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# CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## THE MANY FUTURES OF WORK: POSSIBILITIES AND PERILS

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NOTE: All working papers and conference videos are available at <https://www.futuresofwork.org/working-papers-resources>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND MOVING FORWARD

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### INTRODUCTION

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The Conference on the Many Futures of Work: Possibilities and Perils launches the Institute’s effort to engage the best thinking on the factors driving the diminution of middle-income jobs and on the policies and practices that can transform this trajectory away from low wage, unstable jobs and towards jobs that lead to greater prosperity and economic inclusion. Our goal is to develop and promote policies and practices that link successful and satisfying careers with strong business growth, lasting community economic achievements, and growing equality.

There are many stakeholders who shape the discourse on changing work structures. These include all levels of government, foundations, civic organizations, all manner and sizes of business, trade associations, unions, community groups, education and training organizations, grass roots organizers, and international institutions. And yet, it seems that most events on the future of work tend to focus on specific cohorts and groups – often Millennials, big business, government, community colleges and four-year institutions, and the workforce system. Missing from the most discussions is meaningful attention to how changes in the structure of work are perpetuating and exacerbating systemic disadvantages linked to race, gender, age, ethnicity, place (e.g., rural, urban, suburban), disability, criminal justice engagement, or immigration status.

Technology frequently dominates much of the attention. We constantly hear that new technology will inevitably cause jobs to be lost on the scale of a mass extinction. In reality, the decisions on what and how technologies are deployed are made by company executives and their boards of directors – not by the machines. These uses may range from technologies that augment human efforts to those that replace workers outright. Unfortunately, a preponderance of investor sentiment is to maximize the value of their holdings over the short term thereby resulting in policies and practices that favor the substitution of machines for workers. This is consistent with strategies that slash operating costs, that shut down investment in expensive research and development, that replaces workers with machines, and that off-loads functions to outside vendors, all in the pursuit of greater shareholder value.

Ironically, these “market-driven” choices also rely on large government subsidies. Government is asked routinely to change and expand public education and training to do what businesses once did for themselves. Government is also pushed to fill gaps in what was once part of the fabric of the social contract between workers and their employers. Over time, these actions become normalized and are accepted as inevitable. Consequently, it is not often that anyone stands up at a conference on the future of work and challenges the decisions that are causing these changes. Instead, the starting point for much of the public discourse is to accept the “inevitable” and focus on how to accommodate the titans of industry and commerce.

More than two hundred people participated in the Institute’s two-day conference that challenged conventions regarding business and workers. In many ways, the event took on the trappings of a “people’s conference.” The vast majority had never participated in a meeting on the “future of work.” A diverse mix of stakeholders including grassroots community activists and worker organizers, business and union leaders, educators and trainers, workforce and economic development professionals, government and policy experts, and many from the philanthropic community made up the conferees. While we drew heavily from academia for subject matter experts, one goal was to give voice to people who deal on a daily basis with the consequences of structural changes in the workplace. Consequently, forty-seven people identified themselves as coming from grassroots organizations, three were from unions, ten self-identified as entrepreneurs and eight came from business. Twenty-five identified themselves as part of the education and training system and 14 were from state or local workforce systems.

The conference was organized around six major themes. A primary goal of the conference was to come up with ideas for new policies, laws, practices, research, training and education, and grassroots organizing that were matched to these themes.

**Six major themes of the conference:**

The innovative enterprise: The label “innovative” is applied indiscriminately to a range of organizations, often as a way of connoting “freshness” or “advancement.” The focus of this session is to clarify what is meant by the term, “innovative enterprise,” and how such an enterprise is essential to the retention and growth of middle class jobs.

Restoring the middle: Businesses grow and prosper by retaining and reinvesting in the productive capabilities of workers who can transform ideas into innovative goods and services. These workers act collectively and learn cumulatively; they effectively form the middle tiers of innovative business. This conversation will address the roles for business enterprises, civil society organizations, government agencies, and labor unions in restoring the middle.

Structural racism: Structural racism jeopardizes the security of middle and low-income African Americans, Native Americans and other racial and ethnic groups that are stigmatized by the majority population. The conversation will address possible new policies and strategies for changing these structures, for enhancing the job security of marginalized racial and ethnic groups, and for supporting broad-based upward mobility.

Age, gender, disability, prior engagement with the criminal justice system, and immigration: Barriers to accessing middle-income jobs are also constructed along the lines of age, gender, disability and place of origin. Although various barriers manifest themselves in different ways, it is possible that they lend themselves to systemic solutions.

The on-demand economy and the commodification of work and skills: Work that ties an individual to an employer for an unspecified period of time is generally regarded as standard employment. But, not all work is standard – and never has been so. This working session will examine how on-demand work models may be diminishing the value of standard employment and are reinforcing trends in the commodification of work and skills.

Economic justice and the imperatives of work and family: The issue of economic justice is a global concern. What is the meaning of “inclusiveness” as it is applied to the concepts of economic justice and growth, sustainability, and equality? Do questions of economic justice and morality have standing in public policies that pertain to jobs and employment? Assuming yes, what principles should guide public policies and practices and how are they manifested through action?

There were five plenary sessions: four at the beginning on the first day and one at lunch on the second day. Lamia Kamal-Chaoui from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and Peter Georgescu, chair emeritus of Young and Rubicam kicked off the conference. Kamal-Chaoui provided an international context for how work structures are changing, especially in the “advanced” economies. Georgescu addressed the adverse consequences of shareholder primacy on economic growth, economic equality and social mobility.

Max Neufeind, an advisor to the German Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, described Germany's ambitious initiative, Work 4.0, that is reshaping workforce policy to meet the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century work.

Saru Jayaraman from Restaurant Opportunities Centers United and Dr. William A. Darity, Jr. from Duke University shared the stage to talk about their respective initiatives aimed at upending the institutional structures that drive economic inequality and that determine winners and losers. Jayaraman is at the forefront in organizing restaurant workers and progressive restaurant owners to achieve livable wages, predictable working hours, essential benefits, and environmentally safe and harassment-free working conditions. Darity laid out his ideas for the federal government to guaranteed full-time jobs for all who want to work.

Dee Davis, President and Founder of the Center for Rural Strategies, wrapped up the formal presentations on the first day by describing conditions in rural America. He spoke about the cultural, social and economic factors that shape the views of people living in rural areas.

On day two, Charles Adler, co-founder of Kickstarter and the founder of the creative maker space, Lost Arts, talked about his efforts to foster the growth of communities of creative artists and thinkers.

