an affirmative responsibility to not only protect the right to vote but maximize voting. If voting were treated like jury duty, that is being both a right and a responsibility, citizens would be expected and modestly incentivized to vote. Were America like, say, Australia where voting, not voting for any candidate or party, is compulsory, we could imagine a country where voter turnout is at least 80%. Accordingly, voter turnout rather than voter suppression would be the norm for all Americans and certainly for oft-excluded Black, Latino, Native American, disabled, and young voters."[210]

Eliminate Gerrymandering

Gerrymandering is the long-standing practice of redrawing the lines of legislative districts to help tip elections toward the party in power.

In recent years, there has been some progress by nonprofit and other organizations in reversing gerrymandering. For example, in 2022 in *Merril v. Milligan*, the Supreme Court affirmed a district court ruling that the state of Alabama's Congressional map was an illegal racial gerrymander and ordered a new map to be drawn in compliance with Section 2 of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. However, in *Alexander v. the South Carolina State Conference of the NAACP* in 2024, the Supreme Court shamefully reversed a lower court finding that a South Carolina map was an unconstitutional and starkly racist gerrymander. Other litigation is ongoing in several parts of the country. Clearly, then, gerrymandering is a battleground issue, and much more advocacy is needed. New bills outlawing gerrymandering are being proposed in Congress.[211]

Modify the Senate Filibuster

Historically, the makeup of the U.S. Senate was originally determined not by fairness but by a political arrangement among 13 sovereign entities that they would be represented equally in the Senate. This was in violation of the principle of "one man, one vote." As a result, the Senate cannot be called a representative body of the people. So, for example, voters in Wyoming are almost 80 times more powerful than voters in California—a violation of the principle of equal protection. To compound that inequality, because of the Senate's filibuster rule, one Senator from any state can veto the actions of the entire legislative body. Many times, majorities

in the House of Representatives and the Senate have supported Kerner-relevant legislation—only to see the legislation blocked. Examples include critical voting rights legislation, raises to the minimum wage, and commonsense gun reforms.[212] Consequently, elimination or modification of the filibuster could be one of the most important reforms needed for creating new will.

Reform Campaign Finance

The deepest threat to democracy is the enormous power of big money in politics. As President Franklin Roosevelt warned in 1936, "we know now that government by organized money is just as dangerous as government by organized mob." Nonetheless, the 2010 Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Communications Commission* allowed independent political action committees—super PACs—to spend unlimited amounts of money to support or oppose a candidate. *Citizens United* also paved the way for the creation of "dark money" organizations that can function like super PACs as long, ostensibly, as election activity is not their primary focus. This financial exploitation has deeply corrupted elections and deeply threatened democracy. The 2024 election further deepened the corruption. Polls have shown that a majority of Americans oppose the *Citizens United* ruling. But legislative progress on reform has been slow because of corporate and other special interest lobbying by the privileged. Nonprofit and related organizations have been trying, without success, to bring a case before the Supreme Court that might prompt a reversal of *Citizens United*. A greater confluence of elected candidates in the executive and legislative branches who oppose the present system is needed. In the meantime, we can recognize how at least some candidates who advocate Kerner policies can win against heavily bankrolled opponents through a multitude of small donations.[213]

Create Regular Turnover on the Supreme Court

In recent years, the Supreme Court majority has issued many Kerner-relevant rulings sharply at odds with public opinion. Some of the most controversial decisions have included taking away a woman's right to choose an abortion, gutting civil rights and voting legislation, and giving a president immunity from prosecution. Some see the court as downplaying the importance of Reconstruction and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments—which were passed to guarantee freedom, equality, and citizenship. Kenneth Mack sees a Supreme Court that appears focused "on aggrandizing its own unaccountable power to decide partisan issues at the expense of the other branches of government and the American people."[214] There also are ethical issues—like some members of the Supreme Court failing to report payments by wealthy donors, large gifts, and luxury vacations, as documented in a 2024 *ProPublica* series that won a Pulitzer prize.[215]

Overall, the evidence shows diminution of public support for the Supreme Court. In 2000, 62% of Americans nationally said they approved of the way the court was handling its job—while today, just over 40% approve. This approval is

near a historic low. That is why a recent commission has recommended limiting the terms of justices to 18 years. The Brennan Center for Justice has concluded that "would create regular turnover on the court and assure that every president would have an equal imprint on the court during a four year term." There are calls, as well, for an enforceable ethics code.[216]

ESTABLISH A FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF DEMOCRACY

The nation needs a permanent counter to the threats imperiling the democratic principles upon which America was founded. And we need a laboratory to further develop democracy and democratic methods of decision-making. In the words of LaTosha Brown in Chapter 26, "The Department of Homeland Security demonstrated the effectiveness of a coordinated response to diverse and evolving threats. Likewise, a Department of Democracy would serve as the epicenter for coordinating efforts across various agencies and departments to address the nuanced challenges posed by both external and internal forces seeking to undermine democratic principles."[217]

The mission of a new Department of Democracy would be to strengthen the right to vote in an ongoing way; collaborate with states to fortify election systems against interference; promote civic education on voting and democracy; advance methods of bridge building and conflict resolution, like the "calling in" advocated by MacArthur Award–winner Loretta J. Ross in Chapter 27; ask how leaders can better be chosen based on their honesty, integrity and humility; communicate that there is such a thing as truth and that it really matters; provide guidelines on what is misinformation and disinformation; help advance evidence-based policy across federal, state, and local government; and work to preserve the delicate balance needed in our democracy between individual rights and the common good.[218]

In Chapter 21, Judith LeBlanc points to the "urgent necessity of an Indigenous worldview that honors the interconnectedness of all living beings and seeks to live in harmony with the natural world." She says Indigenous values, including the importance of being "caretakers of Mother Earth," can be "medicine" to help heal the present divisions in America.[219] The Department of Democracy should be tasked with developing commonsense ways in which Kerner-relevant policies and campaign rules can express such interconnected Mother Earth values.

The Department of Democracy also needs to be charged with overseeing AI in service to democracy. As Cornell Brooks warns, "The civic infrastructure of American democracy may well crumble unless we find the means by which to harness rather than be harmed by the power of technology. Most obviously, artificial intelligence threatens to not merely disrupt but potentially degrade our democracy. Technologists are already warning us about the potential for misinformation and disinformation, the capacity of large language programs to deceptively write laws that human voters may or may not sanction, as well as the ability for AI to personalize digital communication to deceive voters."[220]

CREATE A THIRD WAVE OF MORAL FUSION AND COALITION-BUILDING

The movement for new will across most classes and all races needs to be framed in the language of public morality.

The moral argument is that America today is a well-armed, powerfully weaponized state that fails to provide the Four Freedoms in the famous speech by President Franklin Roosevelt that set forth many of the founding principles of the United Nations.[221]

Moral framing has a long history in America. Morally grounded coalitions among Blacks and whites were successful during Reconstruction. White supremacists then instituted Jim Crow laws in opposition. Moral fusion coalitions among Blacks and whites reemerged in the 1950s and 1960s. These partnerships led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Fair Housing Act of 1968, and complementary Great Society programs. Opposing this progress, white supremacists carried out their law-and-order "Southern Strategy" of "positive polarization"—a racially coded message to the (white) "silent majority" that led to many of the race and class divisions we see in American society today.[222] Those divisions deepened in the 2024 presidential elections.

