

## **Achieving Equity in the Economic Recovery**

The U.S. financial crisis has hit low-income communities and communities of color first and hardest. One of the most glaring illustrations of this disparate impact is unemployment. In March 2009, the unemployment rate was 8.5%—the highest level since October 1983. The African-American unemployment rate stood at 13.3%, the Latino unemployment rate at 11.4%, and the unemployment rate for whites at 7.9% in January 2009. Beyond this, soaring foreclosures and evictions, depressed wages, and decreasing benefits are concentrated in minority communities, exacerbating pre-existing racial and economic inequity.

These indicators reveal that racial equity and equal opportunity must be at the forefront of policies designed to promote economic recovery. Grassroots advocates and a range of policy advocacy groups are developing strategies to ensure that the hundreds of billions of stimulus dollars are applied to maximize equity and create meaningful opportunities for disadvantaged groups. Ensuring equity, transparency and accountability in the development and implementation of economic recovery plans is also one of the core priorities of U.S. Programs' Seize the Day Fund. This panel will explore the anticipated effects of current policy proposals on disadvantaged communities and identify concrete strategies for achieving equity in the economic recovery.

Moderator: John Cavanagh, Institute for Policy Studies

Panelists: Sarita Gupta, Jobs with Justice  
Maya Wiley, Center for Social Inclusion  
Gary Bass, OMB Watch

### **Questions to frame the discussion:**

Given that poor people do not have the purchasing power or wealth to drive the economy, what strategies are racial and economic equity groups using to gain a seat at the policy table?

With the bulk of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) dollars being distributed through state discretionary spending, what strategies can state and local advocacy groups use to influence this process?

Beyond ARRA implementation advocacy, what other targets are groups pursuing to promote racial and economic equity in this period of economic crisis?

How does advocacy for transparency help to advance equity? What accounts for the lack of cross-fertilization between transparency advocates and equity advocates? What role can funders play to integrate these groups?

How can we avoid duplication of efforts when so many groups are working to monitor and analyze how stimulus dollars are being spent?