A special guest of the conference, Peter Pogačar, State Secretary at the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities in the Republic of Slovenia, offered his observations on the futures of work as a European looking in on the United States and with respect to Europe as a member of the European Union.

Natasha "T" Miller, performance poet, filmmaker, LGBTQ activist, and entrepreneur, performed her poetry at several points on the morning of the first day and at lunch on both days of the conference. Her words brought laughter, tears, energy, grace and introspection to every person who heard and saw her. She reminded us that our purpose was to address the human dimensions and avoid intellectual abstractions.

The hard work was accomplished in six working groups that met for more than six hours over the course of two days. Each working group focused on one of the six themes. The themes were defined specifically so that they would overlap. Our purpose was to have different groups address the same issues from different perspectives with the hope that separate approaches would lead to new insights.

Each working group was led by a facilitator and a reporter (whose job was to make sense of and report the results of the group's discussion). The major issues of each working group were framed by three or four leading subject matter experts who contributed papers in advance of the meeting and also presented their ideas in the working sessions.

## CONFERENCE VISION

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The conversations at the conference were inspirational. Without any prompting, people attending the conference advocated sincerely for true equal opportunity. They recognized that growing gaps in wealth and income are fueled by unsustainable policies and practices that make opportunities less equal. The conferees acknowledged that those who enjoy an advantage may view their standing as a share of a fixed pie rather than as a growing pie in which others may also prosper. Nonetheless, the conferees believed that it was reasonable to call on those who benefit most from the status quo to help alter the current economic trajectory towards greater inclusivity.

Although a conference-wide consensus on a set of recommendations was formally not obtained, there were six commonly held values and principles articulated across the working groups and at the plenary sessions:

- 1) Business policies and practices must be redirected by business leaders towards retaining and reinvesting earnings for the development and deployment of innovative products and services, thereby rewarding all stakeholders – customers, employees, communities and owners – rather than just focusing on maximizing value for shareholders alone.
- 2) Workers must have equal standing in determining the course of policies and practices that advance their well-being and, at the same time, also provide them with protection from the adverse consequences of economic changes.
- 3) Government is vital in setting the rules, assuring an equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, and for leveling the playing field among all stakeholders.
- 4) Technology expands the possibilities of what can be created and the means for achieving those ends. Policies and practices that use technology in greater symbiosis with workers, rather than as a replacement of workers, offers a promising pathway towards greater opportunities and employment growth.
- 5) Structural biases – structural racism, gender inequality, barriers related to age and disability, disdain for immigrants, prejudices against veterans, and impediments for those who were previously incarcerated – foster inequality as long as they remain unchallenged. These are cultural and social habits that can and should be redressed through community and civic actions.
- 6) The idea that a person's engagement in work follows a lock-step pattern or life course of education then work and then retirement does not describe modern-day realities. People face chronic uncertainties and transitional struggles at every stage in life. This requires great flexibility, continuous learning, and support systems that provide the means and opportunities for bridging change in work and opportunities. Education and training systems and services need to be aligned to serve people as they navigate evolutionary change – and sometimes revolutionary events – in work.

These values and principles are found in the ideas put forth by the working groups.

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## BUSINESS MUST LEAD REFORMS TO ACHIEVE AN EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY.

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Two organizing business principles, shareholder primacy and stakeholder primacy, provided juxtaposition for conversations throughout the conference. A business agenda in service of stable and equitable economic growth balances shareholder and stakeholder interests. It starts with management and corporate boards, and operates at national, state, and community levels.

Shareholder primacy argues that the purpose of a corporation is to maximize value for shareholders over the short term. It extracts earnings and distributes them in the form of dividends and compensation based on stock performance. Investments in research and development decline, capital is put to non-productive uses such as stock buybacks so as to inflate the value of stock, and every penny of operating cost is squeezed to boost earnings.

*Who are the value creators in the 21st century? ... The answer is the employees. The CEO in the C-suite doesn't produce productivity increases or innovation. Those come from the people who work for the corporations. And if you want to do that, you can't treat them like a cost, like a robot – a breathing robot. No. If you want them to wake up in the middle of the night worrying about your company, you've got to treat them with respect and with dignity. That's what you have to do. So, values matter. You've got to love your customer, and you've got to love your people. And those are the companies that are going to win in the future....*

*... Here's a principle. It's an explanation not an excuse of what's going on. But, businesses and society operate in different universes. There's not a nano second of the day that most CEOs worry about how [their] decisions impact what happens in society. I say only when business and society collaborate ... and they think about issues together, can you have sustained prosperity and growth. You cannot have business win over here and society lose. Because the ultimate goal is the American dream....*

Peter Georgescu, Chair Emeritus, Young and Rubicam, October 5, 2017

Stakeholder primacy takes a long-term view and puts customers, managers, employees and community on an equal footing. It favors retention and reinvestment of earnings. It supports research and development and retains and rewards workers who are capable of translating new ideas into successful products and services. These organizations value employees as essential to the success of the business and not as costs that need to be cut.

Peter Georgescu set the stage with the twin messages that: 1) shareholder primacy is plundering businesses and jobs, and 2) that it is essential to adopt policies and practices that reinvest earnings into workers and that create new products and services. Max Neufeind reinforced this by positing that an underlying principle of Germany's Work 4.0 initiative is that profits and equitable growth

in the wealth of workers are mutually compatible. Indeed, several working groups came forward with recommendations on how to reform the way business is done, on the role of employee ownership in achieving constructive change, and for harnessing the strengths of electronic platforms.

Some of the ideas that came out of the working groups include:

- Adoption of incentives that promote “retain and reinvest” behavior and discourage “predatory value extraction” behavior. Included in this are initiatives that:
  - Clamp down on stock buy-backs, runaway CEO pay and other non-productive uses of capital
  - Create new business ownership wealth for workers through the expansion of Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs). This may be achieved through:



- New and expanded sources of capital to finance the growth of ESOPs, including socially-driven equity groups such as foundations
  - An Employee Equity Loan Guarantee program that will facilitate business-ownership by low-wealth employee owners
- Support patient capital in favor of short-term investing. Co-ops, other forms of employee ownership, credit unions, and other mutually beneficial financial institutions can serve as sources of community investment capital
- Expansion of research on:
  - The relationship of different business models with different structures of work, i.e., how are organizations configured to maximize value creation versus value extraction. This will help inform decisions on the consequences of policies that favor one model over another
  - The effects of networked organizations (i.e., production networks) on work structures and worker power. The expanded use of supply chains and outsourcing of non-core functions may fragment work structures and isolate workers within the networks. Broadly networked systems may also create asymmetric information and operational imbalances within the network. The consequences of these and other outcomes of networked organizations need to be better understood
  - Changes in work structures in relation to the growth and evolution of electronic-platform systems
- Promotion and support for champions of innovation who grow ideas into new products and services
- Recognition and promotion of businesses that advocate for corporate reforms. Reforms are best accomplished from within since proposed changes can be designed to be more intuitive and, thus, less threatening. Outside recognition can help to validate and give energy to the increased risks associated with more profound changes.