As William Barber advocates in Chapter 23, we now need a third wave of moral fusion. A shared and self-reinforcing multileader, multiorganization, multicultural movement needs to be focused on changing the rigged and exploitive American system. Barber reminds us how it's all connected. "The same policies that negatively affect poor and low-wealth people in Alabama also hurt poor and low-wealth people in Appalachia. The design of the Southern Strategy and the culture wars has been to constantly give people who might unite against elite interests reason to fight one another. So-called 'wedge issues' are designed to split up the majority that does not benefit from the preferred policies of the richest among us. But today's Reconstructionists are reclaiming the only strategy that has ever defeated the exploitation of elite interests. They are building fusion coalitions across the dividing lines of racial identity and issue areas."[223]

New moral fusion coalitions need to recognize the role of nonviolent action and civil disobedience, as advocated by Dr. King. The third wave of moral fusion needs to incorporate the passion of the moral partnerships of the 1960s. Acknowledging the many negative trends since the Kerner Commission, we need to speak with Birmingham Jail–like outrage, reaffirm our humanity with intensity, become more forceful in making the privileged uncomfortable, and draw power from suffering.[224]

Some of the most powerful examples of the need to speak with moral outrage embrace money and budget decisions. For example, as Barber points out, it was immoral for Congress to pass legislation during the pandemic that cut the rate of poverty in half—but then to allow the legislation to lapse, so that the poverty rate now has returned to roughly pre-pandemic levels.[225]

There are many other illustrations of public immorality. It was immoral for some to wish America would get back to what was "normal" before the

pandemic—when that "normal" was based on the myth of market fundamentalism and the mass incarceration of people of color. It is immoral to block voter rights. Years after the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, it is immoral that little progress has been made on police reform—as the 2024 killing by police of Sonya Massey in Springfield, Illinois, tragically illustrates. And it is immoral to force employment on poor people who can't work because of family obligations and declining health.[226]

The Barber message of moral fusion also was the message of Geno Baroni, who, as discussed above, built successful, Kerner-endorsing, grassroots, multiracial coalitions. He reminded us that every budget is a moral budget—or an immoral one. And he taught that sometimes it is better to beg forgiveness than ask permission.

It is important not to relinquish moral ground to market myth fundamentalists who claim a faith base.

Throughout, we still need to balance moral intensity with bridge-building persuasion. William Barber makes clear that moral coalition building is premised on long-term struggle. He says, "[T]his is not a time for microwave movements . . . [Moral fusion demands] a long-term commitment to build out the coalitions, formation programs, sustained analysis, and community networks that will make it possible for us to not only sustain a struggle for justice but also become the kind of society we want to see in the world."[227]

A committed long-run moral coalition will help ensure that, if there is widespread resistance to income and wealth inequality in America or if events provide significant opportunities for advancement of Kerner priorities, we are ready. The tragedy of a presidential assassination in 1963 led to the civil rights, voting rights, housing, and Great Society legislation of 1964, 1965, and 1968 that was fundamental to the Second Reconstruction.

Barber's new Center for Public Theology and Public Policy at Yale University has been designed as a training ground for future moral fusion leaders. The programming of Cornell Brooks at the Harvard Kennedy School and advocacy of Kerry Kennedy at Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights does the same. In Chapter 24, Brooks reminds us, "The most powerful arguments are often ones that conjoin the economic and empirical with the moral and narrative. From prison closures to reductions in juvenile incarceration, we have seen time and time again arguments for giving people a moral second chance with arguments for reducing the cost of mass incarceration."[228]

In complementary ways, the need for public morality and a moral fusion movement is advocated in the *Creating Justice* chapters by Loretta Ross, Michelle Williams, Herbert Smitherman, and Anil Aranha.

EXPOSE EXPLOITATION AND DENIAL WITH MORE INTENSITY

The moral fusion of William Barber and Cornell Brooks encourages Anat Shenker-Osorio's principle of identifying who is responsible for the problem. In America

today, much of the problem has been created by those who exploit the rest of us and who deny solutions.

Exploitation and denial have become part of what is "normal."

That has to change. We need to better expose exploitation and denial—and to use Shenker-Osorio's inspired call-out as a way of generating new will.

In Chapter 27, Loretta Ross paraphrases Upton Sinclair: "It is difficult to get a country to understand injustice when profits depend on not understanding it." Ross reminds us, "The people who profit from the dysfunction of democracy do not seek evidence-based solutions because social cooperation does not serve their electoral or financial interests. Yet they have the biggest microphones provided by a compliant, profit-seeking media ecosystem, more dedicated to staying in business than in journalism. No wonder people are fed up and feel overwhelmed."[229] This was all the more true in the context of the 2024 election. Along similar lines, Robert Reich has observed that, today, it's a "sell-or-tell society, a catch-and-kill society, a just-take-care-of-it society. A society where money and power are the only considerations. Where honor and integrity count for nothing."[230] Similarly, Thomas Friedman has pointed to a "shameless" "erosion of norms" among many leaders and institutions in America.[231] And others have observed, "Today's rich, their wealth largely preserved through the Great Recession and the Covid-19 pandemic, have opposed reforms aimed at tapping their resources to fund mitigation policies of all kinds."[232]

A More Intense Call-Out of Exploitation

The theme of exploitation cuts across all of the Kerner policy areas in *Creating Justice.*

Many of today's rich have been exploiters. As MacArthur Award–winner Matthew Desmond explains in *Poverty, By America,* in recent years corporations and their stockholders have not fairly shared record profits and have fought unions. In the 1980s, corporate America learned it could crush unions with minimal repercussions. As union membership has fallen, corporations have chipped away at the notion of living wages with associated benefits. The United States now has some of the lowest wages among all industrialized democracies. There has not been an increase in the federal minimum wage for 15 years. In response to labor shortages, companies in some states have lobbied to ease child labor laws and so increase exploitation.[233]

All the world's great religions have moral injunctions against usury, the unprincipled act of trapping the poor in a cycle of debt. But, as Desmond has points out, the deregulation of the banking industry in the 1980s resulted in the poor and lower-income people being excluded from traditional banking and credit systems. This often has forced them to alternative and usurious ways to cash checks and secure loans.[234]

Private equity companies have successfully lobbied for tax benefits that allow their executives to pay lower taxes than the rest of us. This is welfare subsidization of the rich. As a result, private equity companies enjoy disproportionate benefits when their business plans succeed and suffer fewer consequences when they fail. It has been estimated that, if the top income 1% of Americans paid the taxes they

owe, we could raise up to $175 billion in revenues—nearly enough for a Kerner policy to end poverty.[235]

As we have already discussed, surely the tax code is in great need of reform. Until that happens, advocates can at least push to update laws that hold private equity responsible for its behavior. "Congress can clarify that firms can be sued for wrongs committed by companies they effectively control. States and cities can do the same when portfolio companies are based in their jurisdictions. By making private equity firms responsible for their own actions, we can build a better—and fairer—economy. All we need is the courage to act."[236]

Equally egregious, in negotiations over the debt ceiling some privileged lawmakers imposed new work requirements on the recipients of public benefits. This was done in spite of the evidence from careful evaluations that such requirements don't work, boosting corporate profits when they are at record highs and inflicting harm on the people in greatest need. Many exploiters have kept alive the zombie myth, resurrected in the 1980s, that the poor, people of color, and "welfare queens" are lazy, don't want to work, and are "present-oriented." There is little evidence to support the myth and the exploitation.[237]

In education, exploitative segregation of schools and neighborhoods has been undertaken to help support the advancement of more affluent students and uphold the value of their parents' homes. This has been in spite of the evidence from solidly evaluated demonstrations that school and housing integration help the less well-off and do not hurt more affluent families. In addition, zombie education voucher schemes, which as noted earlier have proven not to work, have channeled resources away from public school students in need. At the college level, the Supreme Court's 2023 ruling against affirmative action exploits Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans. Legacy and wealth preferences exploit lower-income college applicants.[238]