Businesses can and should take the lead in promoting changes that grow collective wealth, reduce inequality, and reward value creation. If so inclined, they may be able to accomplish changes more nimbly than government.

There should be a concerted effort to promote civic education on the causes, consequences and possible solutions to the decline of the economic middle and the growth of income and wealth inequality. This goes beyond an information campaign and should be incorporated into what is learned in schools, at workplaces and in other social and cultural venues.

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## WORKER EMPOWERMENT

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Workers must have equal standing in determining their own futures This begins by understanding the five elements that shape the context of work today and in the foreseeable future:

- 1) **Structure of work:** Work will be flexible, and, as such the workforce must also become more flexible. The idea that careers will proceed over a lock-step pattern of education then job and then retirement is obsolete. Careers will progress in many different ways over the life course of workers and their careers will not develop along predictable pathways

- 2) **Education and training:** Training and education will be required over workers' lifetimes. Jobs will be points on the arc of a career that retains its continuity by building on what workers already know and building on prior training and experience. A new social contract should provide the means, methods and opportunities for workers to recognize and apply their skills and knowledge to new circumstances, as well as to acquire new skills and knowledge needed to bridge gaps. Internships and other forms of work-based learning will be essential for supporting lifetimes of learning.
- 3) **Whole worker:** It is essential to view the worker as a whole person. Workers must be regarded as assets who are encouraged to grow, rather as costs that need to be managed and minimized. It is important to balance the strengths and inherent value that each worker brings to their workplace, and not become focused solely on apparent differences among workers. Race and ethnicity have no real bearing on whether someone is competent to do a particular job, but these factors are nevertheless used to determine status and opportunity. Gender, disability, and age may either lessen or strengthen an individual's standing, however, these characteristics when viewed in isolation obscure the totality of what an individual brings to the workplace. Access to housing, transportation, safety and even social justice are all matters that are important to the entire population but are distributed unequally depending on one's identity or standing. These all are factors that drive inequality.
- 4) **Deal with barriers by addressing common challenges together and giving attention to specific problems:** At the same time, it is important to keep calling out the needs of marginalized groups. The solution is to find common ground on the challenges that apply uniformly to all groups while, at the same time, add remedies that address disadvantages that are particular to a given group. For example, basic carpentry skills are the same for all workers regardless of race, gender, ethnicity or English proficiency, however, cultural, social and language differences may stand in the way for some and not others. Programs that cast a broad, inclusive net are able to find common ground on which to build specific remedies for group-specific barriers.
- 5) **Leverage all stakeholders:** Every group with standing on how work is to be structured should be included and asked to join in problem-solving and policy-making. Government plays a large role in this by setting the rules and by assuring that everyone receives the same basic services. The media also need to be engaged to provide context and to establish a common set of facts.

There are two approaches towards greater worker empowerment. Top-down strategies change the basic rules governing institutional structures. One example is guaranteed employment, an idea proposed by Drs. William A. Darity, Jr and Darrick Hamilton. Their idea is that every prospective worker who wants to work should be provided a job that pays a living wage. This addresses the economic precarity of people who are underemployed or unemployed and reduces the economic leverage of those in positions of power. It would eliminate job rationing, bring resources to struggling communities, and contribute to the common good.

Another example is democratized business ownership. Wealth and power come from sustained ownership. Ownership that is passed through inheritance maintains the status quo. Ownership that is passed to the workers or to the community breaks that chain and grows the collective wealth of a larger group. Programs that facilitate these transfers outside of inheritance will shift and broaden who holds positions of power.

Bottom-up strategies rely on collective action by those who do not hold formal power and have low economic status. This action can take the forms of greater unionization and grassroots political organizing. While bottom-up initiatives take root and grow by virtue of individuals acting together, these initiatives may be enabled and fostered by public policies that promote individual rights and recognize the value of collective action. For example, people who are now disenfranchised either because of status or by law (e.g., people who were previously incarcerated) can add their voices to grassroots efforts once their voting rights are restored.

Bottom-up strategies may also be economic. The embedded wealth of communities can be organized and put towards common goals. For example, churches play a large role in African American communities. One strategy is for churches to invest what they collect back into their communities by organizing credit unions and other financial institutions that will reinvest the resources of the congregants.

*"I would like to propose that we establish a universal public option for employment for all adults under the auspices of an agency that Darrick Hamilton and I have dubbed the National Investment Employment Corps. Adult Americans would be assured of the opportunity to work at non-poverty wages via a public-sector guarantee of employment for all. The minimum compensation for each entry level position in the employment agency would be just above the poverty level income associated with conditions for a family of four. Each job also will include benefits as part of the total compensation. Among these will be the provision of health insurance comparable in quality to what now is offered to elected officials and civil servants at the national level. Such a policy will empower American workers in an unprecedented manner ....*

*"First, it will place an effective floor on the compensation that must be offered by the private sector.... Second, every American who wants a job will have access to a full-time job at decent wages .... Thus, the program eliminates involuntary unemployment .... Third, unions will be strengthened .... The presence of a floor on compensation produced by the job guarantee would increase their leverage in providing better pay and better work conditions, including safer work conditions, for their laborers.*

*"While simultaneously assuring full employment and eliminating working poverty, the federal job guarantee also would be a vehicle for citizens to contribute socially useful work."*

William A. Darity, Jr., Duke University, October 5, 2017

New technologies will continue to be used to change the nature of work. Their purposes and uses vary, so how they are governed will also have to vary. Public policies governing the workplace have not kept up with changes brought about by new technologies and venture funding strategies. Some existing policies remain viable, and only need to be re-tooled. Others are obsolete and new policy gaps are emerging. Social policies that are connected to traditional work relationships will need to be reinvented to reflect new realities of work structures.