In criminal justice, the prison industrial complex financially benefits from the disproportionate and exploitive incarceration of people of color—and so lobbies for more prison building. Legislators continue to win elections with law-and-order rhetoric that encourages racial disparities in arrests and sentencing, making it still more difficult for formerly incarcerated people to secure steady employment and living wages. Some jurisdictions practice "wealth-based detention"—exploitatively jailing people of color who cannot pay municipal fees and fines and preventing them from earning money to pay the fees and fines. When such people do manage to get out of jail, few municipalities have invested sufficiently in reintegration programs and job training. This increases the likelihood of reincarceration and creates great hardship among impoverished families. And we protect and subsidize guns—so, in a lethal way, the tens of thousands of Americans killed each year by firearms are exploited.[239]

In housing markets, Leah and Richard Rothstein document in Chapter 16 how poor and low-income people have limited choices when it comes to living in safe and affordable locations. As we have seen, only a small fraction of people eligible for rental housing vouchers receive them. Only a small fraction of the affordable housing that is needed is being built. So, more often than not, says Desmond, the only choice for poor and other low-income people is to rent from private landlords

who exploit them. Often, half or more of a family's income must be spent on rent and utilities. Not uncommonly, landlords operating in poor neighborhoods of color take in profits that are higher than the profits of landlords operating in affluent neighborhoods.[240]

In public health, Kerner constituencies are exploited by a system that fails to accept the kind of universal care found in many other industrialized democracies.[241]

Advocacy for new will, then, needs to better communicate and reverse how affluent, privileged political elites and market myth–driven financial institutions benefit from policies, laws, other rules, and subsidies that enrich them—while they impoverish many people, cause humiliation and pain, exploit Kerner constituencies, and constrain choices for the rest of us.

Desmond advocates that at least one way to counter exploitation is through consumer activism. America has a long history of consumer activism, including, for example, successful movements for seat belts and against cigarettes. So now, in support of Kerner priorities, we can refuse to buy from corporations that fail to support living wages. Investors can steer away from the "sin stocks" of companies that make guns. University graduates can audit their alma maters and demand that endowments not accept gifts from graduates who exploit the people and have disappointing records on Kerner priorities.[242]

A More Intense Call-Out of Denial

Exploitation is linked to denial. Exploiters often are deniers—and deniers often are exploiters.

Deniers tend to be masters of the Illusory Truth Effect, which, in the words of Nancy Gibbs, holds that people are more likely to believe something, true or not, if they hear it over and over again.[243]

A classic example of denial was when, on January 22, 2020, the nation was told about the pandemic: "We have it totally under control. It's one person coming in from China, and we have it under control. It's going to be just fine."[244]

Nearly one in four members of Congress deny the reality of climate change and 147 senators and representatives voted to deny the results of the 2020 election. Of the 247 companies that promised not to fund these senators and representatives in the future, many have not kept their promise.[245] Some deny the seriousness of the insurrection attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.[246] When asked what caused the U.S. Civil War, one candidate in the presidential primaries in 2024 failed to mention slavery.[247] A congressman has suggested that the Jim Crow era has some benefits for Blacks.[248] Some politicians have denied they will necessarily accept the results of future elections.[249]

The Supreme Court has denied women's reproductive rights (in *Dobbs v. Jackson Woman's Health Organization*), denied affirmative action (in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*), denied much of the Voting Rights Act (in *Shelby County v. Holder*), denied reform of gerrymandering (in *Alexander v. the South Carolina State Conference of the NAACP*), denied the

need to control campaign finance (in *Citizens United v. Federal Communications Commission*), denied the principle that no one is above the law (in *Trump v. the United States*), and denied citizens the right to safety against guns in many rulings.[250] In 2024, *ProPublica* won a Pulitzer Prize for a series that has begun a national conversation on ethics and reform of the Supreme Court.[251]

As with exploitation, the realities of denial are found in every chapter of *Creating Justice*. Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway call out the myth of market fundamentalism.[252] Randi Weingarten shows how naysayers deny the evidence against school vouchers.[253] Michelle Williams, Herbert Smitherman, and Anil Aranha demonstrate how health policy in America denies prevention.[254] Leah and Richard Rothstein expose how America has denied the role of government in creating housing segregation.[255] Elliott Currie laments the long-run "tenacious denial" of serious endemic violence in the United States.[256] And, as we will see below, naysayers in Congress are denying efforts to reduce misinformation and disinformation.

Nowhere is denial more clear than in the surge of book banning in schools. We are not banning guns, but we are banning books. PEN America has reported that, from July to December 2023, more than 4,300 books were removed from schools across 23 states.[257] This was a 92% increase from the previous year.[258] In that year, 40% of the books censored nationally had characters of color, and 21% had titles indicating issues of race.[259] In opposition, actor Tom Hanks has asserted that schools need to "stop the battle to whitewash curricula to avoid discomfort for students. America's history is messy but knowing that makes us wiser and stronger people."[260] In keeping with this advice, we need a grassroots strategy: Show up at school board meetings, volunteer, serve on library boards, advocate for free expression, force censorship to play defense, and underscore George Orwell's lesson that, "Who controls the past controls the future."[261] The denial of Black history and the banning of books are all the more destructive because, as we discussed earlier, student test scores released by the U.S. Department of Education show a decline in history and civics proficiency—a trend that COVID-19 appears to have accelerated.

The lesson is that many in America still believe systemic racism ended with Jim Crow, deny the evidence and wisdom of the Kerner Commission, deny that we know what works, and deny that we can create new will to scale it up.

Such pervasive denial, rationalization, and opposition are smokescreens designed to obscure the truly important task of implementing the kind of economic, education, criminal justice, housing, and public health policies found in *Creating Justice* that will reduce racial injustice, economic inequality, and poverty.

So Matthew Desmond's call-out of exploitation and denial needs to be repeated again and again—and reinforced by furthering evidence-based policy and reforming the media.

Building on William Barber's moral fusion advocacy, we must call out exploiters and deniers—and remind the country that most citizens are impacted, not just Kerner constituencies. Here is where, with Birmingham Jail–like outrage, William Barber's advice on becoming more forceful in making the privileged uncomfortable comes into full play.

FORTIFY THE MOVEMENT FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY

Throughout *Creating Justice*, we have based policy recommendations on evidence. The more evidence that can be assembled, the greater the opportunity to convince people that solutions are possible and replicatable. This can generate optimism and new will.

But we need to significantly advance and fund the movement to base policy on evidence. This can help change attitudes on how solutions are possible and replicable.

Justin Milner reminds us in Chapter 31 that, at the heart of the Kerner Commission's findings was "a simple yet profound directive: Amplify what works in addressing social issues and minimize ineffective approaches." The directive complements the 2024 conclusion of Scientific American that the nation needs policy that relies on "science, solid evidence and the willingness to learn from experience."[262]

The Kerner directive remains as relevant now as during the Commission. We need, in Milner's words, to "design interventions and policies to improve outcomes; collect and analyze data to evaluate whether the interventions deliver such outcomes . . . and use the insights and findings from the evaluation to inform policy, program, practice, and budget decisions."[263]

Whenever possible and appropriate, we need to evaluate using the gold standard of randomized control trials.

Since the Kerner Commission, progress has been made on increasing public sector and philanthropic funding for evidence-based policy. This is so even though public policy and campaign rhetoric still are framed far too much by ideology and supposition—rather than by evidence and facts. As a result, too few Americans, especially the poor and working-class citizens, are benefiting from evidence. In addition, not all philanthropies base their funding decisions on evidence.

However, the bipartisan Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 did help advance the evidence movement. The act mandates that federal agencies support the role of empirical data in policy formation. As part of the act, federal agencies are required to appoint Chief Evaluation Officers.[264]

Some federal agencies have developed repositories that compile, assess, and disseminate research findings on the effectiveness of programs and policies. In the context of Kerner, good examples include the What Works Clearinghouse at the Department of Education, CrimeSolutions at the Department of Justice, and the Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness repository at the Department of Health and Human Services. These online resources need to be strengthened and expanded. While they are invaluable for validating what works, "they often provide less insight into how programs can be effectively implemented in diverse contexts."[265]

From a Kerner perspective, the evidence base has especially advanced in recent years for job training, K–12 tutoring and mentoring, and higher education completion programs. While receiving a great deal of attention, many other highly relevant programs, like community-based violence interrupter initiatives, are not yet sufficiently evaluated.[266]

Nonetheless, full implementation of the Evidence Act still has not taken place. Resources for staffing have not sufficiently been made available, and the

Office of Management and Budget does not presently have the capacity to develop guidance for how to carry out the Evidence Act.[267]

Milner presses for adequate funding to create a comprehensive evidence base and to build "a stronger culture of testing and learning." He wisely advocates that 1% of all federal grant funding be designated for research and evaluation. Programs meeting the highest standards for proven effectiveness should receive top priority for funding, so as to expand them widely across the nation. Funds should also be allocated to rigorously test innovative new programs—and promising existing ones—to grow the body of proven programs over time.[268]

Inherent to evidence-based policy is the scaling up of what works. Milner writes: "If research findings are not consistently replicable, how can we reliably advance our knowledge about what works across different settings?"[269]

AI could play a positive role. We can envision a future where decision-makers access an adaptive AI portal to query key policy issues. "Imagine a platform where questions like, 'What are the most effective tutoring programs?' or 'How can we effectively tackle the homelessness crisis in our city?' are answered with research-backed, actionable insights. . . . We are only on the precipice of these alternative approaches to research synthesis and translation, but developing tools that are grounded in rigorous research and are practical enough to provide actionable guidance to future policymakers should be at the forefront of funders interested in supporting a scaling agenda."[270]

More fundamentally, we have yet to create a culture in which legislators, executive branch executives, and court officials actually utilize solid empirical evidence in their day-to-day decision-making. Too many elected and appointed officials ignore evidence in favor of policies with poll-tested slogans and sound bites. This was blatantly evident during the 2024 election campaign.

Institutions like Arnold Ventures and the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy are crucial for moving the public and private sectors forward to strengthen American democracy based on evidence. In this spirit, Arnold Ventures and the Coalition now are match funding with the governor of Maryland to replicate workforce, K–12, higher education, and crime prevention programs that have proven to be effective and to institutionalize government funding priority on what works.[271] Maryland is a national model.

COMBAT DISINFORMATION AND REINFORCE NONPROFIT MEDIA

The Kerner Commission was highly critical of the media: "There is a significant imbalance between what actually happened in our cities and what the newspaper, radio, and television coverage of the riots told us happened."[272]

What the Commission Found

The Kerner commissioners saw the media as failing to report adequately on the causes of civil disorders. They found that newspapers, radio, and television

focused on how police controlled "rioters" rather than on police brutality and on the economic, education, housing, and related inequalities in America that led to grievances. The commission observed that, for the most part, media coverage of the protests in the 1960s was not based on street-level evidence. The Kerner Report pointed to "scare headlines" and observed that reporters often were inexperienced. Few of the reporters were African American or other people of color.[273]

Ray Suarez observes in Chapter 28 that the failures of the media "tended to have a synergistic effect, cross-pollinating and compounding their severity. The asymmetry of understanding got us to the late 1960s with a country that knew little of the realities of Black life in America . . . [The] Black population was convinced the national media were part of the white American 'power structure' ignorant of their lives and hostile to their interests."[274]

The problem, says Julian E. Zelizer in Chapter 27, was that "white reporters, regardless of their talent, didn't have much sense of what the experience of being a Black American in the city was like. Most of them had not been continually harassed by police authorities. Most had not lived in communities where the persons who were supposed to provide protection acted as threats. Most had not lived in areas of the country where families were trapped by pervasive discrimination as job opportunities disappeared. Most did not understand what it felt like to be on the bottom end of racial hierarchies that were entrenched through local and state institutions."[275]

The Kerner Commission pointed out that television coverage in the 1960s "tended to give the impression that the riots were confrontations between Negroes and whites rather than responses by Negroes to underlying slum problems." This kind of coverage had generated great distrust of the news. One person interviewed by the Commission complained, "The average Black person couldn't give less of a damn about what the media say. The intelligent Black person is resentful at what he considers to be a totally false portrayal of what goes on in the ghetto."[276]

One obvious solution, concluded the commissioners, was to diversify the newsroom and provide permanently assigned reporters to cover urban and racial affairs. The changes had to also include editors, producers, and commentators. "The vision was that by changing who covers the news, particularly with more Black reporters, the better the understanding would be of the dynamics on the ground. Black reporters would be able to grasp why arrests had sparked such massive confrontations and the ways in which police created hostile climates for residents."[277]

The Commission prodded, "Along with the country as a whole, the press has too long basked in a white world, looking out of it, if at all, with white men's eyes and a white perspective. That is no longer good enough. The painful process of readjustment that is required of the American news media must begin now. They must make a reality of integration—in both their product and their personnel."[278]

Trends Since the Commission

There has been some progress since the Kerner Commission. For example, newsrooms and to some extent television and radio have become more diverse in terms

of race and gender—even though reporters of color have remained a small percentage of the overall media labor force.[279]

Yet in communities of color today there continues to be deep distrust of media because of the harm created by journalism in the past. As Colette Watson has explained, there is a lack of understanding that white-dominated journalism steeped in a world view of Black inferiority is very relevant to the crisis in the media today.[280]

After the police murder of George Floyd in 2020, promises were made in some cities that the way Black people were treated by police and the way Black people were covered in the news would change. But by 2024 little had changed on either front. In a national Pew Research Center survey of Blacks in 2023, just 14% said they were highly confident that Blacks would be treated fairly by the media in their lifetimes. Fewer than half said the news covers things they want to see, like stories on wealth and income gaps or on police brutality.[281] Sixty three percent of Black adults said the news they see or hear about Black people is often more negative than the news about other racial groups. In addition, a 2022 Pew Center survey of journalists found that only 6% of journalists are Black in the United States. That is well below the Black share of U.S. workers (11%) and of adults overall (12%).[282]

Where Kerner-relevant media progress has occurred, it has been slow. Today, websites promoting white supremacy have taken root online, talk radio shows broadcast negative stereotypes of minorities, and thinly veiled racist content is not uncommon on news and opinion shows on cable television.[283]

Along similar lines, as Gary Younge points out, for the most part the media still often fail to report on the obvious. Younge reminds us of the journalistic aphorism that a dog biting a man is not news. But if a man bites a dog, that is news. In America, occurrences that are both commonplace and expected are not considered news. Our norms frame news in terms of events that are relatively rare and unexpected. So commonplace and expected events—like income and wealth being dramatically unequal, public schools being underfunded, crime rates being high in poor neighborhoods, with people of color and segregation being institutionalized by the federal government—often are insufficiently covered.[284]

Inadequate media coverage of *Creating Justice* issues also is explained by the for-profit priorities of major commercial media companies and the difficulty of sustaining viewer and reader interest. Media culture seeks snapshot sensationalism and reports less on many long-run realities that impact people's lives.[285]

One partial exception to media and public inattention to Kerner issues has been criminal injustice. Since Kerner, technology has created a breakthrough in coverage of institutional racism in policing. From camcorders to cable television news to smartphones to the advent of social media, platforms have been created that communicate police violence. A young woman in Minneapolis recorded the police murder of George Floyd on her smartphone. Protests followed across the nation. The 2024 police killing of Sonya Massey in Springfield, Illinois, was particularly brutal, as recorded on a police body cam. And so there has been more widespread media attention given to the carceral state and to the criminal justice system—even though there has been little fundamental reform of police.[286]

Recent years have experienced substantial job losses in commercial digital, broadcast, and print media. Since 2005 we have lost two-thirds of our newspaper journalists and a third of our newspapers. About five local newspapers are closing every 2 weeks, according to the Northwestern Medill School of Journalism.[287] The local newspaper industry has been collapsing for decades, since the Internet began siphoning revenue from print advertising. In addition, with the enormous increase in social media misinformation and disinformation over the last decade, there has been a decline in local news consumption. There now is substantial evidence that most Americans are unwilling or unable to pay for traditional journalism. There are just a few large newspapers, like the *New York Times*, that can rely on subscriptions and paywalls. National commercial cable networks like CNN and MSNBC have undertaken extensive cost-cutting measures.[288]

In other words, we no longer have a commercial market model that can support the levels of journalism that our multiracial democracy deserves and requires. This is another failure of market fundamentalism, and it played out in the 2024 election.