The electronic platform economy provides opportunities but also poses important risks. Consumers can benefit from services and products that can be offered at lower prices and at greater convenience than would otherwise be the case. Workers who are seeking supplemental income can benefit from platform work, and this type of work provides opportunities to gain experience and new skills. Workers are also afforded the opportunity to find work that fits their lifestyles and personal needs.

The platform economy does not work well for people who must depend on it to make a living. Income is often low, and risks and economic uncertainty are great. Workers have very little, if any, control over the wages they earn or the work that they perform. The business model of many platform businesses is to insist on (mis)classifying workers as independent contractors and not employees. These platform businesses therefore do not incur liabilities for unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, pensions, vacation, overtime, minimum wages or healthcare. Legal cases challenging the classification of

workers as independent contractors are making their ways through the courts of several countries, including the U.S. Nonetheless, it is likely that new laws will have to be enacted to capture forms of work that are outside the traditional 20<sup>th</sup> Century structure of employment. A challenge is in finding solutions that minimize the negative effects of the digital platform economy without adversely affecting the positives.

*"I'm sure many of you have noticed walking into a coffee shop, we never used to have to tip at a coffee shop. Right now, you pay on an Apple Pay – they turn a little screen around and you're asked how much you want to tip. Right in front of the barista. We never used to have to do that.*

*"Or, look at Uber, or you look at musicians who increasingly are being asked to work for tips rather than wages. We are seeing this "beautiful" idea created by the restaurant industry – beautiful for them. [It is] the idea of replacing wages with tips spreading across our economy, aided and abetted by technology. Spreading across many other sectors. bless you, ... because it's a "beautiful" idea: the idea of not paying your own workers and letting the customers replace wages. It's a beautiful idea. It's a smart, ingenious idea – which is why we have to stop it now."*

Saru Jayaraman, Co-founder, Restaurant Opportunities Centers – United, October 5, 2017

Concerns over the use of technologies by business extend beyond the platform economy. Digital technology in the workplace is ubiquitous. It is often used to replace workers with machines and computers. It also may be used to manage and gather information about workers - often in ways that are opaque to workers. Electronically collected data are collected and used frequently without their knowledge or consent. Algorithms containing code that is not transparent are used to determine schedules, assess performance, assign tasks and perform other management functions. Any bias can only be surmised from what people report. Any effort to collect relevant data is difficult for workers who work for the same company and under one roof, but it is especially difficult for platform workers and workers in networked systems since they often are not in the same place and cannot organize for mutual benefit.

There are ways to move forward:

- **Expand worker protections and raise the floor:** All workers irrespective of how they earn income must enjoy the same basic rights and social benefits. The growth of non-traditional employment is raising awareness and demonstrating the need for common standards. Basic social benefits may be established by attaching the benefits to individuals rather than through employers. Most of these can be accomplished by states. These include compensation for injuries in the course of work, defined contribution or defined benefit pensions, unemployment insurance, paid sick and family leave, a livable minimum wage, regulations governing overtime, supplemental security income, and paid vacations and holidays. Municipalities can also act to raise wages and require employers to provide paid sick leave. And, the right to health care is an issue that can be resolved at the national and state levels.
- **Address and limit rising corporate power:**  
This is accomplished in three ways:
  - First, worker power needs to grow, and new means for acquiring power need to be developed. Grassroots efforts such as Restaurant Opportunities Centers United and the Domestic Workers Alliance point a way for greater worker empowerment. New technologies and resources, similar to Coworker.org, can be important levers to facilitate self-organizing

- Second, accelerate union organizing around industry sectors covering defined geographies (a city, county, or region) rather by individual businesses. Federal, state and local policies need to be developed and enacted that support this model that already is favored in the construction industry. Union organizers need to be trained in how this model can be made to work in services, manufacturing and other industries. Information about the model needs to be developed and propagated, including the development and deployment of new ways to talk about unions, the goals of these new unions to improve business returns on investment, on reducing downtime and skills shortages, and as the vehicle to address real worker fears and frustrations. Further research is required on the value of “area unions” with respect to wages, training and the quality of products and services.
- Third, restrictions on corporate power with respect to labor need to be implemented. This begins by enforcing existing labor laws, as well as expand them to prohibit employers from interfering with workers’ efforts to organize and bargain collectively. Also, existing anti-trust laws may be used to address human resources practices that effectively limit competition. The data collected and used by businesses with respect to workers and the algorithms for managing human resources need to be transparent to and discoverable by workers. Further, new laws or regulations may be needed in order to limit monopsonistic behavior not covered by existing anti-trust laws. Finally, it is essential to reverse anti-union policies and laws and, instead, extend and broaden union protections and benefits. These act as natural checks on abuses of workers and of labor laws.

The U.S. is wedded to rugged individualism and is culturally ambivalent about worker power. Many workers rarely question the potential of their individual efforts and unsure of the possibilities and importance of having a collective voice. They are less certain about what they deserve as workers. In the past, unions supported workers and middle-income earners – and can so today. Also, digital networks can serve as quasi-unions. They can create environments for mutual aid, and they can aggregate data on working conditions, pay and business performance. These new networks can begin by providing specific services that assist workers, quantify positive outcomes and build on collective successes. They can also call-out businesses that act badly and seek to change their behaviors.

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### GOVERNMENT MUST ESTABLISH THE FUNDAMENTALS FOR ACHIEVING GREATER EQUITY AND FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH

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Governments have a sovereign duty to their citizens to properly regulate commerce for the benefit of the people and to properly balance the relationship between those who engage workers and those who provide their labor. Governments do this by establishing rules of conduct and, in so doing, can level the playing field among all stakeholders. Governments are relied upon to provide solutions and should not be viewed – so some claim – as inherently the source of problems.

Public discourse on human-machine competition is locked into existing production models; i.e., disputes over the methods and modes of production. Much greater attention should be given to the emergence of digital platforms as marketplaces for organizing project-based work. Digital platforms and growing computational capacity also are changing the very nature of production. Platform owners, such as Amazon and Uber, are developing power that can be as formidable as that of factory owners at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Just as early industrialists owned the means of production and

controlled capital, the owners of digital platforms own the data used by producers and consumers. But, unlike the time of early industrialists, digital platforms are becoming ubiquitous and embedded in the fabric of day-to-day commerce. They also control the algorithms and software that create wealth and value. The owners then use the platforms to define and manage markets. This gives platform owners unprecedented and exclusive advantages in consumer and labor markets and enormous control over customers and workers.

Government safety nets are increasingly out of synch with the realities of 21<sup>st</sup> century systems. The no-fault insurance program of workers' compensation assumes that the injured worker is attached to an employer of record and that an injury occurs in the course of performing work for that employer. The "bargain" is that the employer is protected from civil liability and the worker receives quick medical treatment and disability relief. The nation's unemployment insurance system also assumes a similar attachment between a worker and employer. Employers rely on unemployment insurance to tide over workers during layoffs so that they are available to return to work when the economy improves. As businesses increasingly rely on workers who they do not directly employ, these systems protect fewer workers. New wage and work standards need to be developed to track with changes in the structure of work. These standards should embrace independent work (so called "gig" work) and should be adaptable to new work structures that have yet to emerge, including those that are the consequence of extended business networks and non-hierarchical systems.

The rapid growth of digital platforms is prompting policy makers to ask whether these platforms are reducing fair competition by giving particular advantage to those who own the platforms. Just as government stepped forward to address monopolies in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is time for government to consider whether, when and how it should regulate digital platforms. In so doing, it should address the possible regulation of platform owners with respect to their exclusive access to data on customers, suppliers, and employees. Unfettered control by digital platform owners creates an asymmetric information advantage for them. It confines those who use these platforms (e.g., Uber drivers, Airbnb renters, job board users, etc.) to the role of "digital sharecropper."<sup>1</sup>

Policy makers must tackle the issue of who owns and controls consumer and supplier data and how individual privacy and proprietary business information should be protected. It is important for the public and policymakers to establish who sets the rules for business and the economy. No one should be indifferent to how technology is deployed, as to whether the operative business model is value-adding versus value-extracting business models, or how financial markets drive corporate decision-making.

Policy makers should challenge practices that limit the ability of workers to freely offer their skills, talents, knowledge and experiences to all businesses, especially by workers who are engaged project-by-project and have no long-term commitments to any particular business. The blanket use of non-compete agreements that limit employee movements effectively constrain opportunities for workers. New laws or regulations may be needed to limit monopsonistic behavior not covered by existing anti-trust laws. These include limits on blanket non-compete agreements and regulations regarding the use of mandatory arbitration in human resources disputes.

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<sup>1</sup> Digital sharecroppers produce and consume services in accordance to the market rules established by the platform owner who owns the data and controls key market information.

Government must be supported adequately for the services it is required to provide. Businesses' share in the cost of government is out of synch with economic reality. We should consider new taxation models that track with changing economic realities while guarding against creating unintended consequences. Also, business should not be able to off-load operational costs and responsibilities onto government and public education and training institutions without also providing for their funding.

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## USE TECHNOLOGY TO EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES AND POSSIBILITIES

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Taken to two extremes, technology can be used in symbiosis with workers and augment human activity or it can be used to replace humans. Alarmists assert the latter and predict mass job extinctions; others point to a brighter future of machines complementing human activities. Nonetheless, even optimists concede that many people will be pained as some jobs are destroyed, other jobs are radically reconfigured, and new jobs emerge for which they are not immediately qualified.

As John Zysman and Martin Kenney observed in their paper for the conference, "... despite ... [the] seemingly inexorable march of technology, the future is not pre-determined, but, rather, will be shaped by social, political and economic actions. In a sense, the future is ours to create. A dystopian future in which jobs are simply lost and workers are only displaced is not inevitable. These tools can be deployed in ways that generate new employment, organize work to augment skills and support a more just and equal society."

Financial capital plays an important role. The view that business is simply about making a profit no longer holds for large segments of the economy. Many prominent venture-fund investors are willing to accept large losses with the hope of gaining monopoly advantage and achieving large returns when they cash out their investments. Uber, for example, is losing billions of dollars per year on its operation. Amazon, a publicly traded company for 20 years only started reporting modest profits in the last several years. The pursuit of extreme market share creates an unequal competitive environment that favors newcomers over incumbents since private equity funded platform firms often are able to operate for prolonged periods without a profit while "legacy" businesses must earn profits to survive.

*"What we rather promote is something we call the human centric complementarity, where technology works as an amplifier of those skills that are uniquely human. Because there are a couple of things like: empathy, creativity... that are uniquely human.... When you ... bring together these capabilities with the capabilities of technology, [that] makes a quite productive combination. So, what we promote is job enrichment. What we promote is up-skilling as opposed to de-skilling due to a polarized organization where those on the top are actually programming the algorithms and programming the smart robots while the others are basically cleaning up the shop floor.*

*"An example and something was especially German about this is the role of social partnership. Just to give you an example how this upskilling could work out. [At] a container terminal in Hamburg, what they did [was] a kind of social partnership agreement on the company level... The company is allowed to make use of automatization technologies, but productivity gains being produced by these technologies go into a fund within the company, and this fund is used for investments for upskilling of the workforce. And this kind of idea is now pushed from this company to a more sectoral level. This is a social partnership approach that we are promoting in Germany."*

Dr. Max Neufeind, Special Advisor, German Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, October 5, 2017

Moving forward, the public and decision makers must have a more informed understanding on how the economy is changing and how traditional views of business may no longer be adequate. They need to

appreciate how different modes and methods of conducting business have varying effects on workers, on communities, and on social and cultural norms. It is important to recognize that this news will be unsettling, even to business leaders who may see emerging systems as existential threats. People at all levels need to come to the understanding that no set of outcomes is inevitable. The information that is given to the public must be offered in ways that are understandable by those who are not experts. But, neither can it be “dumbed down.” One method is to employ metaphors and other visuals of mind and experience to frame big issues and possible solutions. In the end, government must be relied upon to set rules and police behavior to conform with public expectations.

Efforts focusing on socially beneficial uses of new digital tools should be considered as much as policies that attempt to limit socially non-constructive uses. Digital platforms and the algorithms that power them can be adapted to strengthen local economies, reduce or eliminate barriers for marginalized communities in cities as well as in rural areas, and open access to resources that are unaffordable except in highly concentrated, affluent markets. At the same time, these digital tools work globally and not just in the United States. Consequently, new opportunities also open new competition for which U.S. workers must be prepared to meet. This means that training and education must match evolving economic conditions.

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### **FACE UP TO STRUCTURAL RACISM AND OTHER SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONSTRUCTIONS THAT CREATE AND PERPETUATE INEQUALITY AND DIVISION**

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The racial constructions that are the foundation for economic and social inequality are not grounded in biology and neither are they a function of the collective failures of any group of people. Race and related distinctions are social constructions, and as such, they can be changed. At the same time, they are embedded deeply in the relationships defining power and privilege. They produce a systemic, long-lasting stratification of the economy, society and institutions and can only be disassembled through similarly systemic policies and initiatives.