Suarez observes that, since the Kerner Commission, there has been a shift in the power relationship between news providers and news customers. News provider budgets have been shrinking while information has been exponentially increasing. "Today, anyone can appoint themselves a journalist. The tools of creation and distribution are cheap, easy to use, and widely available. Anyone who decides for themselves to acquire some basic skills can turn themselves into a videographer, a reporter, a photographer, a documentarian, or an information activist. For all that, fewer people make a full-time living as a journalist in America in 2024 than did at the turn of the century."[289]

The crux of the modern challenge, says Suarez, is that "the world demands a better-informed citizen, consumer, voter, taxpayer, PTA member, commuter, and neighbor. The gush, the swollen river of stuff flowing to laptops, smartphones, and televisions creates the illusion of sufficiency."

But the "information tsunami does not make us smarter. When news organizations and researchers give rank-and-file citizens general knowledge and current events quizzes, they have a weaker grasp of events, a shakier mastery of science and geography than they did a generation ago."[290]

The result has been what Robert Faris (Chapter 30) says is "the scourge of disinformation and hate on social media and the perils to our democracy and governance systems as more people turn to untrustworthy sources of information to understand the world. This is a legitimate concern that appears to be only getting worse." For example, recent changes at X (formerly Twitter) have included the reversal of efforts to purge the platform of disinformation and abusive content. And many prominent users, including white supremacists, who had been removed from X for spouting hateful speech have been welcomed back.[291]

Not surprisingly, then, a 2022 Pew Center survey found that 70% of Americans believe that false information spread online is a major threat to American democracy.[292]

The threat is made worse by billionaires who today use social media to convert their wealth into power. To a considerable extent, they are insulated by their wealth

from the many consequences of their speech. For example, a self-employed billionaire hedge fund manager used social media and other media venues to help oust the president of Harvard University in 2024. As *Puck* founding partner William Cohan asks, "When only the ultrawealthy, as a practical matter, can afford to speak freely without consequences, what does freedom of speech really mean?"[293]

What can be done to reform the media landscape in ways that help create new will for *Creating Justice* and Kerner priorities? That is a daunting task. Here we suggest two ways to begin. We can better combat disinformation and misinformation and expand Kerner-relevant nonprofit media. Even modest progress on these fronts, we believe, can significantly increase new will.

Combat Disinformation and Misinformation

Nowhere is our *Creating Justice* theme of evidence-based policy more relevant than in the media.

The media thrive on conflict, as did many public figures during the 2024 election. So, disinformation, denial, and misinformation receive disproportionate attention.[294] One promising way to teach students about threats to democracy caused by disinformation and misinformation has been created by the Stanford Internet Observatory. Funded by the National Science Foundation, the Observatory's work on false narratives has included development of curricula for college students on how to handle trust and safety issues on social media platforms. However, congressional naysayers and other evidence deniers have criticized the Observatory's research (just like there have been restrictions by congressional deniers on gun control research). As a result, foundations have pulled back on funding.[295] But Julian Zelizer warns, "It will be important in the coming years that there is strong push back against these efforts to pressure institutions into cutting back operations that can offer vital steps forward in civics education."[296]

More comprehensive and more tested is the curriculum to resist fake news that was introduced in primary, middle, and secondary schools in Finland in 2016. In secondary school math lessons, pupils learn how easy it is to lie with statistics. In art, they see how an image's meaning can be manipulated. In history, they analyze notable propaganda campaigns, while Finnish language teachers work with them on the many ways in which words can be used to confuse, mislead, and deceive.[297]

The Finnish education system has found that "fake news" is not a particularly useful term for young people. More useful, the Finns have found, are three distinct categories: misinformation, or "mistakes"; disinformation or "lies," which are false and spread deliberately to deceive; and "malinformation" or "gossip," which may be accurate but is intended to do harm. Teachers ask students: "[W]ho produced this information and why? Where was it published? What does it *really* say? Who is it aimed at? What is it based on? Is there evidence for it, or is this just someone's opinion? Is it verifiable elsewhere?"[298]

Observed one Finnish education official, "Thinking critically, factchecking, interpreting and evaluating all the information you receive, wherever it appears, is crucial. We've made it a core part of what we teach, across all subjects."[299] In 2023,

Finland ranked first among 41 European countries evaluated on resilience against misinformation—for the fifth time in a row.[300]

We need to advocate for a system like the Finns have developed with the same urgency that we push back on the evidence deniers who criticize the Stanford Internet Observatory.

In a complementary way, we need to ban smartphones in schools.[301] The evidence is clear that, in educational settings, smartphones have an almost entirely negative impact on students from all classes. They can fuel cyberbullying and stifle meaningful in-person interaction. A 14-country study by UNESCO found the mere presence of a mobile phone distracted students from learning. The impact is especially concerning for low-income students. As we have discussed, the historical learning gap between lower-income students of color and wealthier white students increased during the pandemic and has not been closed.

The UNESCO report calls for a ban on smartphones at school for users of all ages. Countries that already have done so adapted such policies have experienced positive results. In the United States, schools and localities that have banned smartphones also have experienced positive results. A number of states, including California and New York, are considering bans.[302] But federal legislation is needed, following other nations. Based on existing evidence, the U.S. surgeon general has already pushed for warning labels on social media platforms advising parents that using the platforms might damage adolescents' mental health. In addition, America needs to seriously consider replicating the 2024 legislation in Australia that banned social media for children under 16.[303]

The surgeon general also has called on tech companies to make changes—like sharing Internet data on the health impact of their products and allowing independent safety audits.[304] More comprehensively, Robert Faris points to the need for regulatory legislation on Internet companies. He concludes that we should require content moderation practices that "would improve our ability to craft better responses and would provide an incentive for companies to deal with harmful speech more effectively. Ensuring that researchers have access to data will promote greater public accountability. Another possible step would be to remove liability protections for Internet companies that encourage online abuses and do not make a reasonable effort to address online harms. . . . Enhanced regulation can help to chip away at the most egregious forms of disinformation and harmful speech while still allowing private companies to decide what is and is not appropriate on their platforms—an imperfect system with no obviously better alternatives." Part of the need is to educate people on how algorithms work and how information is selected on social media. [305]

And, although journalists are appropriately concerned about AI, it could hold *Creating Justice* and Kerner-related promise in fighting disinformation. As Suarez reminds us, "Machine learning programs are already acting as sorters, helping news consumers choose between reliable, factual reporting and some of the supercharged lying and distortion that wears journalism's respectable clothes. With all the legitimate terror about deepfakes, doctored photographs, and computer-generated audio putting words in the mouths of prominent figures, AI also has

the capacity to speed research, relieve drudgery, and aid the public in sorting out what's true and what's not."[306]

Suarez, cautions: "The truth business has to take the measure of its opponents in the untruth business. It's going to take resources and training and a real understanding of the stakes. The Kerner Commission put it pretty well, 'We believe that to live up to their own professed standards, the media simply must exercise a higher degree of care and a greater level of sophistication than they have yet shown.' They asked a lot in 1968, having seen how critical good journalism was to the health of a society in good times and bad. We cannot ask less of ourselves today as producers and consumers of one of society's most vital products, reliable information."[307]

Expand Nonprofit Journalism and Reduce the Influence of Billionaires

Given the failures today of commercial for-profit media, including billionaire-owned media, observers like Victor Pickard, Ray Suarez, Julian Zelizer, and Robert Faris advocate for development of a new nonprofit model based on funding by foundations, other donors, and the public sector, among other sources.