Structural racism – as well as discrimination tied to ageism, gender and gender identity, disability, immigration, and criminal justice – must be central to any conversation about work in the future. Unfortunately, the literature on the future of work is virtually silent with respect to these issues, and it appears that most conferences ignore the subject. The Many Futures of Work conference took on these questions in several working groups, and conferees jumped in with vigor and a view towards achieving a fair and just society. Although the conversations had the potential for being discomforting and guarded, they were, in fact, candid and energizing.

The consequences of structural racism are evident in many institutions, and social and foundational cultural hierarchies. An insidious false narrative cites self-reproducing individual failures and inadequacies as being tied to poor family values, social collapse, and violence, and as the bases for the hierarchies. Clearly this is a received “wisdom” such that even some immigrants who wish to improve their own standing will express these same ideas so as to be seen in a better light in relation to African Americans. Tragically, by characterizing the problem as something inherent to a group of people denies that the real root causes are institutional and therefore correctable.

Structural racism accounts for the racial gap in wealth. Seemingly neutral, programs such as federal home loan guarantees and the GI bill for returning military following WWII benefited whites significantly more



than African Americans. Redlining prevented African Americans from securing home loans. The GI Bill reinforced differences in educational and career opportunities for whites. Even educational attainment, once considered to be the great equalizer, does little to narrow the gap in the economic and social statuses between African Americans and whites. Data on the earnings of African American males and white males show that while African Americans made gains in overall educational attainment, these gains did very little to shrink the income gap between the two groups. The effects of these and similar programs and conditions allowed whites to build wealth more rapidly and to a greater extent than African Americans – wealth that could be passed and grown from generation to generation.

Responsibility for dismantling structural racism in American institutions and society rests first with those who derive advantage from it. The main order of business is to change systems that immediately favor some over others. The process necessarily starts with individuals and small groups working together to eliminate structural disadvantages at the ground level. The aim is to achieve some early wins on manageable and achievable goals. At the same time, these early accomplishments need to be put into a broad framework that connects immediate goals with transformative initiatives that get at the roots of systems that perpetuate and grow economic and social disparities. Such a framework is based on shared values and a commitment to hold all stakeholders mutually accountable.

The conferees recognized that the way forward will be rocky, and there will be conflicts between and within groups. People who begin with an advantage will fight to keep their prerogatives. The solution is a narrative of inclusivity that seeks to improve the standing of those at the bottom and in the middle as economies grow as a whole.

Responsibility for ensuring change rests first, but not solely, with those who already enjoy privilege. This is collectively whites, and specifically those who already are regarded as leaders. White men embracing racial justice can be the tipping point for an effective anti-racism movement. The voices of all groups need to be heard so that what comes out of these efforts is determined collectively and not just by whites and elites.

Individuals can take action in several ways. They should become more self-aware of their advantages and be willing to adopt a frame of reference grounded in the principles of mutual gain. It is especially important to understand personal success in a broader context. Those who begin with an advantage may not see it in that way, especially if they work hard and perceive success as exclusively the result of that work. People often see their accomplishments as validation of their talent and intelligence, and thus discount the advantage of their head start. They need to accept their early privilege and consider what could have happened but for that early advantage. The hoped-for result is that they work to level the playing field within institutions and across economic stratifications so as to not perpetuate a cycle of inequality and injustice.

Large institutions should take collective action on systemic issues such as criminal justice reform, mental health issues, housing, entrepreneurship, vocational and technical training, meaningful tax reform, greater protections for disadvantaged classes including those who were previously incarcerated, greater worker protections, improved services for veterans, and improvements to social safety nets. They need to ferret out implicit biases in policies, funding practices, operational procedures and institutional structures and, finally, learn how to take corrective actions. But, institutions are human creations. So, organizations

must hear that the public - and in the case of business, their customers, boards, stockholders and managers – expect them to take on these challenges. This closes the circle back to grass-roots efforts.

One barrier to collective action is that people often measure their status against each other rather than recognize how they are bound together in dealing with the consequences of the decisions made by those who pull the levers of economy and government. Instances of groups overcoming their differences demonstrate that collective actions can bring about change. For example, a coalition of African Americans and Cuban Americans came together to successfully lobby for new law school additions at Florida International University and the University of Florida - Orlando. Similarly, a coalition of SEIU and AFSCME came together with Latino and African American women to advocate for a living wage in Florida. In both cases, racial and cultural differences were bridged by common goals.

The bones and muscle of structural racism need to be seen clearly by all of the public. How does structural racism work? Where does it exist? What are the false social constructs that give advantages to one group over others? What are the steps to dismantle it and to replace it with something that is equitable? The language that is used must be very intentional. The strategies must address directly white fears while also rejecting white supremacy. The focus should be on disrupting institutions of power and advantage in ways that favor all workers and not simply reorder cultural, economic and social hierarchies. Those who seek advantage during periods of change also favor inequality and will work to create differences. The rhetoric of change should focus instead on economic equality.

Conversations must be ubiquitous - in classrooms, in places of worship, and in public discourse. While the task is daunting, it is possible for groups with no military power, economic power, or political power to achieve greater equality. Jim Crow was changed. Gay rights have been advanced. Obviously biased and demeaning curricula have been changed. Progress can happen.

Talking about racism simply serves as a precursor for change. Change occurs only after people take action. One avenue is to bring culturally different voices and thinking into decision-making, by acknowledging culturally different world views and incorporating these views into educational curricula and instructional methods, and by reforming political systems to be truly representative. Our political, civic, cultural and social institutions are largely designed to conform to and serve an existing power structure. The most productive avenue for change is to distribute decision-making to the larger collective.

Race touches nearly all aspects of American culture and society, however, there are other divisions that are seen on a global scale. These include sexism, ageism, disability, nativism, prejudices against veterans, and continued persecution of those who were once incarcerated. Like racism in the U.S., these attitudes and conditions are the result of social constructs and have little to do with personal capacity and ability.

Many in the private sector support diverse workplaces. Businesses can see that the consumer base is diversifying and understand that their workforces must reflect their consumers. But employers are not free to act unilaterally: self-imposed efforts to diversify the workforce are sometimes resisted by incumbent workers who are worried about being replaced or losing status.

Businesses should adopt and promote reasonable accommodations and flexibilities to maximize the effectiveness of workers and to promote their health and well-being. Standard scorecard measures should be used to measure company performance with respect to reasonable accommodations, flexible

practices and greater diversity in all levels of employment. The results can be published and shared through an app, similar to the one that Restaurant Opportunities Centers United launched for the restaurant industry. Companies that are in the forefront of best practices should be recognized and their work should be used as examples for their peers.

The boards of directors of businesses need to be diversified to include people who represent the needs and views of marginalized groups. Workers need to have a strong voice in training that improves business performance and advances their careers. Such training should include, to the maximum extent possible, all workers and not be exclusive to specific groups except when addressing specific barriers that do not pertain to the entire workforce.

Government can do better in leveraging existing resources and funding streams to address barriers faced by disadvantaged groups. It can act as a partner and not as an adversary. Specific actions include: protecting immigrants who have temporary protected status or are registered pursuant to DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals); protecting the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), banning the “box” that requires that people report prior arrests or convictions, re-focusing the orientation of the National Labor Relations Board toward worker protection, and perhaps by imposing hiring quotas for disadvantaged populations. In addition, the existence of a vacuum in leadership that is the result of vacancies in senior federal government positions may pose an opportunity – through the Senate confirmation process – to push through new ideas and policies. Added support for a federal agenda can be accomplished with a bi-partisan congressional caucus on work and the economy. Grassroots efforts in behalf of an inclusive agenda can support efforts nationally.

It is not uncommon for groups to either want to be part of the mainstream power structure or become co-opted by and homogenized within the power-dominant group. Over time, people within groups that are marginalized may identify with or take on the characteristics of whites. In other instances, the effort to make a population more “white” is imposed on a group. For example, the world view and ways of learning of Native Americans are devalued in schools and are supplanted by Western values and ways that do not conform to the realities of the students and their communities. The counter strategy is to acknowledge and celebrate the cultural, social and economic values of every group and thereby erode the need to emulate what is regarded as “mainstream

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### ALIGN WORKFORCE SYSTEMS, AND EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO FLEXIBLE LIFE-COURSES

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Think tanks and policy makers have been making the case for life-long learning since at least the early 1980s. This is the same time that states such as California and Illinois established publicly-funded programs to support incumbent worker training. Progress has been uneven since then: workforce systems, education and training are still out of alignment with the realities faced by workers.

Businesses historically played a very large role in training and re-training their workers. Over the last few decades, responsibility for and the cost of training and re-training shifted onto workers and third parties – especially public systems such as community colleges. Recently, this is exacerbated by project-based work facilitated by electronic platforms. Success in this environment is dictated by how they personally are able to keep their skills current and in demand as they continue to churn out work.

Both the Workforce Investment Act and the successor Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act envision training programs that are employer-demand driven. This approach that defines employers as customers. It gets turned on its head by life-course thinking: A career-focused approach gives greater emphasis to what workers need and want to do in order to achieve fulfilling and financially successful careers. In fact, what is meant by “career” is no longer tied to specific jobs or industries.

Ideas offered in prior sections on worker empowerment and new technologies are equally pertinent to a discussion on needed changes in workforce development policies, practices, programs and institutions. Going further, the workforce system needs to be re-designed to meet the needs of workers and learners at all stages of their lives and development. Hortatory messages about how workers must commit themselves to a lifetime of learning do not specify how to make this practical and reasonable for people who work full time, care for family, or cannot easily access training and education. Deliberate (or formal) training and education need to wrap around the lives and resources of workers with the objective to make workers more successful, however. At this time, however, legacy institutional structures stand in the way.

Germany’s Work 4.0 initiative is an example of top-down change, although many of the ideas emanate from the grassroots through aggressive community engagement. This approach is socially and culturally relevant to Germany and a few of its neighbors as a result of centuries of community-by community collaboration linking education with employers and trained workers through what have become local chambers of commerce and unions. The U.S. system is far more diffuse, even though a large source of public funding comes from the federal government. While the Work 4.0 framework is useful as a guide on what may be good end-goals for workforce development systems, the more likely pathway for workforce policies and practices in the U.S. builds on incremental changes from the bottom-up.

One place to begin is by addressing how programs and policies are organized locally. This means that programs need to be operated more efficiently and that common elements across programs need to be better integrated and shared. This is an often-discussed goal within workforce development agencies regarding their own programs. But, it also needs to be addressed across jurisdictions. For example, new veterans face gaps in service after they finish active duty simply because public workforce agencies are not given adequate notice to prepare for the expected arrival of former military personnel in their communities. Closing that gap alone can improve the employment prospects for a cohort of capable workers.

Another step is for the workforce system, especially educational and training institutions, to do a better job at recognizing and transferring skills learned on the job. Here, too, veterans provide an example since they have many skills that are transferrable to civilian life, but, in fact, go unrecognized. These range from technical skills to soft-skills such as discipline and self-reliance. In the general population, older workers are unable to convert years of undocumented skills and experiences into credentials or entrepreneurial opportunities. There are particular examples of schools and local workforce systems attempting to address these issues, but these need to be expanded across state and national systems.

Philanthropic institutions should take a greater role in promoting greater community-level coordination as well as in assessing how economic changes are experienced in localities and by different segments in the population. Philanthropy also has the capacity to support inquiries into policies and practices that conform to a life-course framework for workers’ careers.

## MOVING FORWARD

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We were inspired by the ideas of Dee Davis, President and Founder of the Center for Rural Strategies, who was invited to share his insights about rural America. A best-selling book, J.D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elogy*, and countless commentators on the 2016 election portray rural communities as anomalies and their support for disruptive politics as an unexpected turn of events. What Davis shared, in contrast, is a view that rings true across the American landscape. He talked about self-identity and self-worth. Davis talked about the importance of communities and about people wanting to do something constructive that helps the country. He talked about miners, loggers, and truck drivers, but it could have easily been about teachers, machinists, health care workers, auto workers, retail workers, bookkeepers, legal professionals and many others whose jobs are outsourced, are replaced by machines and algorithms, or simply disappear because the returns for their work are not sufficient for Wall Street investors.