A great deal must be done to develop such a model—in which nonprofit media organizations essentially are viewed as charities providing services that the for-profit world will not support. If a viable nonprofit framework can be made to work financially, it hopefully would provide more opportunity for coverage of *Creating Justice* and Kerner priorities and more reporting by people of color. The 2024 election deeply illustrated the need.

In recent years, some nonprofit media organizations have become the most exciting components of modern journalism. These organizations have been able to raise money to fund long-term investigative reporting and retain the ability to deal with important and controversial issues that might not be lucrative when it comes to advertising or the world of shares and retweets. *ProPublica*, The Marshall Project, and *The Guardian* are just three illustrations of the kind of existing media organizations that need to be replicated in a new model. *ProPublica* self-describes as "an independent, nonprofit newsroom that produces investigative journalism with moral force." It focuses on issues "as long as it takes to hold power into account." *ProPublica* has won seven Pulitzer Prizes, most recently in 2024 for its series on Supreme Court ethics and judicial reform.[308] The Marshall Project is an independent nonprofit that focuses on criminal justice reform. In 2024, The Marshall Project won two Pulitzer Prizes for its investigative journalism and wrote a series on how the St. Louis Police Department has struggled to solve homicides—partly due to shoddy detective work, staffing shortages, and eroding community trust.[309] Based in London, *The Guardian* has received strong praise for its new American edition and for coverage of Kerner priorities.

In terms of financing, *ProPublica* and The Marshall Project rely a great deal on philanthropy and private donations. *The Guardian* is owned by the Guardian Media Group, which has only one shareholder, the Scott Trust, which provides financial support. *The Guardian* does have a modified paywall, and donations are

an important source of revenue. A nonprofit organization has been established in the United States to raise philanthropic funding for *The Guardian*.[310]

These illustrations are national in coverage, but local news also is especially important from a Kerner and *Creating Justice* perspective. Suarez writes: "A local school board debate, a zoning controversy, the siting of a waste transfer station . . . all won't make national newscasts or the pages of *The Wall Street Journal.* Those issues dictate the way of life in communities across America, and create the context for developing the muscles of civic engagement." There are some successful locally funded nonprofit news organizations in cities like Baltimore, Boston, and Washington, DC. Louisville Public Media has radio programs, a website, and an investigative arm, all backed by a broad fundraising base. Numerous foundations are supporting Capital B, which has a specific focus on Black Americans living in the Midwest and the South.[311]

Both local and national nonprofit media especially need to do more to explain economic policy—especially considering how some Americans during the 2024 election campaign did not give sufficient credit to the full employment industrial policy, economic growth generation, and the stock market surge.

A recent report by the Boston Consulting Group has estimated that nonprofit newsrooms in America presently receive an estimated $150 million per year in funding—but the report suggests that the need is for 10 times more.[312] American philanthropy has taken a step forward by pledging $500 million over 5 years to support local journalism. Such funding is especially needed for Kerner and *Creating Justice* constituencies at a time when, in the words of Victor Pickard, we are seeing vast news deserts spread across the country where tens of thousands of Americans have access to little or no local news whatsoever.[313] And even in places where local media remains, historically that media often has not been sufficiently supportive of low-income people of color.[314]

But philanthropy is not enough. As Pickard advocates, we need public media to play a bigger role. One partial model is the BBC. Since World War II, America has continued to express positive regard for the excellent journalism of the BBC, which is substantially financed by a tax on television licenses.[315]

Despite evidence of trust that people of all political stripes place in public media, some deniers have long threatened the American Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which provides essential financial support to NPR and PBS stations across the country. America has lagged far behind comparable nations in supporting public media. For example, America spends about $3 per capita on public media while Norway spends about $180 per capita. The United Kingdom and other comparable democratic countries also give much higher spending priority to public media than the United States. Accordingly, Pickard has proposed creation of a "public media fund" of $30 billion financed in part through taxes on commercial media organizations. As a precedent for considerably increased federal support for public media, some states are expanding public funding. For example, the state of New Jersey has allocated funds to the Civic Information Consortium.[316]

While our priority in *Creating Justice* is on how nonprofit media can create new will, media watchdog organizations like Free Press need to continue pressing

commercial media to racially diversify and invest more in higher-quality reporting that expresses Kerner values. Commercial media organizations that publish especially thoughtful analyses of Kerner and *Creating Justice* themes include, for example, *Bolts* and *The American Prospect*.[317]

It is essential to hold commercial media accountable, especially Big Tech, Kerner-accountable. As Free Press warns: "Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube amplify racism and other forms of hate—threatening public safety, civil rights, privacy and our democracy. The platforms' failure to protect women, people of color, immigrants, religious minorities and the LGBTQIA+ community has allowed hate groups to recruit new followers, fund their operations and incite real-life violence. Meanwhile, the platforms are failing to crack down on disinformation—disrupting free and fair elections and making it harder to hold the powerful accountable. These companies also exploit internet users' privacy and subject them to discriminatory algorithms—violating people's civil and human rights."[318]

More broadly, nonprofit media need to push harder on the Federal Communications Commission and the Department of Justice to block mergers of giant media corporations and boost diverse media ownership.[319]

Limitations

As we press for change, Julian Zelizer reminds us of the present limits to what the media can do: "[W]e remain and will remain a nation that is 'separate and unequal' as a result of white racism until our citizens make institutional reform a top priority."[320]

MOBILIZE UNIVERSITIES TO BETTER ASK WHAT AMERICANS CAN DO FOR THEIR COUNTRY

After the 2023 Supreme Court ruling against affirmative action, deniers of Kerner priorities have attacked diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs at universities. But the criticism of DEI has really been an attack by privileged deniers on higher education, expertise, and evidence.

The antonyms for DEI are uniformity, inequality, and exclusion. These words are in opposition to the recommendations of the Kerner Commission and *Creating Justice*. The opposition to Kerner is a strong argument for continuing DEI programs at universities, even as we refine those programs. Attacks on DEI by billionaire donors to universities further underscore the need for creative DEI programs that can help repair the damage of the Supreme Court ruling against the Kerner principle of affirmative action.[321]

DEI initiatives exist to give strategic support to institutional leaders, identify hurdles, and assist staff in serving, educating, and meeting the needs of diverse populations. We need to push back against efforts to repeal these important initiatives and instead invest in evidence-based programs that improve education and reduce racial discrimination. In the words of Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor,

"What was true in the 1860s, and again in 1954, is true today: Equality requires acknowledgement of inequality."[322]

From a Kerner perspective, universities need to better educate students on how denial and exploitation by the privileged are threatening democracy and on how disinformation and misinformation need to be significantly reduced in America through new curricula, as in Finland.

The larger issue is the mission of universities in today's threatened democracy. During the time of Kerner, graduates from top universities often sought public sector employment. Today, graduates are choosing government less frequently, a trend that began with the regressive federal policies of the 1980s. In many universities, over 60% of graduates are in finance or STEM fields.[323]

American universities need to reverse this trend and reawaken the vision of President John Kennedy when, in his Inaugural Address, he motivated us to ask what we can do for our country. In his first State of the Union address, Kennedy urged, "Let public service be a proud and lively career. And let every man and woman who works in any area of our national government . . . be able to say with pride and with honor in future years: 'I served the United States Government in that hour of our nation's greatest need.'"[324] Following the Kennedy challenge, universities today are beholden to reinspire the best students and encourage government service.

One of the most important practical ways to merge the Kennedy vision and the Kerner vision is for universities to create a new generation of undergraduate and especially 2-year master's degree Kerner-relevant public policy programs that better convert knowledge into action by government at the federal, state, and local levels and by nonprofit organizations. In America today, if you want to make money, you can go to business school. If you want to learn the rules, you can attend law school. If you want to heal the human body, you can apply to medical school. But if you want to heal our divided society, there are relatively few comprehensive and holistic public policy options in American universities. There is a lack of university creativity.

New common-sense public policy degree programs need to better link academic knowledge to community practice and lived experience. Students need to know what economic, education, criminal justice, housing, public health and other policies work and what policies don't work. They need to learn the rules of evidence. They need to become proficient in how to evaluate, how to communicate, and how to community organize. They need to practice how to advocate effectively. And they need their universities to create enriched and more efficient pipelines that lead them from higher learning to nonprofit and government positions that make a difference. These are the pipelines that help create justice—not the pipeline from school to prison.

As we have talked around the nation on Kerner priorities, students often have expressed the need for greatly improved training, curricula, and outreach along these lines.

In a supportive way, universities need to enrich existing schools of journalism and open new schools. It is unacceptable for a number of top universities to have media research centers and student-run newspapers but no schools of

journalism—for both undergraduates and graduate students. As Ray Suarez points out, "[M]ore news organizations demand skills that once were the siloed province of specialists. . . . Not just wide curiosity, always an essential, but a foundational understanding of a broad array of the disciplines that shape what we think of as "news," like economics, public health, politics, geography, ecology, and demographics."[325]

It also is unacceptable for universities to fail in recruiting and financially supporting many more students in the kind of practical new public policy master's degree programs and new schools of journalism proposed here.

University hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions need to shift away from a narrow focus on research produced almost entirely for other academics and toward how knowledge can be utilized by nonprofit organizations and the public sector in the communities where universities are located and across the country—in support of disadvantaged populations.

Some of the models for the kinds of reforms needed to make universities more integrated with the Kerner and Kennedy vision include William Barber's Center for Public Theology and Public Policy at Yale, Cornell Brooks's courses on the Practice of Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School, and Max Kenner's Bard Prison Initiative—which enrolls incarcerated women and men in academic programs that culminate in degrees from Bard College.[326] Why don't all top universities have initiatives like the Bard program, especially now that persons in prison again are eligible for Pell grants? Where is leadership from university presidents? If the presidents don't act, why are students not pressing for many more university partnerships with local nonprofit organizations? One can argue that, with evidence that students are spending fewer hours on their courses and professors are inflating grades, undergraduates have more time for community outreach mentored by faculty and nonprofit work on *Creating Justice* priorities.[327]

Another model is the Occidental College Campaign Semester program, where students spend 10 weeks in campaigns for public office in which they must engage citizens with views very different from their own. Said one student, "The nuances of policy can be learned in the classroom but the heart of politics—building a shared vision for improving people's lives—can only be learned out in the field."[328]

We must hold universities accountable for doing more. Universities must become much more relevant to Kerner and *Creating Justice*. Even though, as Robert Reich has reminded us, it is not the educated class that is holding back America—it is the monied class. The 2024 election underscored this reality.[329]

ENHANCE HOW THE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CAN BETTER SUPPORT KERNER-ALIGNED ACTION

In his speech at Amherst College in 1963, President Kennedy observed, "There is a connection, hard to explain logically but easy to feel, between achievement in public life and progress in the arts . . . The Age of Elizabeth was also the age of Shakespeare."[330]

Margaret S. Morton, Rocío Aranda-Alvarado, and Lena Sze observe in Chapter 32 of *Creating Justice* that artists and other culture bearers in the 1960s and 1970s sharpened the Kennedy vision. They asserted their relevance in powering political projects nationally and locally—and began to create an infrastructure of institutions, spaces, and artist collaboratives. Building on that infrastructure, over the last 10 years there has been a flourishing of counternarratives, creative interventions, artist-driven activism, and other forms of artistic reckoning in response to the exploitation and inequality that America now is experiencing. As Ta-Nehisi Coates reminds us, "The cradle of material change is in our imagination and ideas . . . We have the burden of crafting new language and stories that allow people to imagine that new policies are possible." [331]

Given how the media at the time of the Kerner Commission wrote from the perspective of white men and not from the perspectives of Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Asian Americans, and given how there has not been sufficient progress up to this day, it now is all the more important for the arts to communicate the counternarrative.

How can the performing and visual arts help fill the void left by our imperfect media and better direct energy into creating Kerner new will? In what follows, we illustrate with a few examples of nonprofit organizations and public sector institutions that are leading the way—including the Poor People's Campaign, the Kennedy Center's Cartography Project, For Freedoms, the Mellon Foundation's Monuments Project, the Equal Justice Initiative, the Ford Foundation's Arts for Justice program, and the Smithsonian Institution's Reckoning initiative. (Chapters 32 through 36 of *Creating Justice* provide many more examples.)

The Poor People's Campaign

During Reconstruction, the spirituals written and composed by enslaved people were powerful means of coping. As Henry Louis Gates has documented, gospel music has been a constant source of strength, courage, and wisdom to African Americans. Black sacred music historically has been a cathartic way to communicate the anger and frustration of living as a Black person in America.[332]

During the Second Reconstruction in the 1960s, Dr. King drew on the performances of Aretha Franklin and Mahalia Jackson to further the Civil Rights Movement and motivate people as they organized communities. Mahalia Jackson sang right before Dr. King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Young nonviolent activists took songs they learned in church and made them into "freedom songs" as they faced racist police and sheriff deputies.[333]

This was resistance art—and it is needed all the more today to create new will by conveying moral messages and speaking the truth. In the words of the late Harry Belafonte, a lifelong friend and supporter of Dr. King, "The role of art isn't to just show life as it is, but show life as it should be."[334]

Today, as codirector of the Poor People's Campaign, which Dr. King began, William Barber uses the performing arts to communicate his mission to diverse

audiences of different races and different economic classes. In an Eisenhower Foundation forum with him, Barber observed that "the sanity of any movement is contingent on the strength of its song." Sometimes, he concluded, "the pain is so great that you need to begin with music."[335] To Barber, music and related arts motivate staff, create new will, and carry the struggle to the next generation.

The Kennedy Center and the Cartography Project

Marc Bamuthi Joseph is the vice president and artistic director for Social Impact at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. His Kennedy Center Cartography Project incorporates a series of orchestral and opera performances designed to use music as a source of healing in America. This is new will creation. Composers and librettists around the country are commissioned to create performances by the National Symphony Orchestra and the Washington National Opera. Mr. Joseph is experimenting with how to cultivate dignity for and empathy toward people of color. He is asking how music can create dignity and empathy as a "vaccine" "injected" into American culture—allowing "collective healing" and reducing systemic racism. The first installment of the Cartography Project was presented at the Kennedy Center in March 2022. It featured eight world premiere works by African American composers and librettists from around the nation. Each work represented an American community grieving victims of race-based violence. One piece was "Breonna's Lullaby" by Louisville composer Derek Douglas Carter.[336]

As with William Barber, Linda Darling-Hammond, Kerry Kennedy, Dorothy Stoneman, and Bryan Stevenson, the Eisenhower Foundation honored Mr. Joseph at its 2023 Nelson Mandela Forum at the United Nations. We encourage him to expand the Cartography Project to more people of color—and to ask how to focus empathy and dignity creation in popular music.

For Freedoms

Hank Willis Thomas, who also was honored at the United Nations by the Eisenhower Foundation, cofounded For Freedoms, the artist-run nonprofit organization that works to communicate how money, power, art, commerce, education, and the public sector interrelate. For Freedoms has collaborated with over 200 artists in all 50 states to create activist public art billboards and exhibitions on voter rights, campaign finance reform, gun control, racism, gender equality, freedom of expression, and many other Kerner-relevant issues. The billboards are shown out in the open, for example, along highways and roads. But they also have been shown in museums like the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Construction of public art billboards frequently is timed with civic engagement, town meetings, and other community events to discuss public policy issues on the billboards.[337]

One well-known billboard has the words: Make America Great Again. These words have been used over time by presidents from both major parties in America. One implication is that such words can be a source of healing rather than a mantra for division.[338]

As For Freedoms executive director Claudia Pena observes in Chapter 33, "[For Freedoms] wrestled back territory from consumerism and placed it back into the public dialectic. Instead of using billboards to sell products, that public space is used to sell ideas. Or at the very least, to pose thoughtful questions that lead to a plethora of ideas through dialogue."[339]

For Freedoms took inspiration from the Four Freedoms President Franklin Roosevelt spoke of in his 1943 speech that helped lay the groundwork for the United Nations. The Roosevelt Four Freedoms were Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Fear, and Freedom from Want. Today, the organization is focusing on four other freedoms—awakening, justice, healing, and listening. Visual artists associated with For Freedoms are encouraged to express in their art the interrelationships among these freedoms.[340]

When it comes to creating justice, as one of the freedoms, the Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors have already coresourced the Arts for Justice Fund with philanthropist Agnes Gund. The Fund demonstrates how advocates and artists can successfully partner to ensure fairer criminal justice sentencing. Related, poet Reginald Dwayne Betts's Freedom Reads organization resources libraries in prisons and so complements prison education programs.[341]

The Monuments Project

Fostering public art created collaboratively between community activists and artists, the Mellon Foundation has launched the Monuments Project—focused on the statues, plaques, markers, and place names that commemorate people and events. Today, our nation disproportionately celebrates only a limited number of people and overlooks many others who have made and shaped American society.[342] A more complete representation of the many can impact how we perceive power in the United States and can help encourage new will for Kerner priorities. An example of a new monument that communicates this perspective is the National Memorial for Peace and Justice created by Nelson Mandela United Nations honoree and MacArthur Award–winner Bryan Stevenson and his Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama. The memorial powerfully narrates the story of the nation's undocumented criminal lynchings and is an inspiration for other monuments across the nation.[343]

The Smithsonian Reckoning Initiative and the Role of Museums

In Washington, DC the Smithsonian Institution's exhibit titled "Reckoning: Protest, Defiance, Resilience" has been a testament to how artists and photographers have paid tribute to people who have been killed—like Eric Garner, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Sonya Massey. Figure I.3 shows the now-famous portrait of Breonna Taylor by Amy Sherald. At its National Museum of African American History & Culture, the Smithsonian exhibition has portrayed a historical process from defiance to resilience to grief to mourning to hope and cultural change. Importantly, a digital museum guide allows visitors to engage with

Figure I.3. Amy Sherald, *Breonna Taylor*. 2020, oil on linen, 137.2 x 109.2 cm / 54 x 43 inches, Speed Museum and National Museum of African American History and Culture. © Amy Sherald. Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth. Photo: Joseph Hyde.

the exhibit on their personal mobile devices and so share on the Internet, carrying the conversation beyond the physical museum.[344] We believe there is great potential for communicating Kerner priorities in this way to youth of color. The same potential role exists nationally for the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Latino, National Museum of the American Indian, and Asian Pacific American Center.

The Smithsonian also is actively engaging with smaller museums around the nation—pointing out that there are more museums in America than McDonalds and Starbucks combined. Large or small, museums have a relatively untapped ability as catalytic platforms for creating new will. The Eisenhower Foundation has convened forums with the leadership of the Smithsonian, the Museum of Modern

Art in New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to explore the possibilities.[345]

Policy

For now, perhaps the best we can hope for is that the organizations we have highlighted here, along with the many others discussed in Chapters 32–36, will continue to create new will through their own individual missions.

However, we are mindful of how, in Chapter 32, Margaret S. Morton, Rocío Aranda-Alvarado, and Lena Sze conclude, "We urge government and philanthropy to work together more strategically to partner with artists and visual arts organizations committed to activating public spaces, art spaces, museums, the Internet, and varied forms of popular culture and integrate works that penetrate all our histories into society . . . [and] that advance and strengthen truthful civic knowledge . . ."[346]

With this advice in mind and consistent with the bridge-building values of For Freedoms, we encourage a national summit on Arts and New Will as a first step in creating "new partnerships with a multitude of artists, culture bearers, and creatives . . . [that] can reckon with history in more tangible ways by engaging directly with community and the public at large . . . [T]hese kinds of arts and art practices help build the new will to achieve the goals of the Kerner Report."[347]

As a means of organizing new partnerships, the White House Conference might consider a significant online platform is needed that connects artists and their organizations with local and national advocates who pursue evidence-based solutions. In addition, there needs to be dialogue among social scientists, artists, and advocates for *Creating Justice* priorities on the extent to which we can empirically measure the cause-and-effect process through which the arts create new will.

CONCLUSION

As America approaches its 250th birthday in 2026, *Creating Justice* is part of a long-term, multiracial movement based on evidence and moral fusion. We set forth a plan for creating new will to scale up Kerner priorities that have proven to work. The roles of government and nonprofit organizations are enhanced. Financing is based on eliminating what doesn't work, increasing the resources of philanthropy, and taxing the rich, the privileged, and corporate America. Success will depend in no small part on how the *Creating Justice* domestic agenda can be integrated with progress on climate control and wisdom in foreign policy. We seek to reduce inequality, poverty, and injustice while we revive the heart of democracy.

Notes

1. These observations on the 2024 election draw on endnotes found later in this Introduction. The discussion of hateful rhetoric and uncivil discourse is based on Hannah Knowles and Meryl Kornfield, "Trump Says He Doesn't Mind Someone Shooting Journalists at Rally," *Washington Post*, November 3, 2024; Adam Gabbatt and Ed Pilkington, "Trump Fills Madison Square Garden With Anger, Vitriol and Racist Threats," *The Guardian*, October 27, 2024; and Russell Falcon, "Did Trump Actually Call Veterans Who Died In Wars 'Suckers'?" Nexstar Wire Media News, June 27, 2024.

2. Report of the *National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, United States Government Printing Office, Washington DC, 1968. See also Eisenhower Foundation Nelson Mandela Healing Forum on *Healing Our Divided Society*, United Nations, New York, March 1, 2023.

3. Mishel Lawrence, "We Can and Should Address Racial Disparities," *The American Prospect,* June 24, 2024.

4. See note 3.

5. Zuman Gabriel, "It's Time to Tax the Billionaires," *New York Times*, May 4, 2024.

6. Fred R. Harris and Alan Curtis (Eds), *Healing Our Divided Society: Investing in America Fifty Years After the Kerner Commission* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2018).

7. See note 3.

8. See note 6; Linda Darling-Hammond, Chapter 5, this volume; Leah Rothstein and Richard Rothstein, Chapter 16, this volume; Elliott Currie, Chapter 14, this volume; Michelle Williams, Chapter 17, this volume.

9. See note 6.

10. Felicia Wong and Matt Hughes, Chapter 2, this volume.

11. Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, Chapter 3, this volume.

12. Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, Chapter 3, this volume.

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