Davis put it this way:

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"THE THING ABOUT RURAL AMERICA AND WORK IS WE ALWAYS REFER TO OURSELVES AS WHAT WE USED TO DO. YOU KNOW, WE USED TO BE MINERS, WE USED TO BE FARMERS. YOU KNOW, THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE IN KENTUCKY SAYS KENTUCKY SUPPLIES ALL THE SAUSAGE TO CRACKER BARREL. WE SUPPLY ALL THE BISCUITS TO MCDONALD'S, BUT WE USED TO HAVE 90,000 FARMERS ... WE HAVE FOUR. PEOPLE AREN'T FARMERS, THEY'RE CULTURAL FARMERS. THEY'RE NOT LOGGERS. THEY'RE HARDLY WORKING ON OIL RIGS ANYMORE.

"THOSE TRADITIONAL FORMS OF EMPLOYMENT ARE OUR CULTURE. THEY ARE TOUCHSTONES. THEY ARE HOW WE IDENTIFY OURSELVES AND HOW WE SORT OUR WAY IN THE WORLD. I WAS TALKING TO A NEW YORK TIMES REPORTER AFTER THE ELECTION AND SHE SAID TO ME - I LIVE IN THE COALFIELDS OF APPALACHIA - SHE SAID TO ME, "DO YOU TALK TO ANYONE WHO THINKS COAL'S COMING BACK. I HAVEN'T TALKED TO ANYBODY ... AND EVERYBODY I'VE TALKED TO SAYS [COAL] WAS NOT COMING BACK." SHE SAYS, "I'VE TALKED TO PEOPLE ALL OVER WEST VIRGINIA AND KENTUCKY. NOBODY HAS SAID THEY THINK COAL'S COMING BACK, THOUGH THAT WAS A MAJOR THEME OF THE ELECTION." BUT WHAT'S SOMETIMES HARD TO UNDERSTAND IS THAT ELEVATING THE CULTURE OF MINERS IS IMPORTANT. MAKING THAT STORY THE CENTER OF A POLITICAL DEBATE IS IMPORTANT FOR GETTING THOSE VOTES.

"SO, WHAT BEGINS TO HAPPEN IS THAT WE BECOME VESTIGES, REPLICAS, ICONS OF EARLIER DAYS. AND, WHEN ... THAT'S THE BEST WE CAN HOPE FOR, THEN THAT'S WHERE IT STOPS. PEOPLE IN RURAL PLACES: FARMERS, MINERS, LOGGERS – THEY WANT TO DO SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE. THEY WANT TO HELP THE COUNTRY. THEY ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT WHAT'S THEIR JOB WAS BEFORE."

*DEE DAVIS, PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER, CENTER FOR RURAL STRATEGIES, OCTOBER 5, 2017*

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Workforce experts predict that workers in the future must expect to change careers many times over their course of their working lives. Consider what this means to people who hear this message and

whose jobs and ways of life are now being threatened: It says, in effect, that who and what they are don't count for anything important. Their careers – and identities – are like articles of clothing: something that they should be able to replace at will. It is no wonder that many workers feel cheapened and powerless.

How we talk about the future of work shapes thinking and policies. Metaphors and language have consequences. They frame the debate, include some and not others in the discussion, and tip the scale in favor of some solutions and not others. If we describe careers as things that are detachable and subject to reassembly, we ignore that most people define the essence of who they are by what they do. So, it is not enough to talk only about education and training (and retraining). We must address how people are able to string a series of jobs and projects together into an arc of a single career that offers continuity and a sense of self-identity.

Metaphors also determine how we talk about race and perpetuate institutional racism over generations. They form the basis for immigration policy. They define what is good or bad, help to create winners and losers, and normalize corporate and government behaviors that are deleterious to workers and their

*“But what I recognized in this other moment that [what] was happening [was] spirited on by technology... that the world seems to be moving pretty quickly. Sometimes [this is] scary for people. ...*

*“So, what I think is interesting about that reflection is it should just be the opposite. It shouldn't be so scary. Because the reality is, rules have always changed. And people changed those rules. Every one of you, ... every one of us have been a part of changing part of the game. And the moment that we're in now enables us to make those changes quicker. Which, I think is a far more empowering reflection – because the reality is the rules that were in place were always temporary. They're [now] just temporary for a lot shorter period of time. And, so why not put forth your idea, be as creative as you possibly can, and make the change that you want, because change only comes from people.”*

Charles Adler, Co-founder, Kickstarter, and Founder, Lost Arts, October 6, 2017

families. Deciding on what metaphors should be used is not a matter of political correctness – they can either form bridges between people – or build walls.

An over-arching takeaway from the Conference on the Many Futures of Work is that all discussion about the future of work needs to be framed so that it is seen and understood from the vantage point of ordinary people. They need to have the facts that enable them to understand what they are experiencing in their careers and lives and have the language and tools to be able to articulate their needs, fears, concerns, hopes, and promises. They need to recognize that rules can be changed and that they have a voice in setting new rules.

Words and concepts that deny or trivialize personal identity have no constructive value. Telling someone that the careers and working lives of generations of family members are no longer relevant without offering a path forward forecloses any meaningful conversation. We need ways to communicate that are centered on new narratives of hope and possibility, ways that identify needed levers of change and connects the many activities that are already under way. We also need ways for individuals to feel that they can exercise control over their own destinies. This often is achieved through some form of collective action that is the result of community organizing and engagement.

Experts frame discussions and draw from the data to support their arguments. They can tilt the table to give their views an unfair advantage, or than can rely on the strength of their arguments alone. Those who engage in selective fact-picking can taint all policy experts by sewing distrust in the data and in the

credibility of those who are serious students of the issues. This can also ruin the possibility for achieving common ground among competing stakeholders.

The ideas proposed at this conference require a wide-ranging collective effort involving all stakeholders. Although the Institute for Work and the Economy is a small player, we believe that we can play an important role by doing what we do best: by framing and ordering the problems that need to be addressed and by convening diverse groups to inform the issues, offer solutions and take action in their communities, cities and states. We will work along four pathways:

**First**, time and again, the top scholars assembled for this conference pointed out that research on emerging new structures of work is not keeping pace with the rate of change. Policies and programs remain rooted in post-World War II, 20<sup>th</sup> Century business and union models that are out of synch with how products and services are created and delivered.

Often, the first tendency in the U.S. is to look to the federal government and national organizations to set the framework for future policies. Clearly, many challenges are national in scope, and the federal role is pre-eminent in areas such as anti-trust, civil rights, interstate commerce and fundamental labor protections. States, and to a lesser extent, cities, are on the front line in areas such as workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, collective bargaining, minimum wage, business regulation and licensing, business and economic development, and training and education. Unfortunately, all levels face the prospect of having to make new policies and design new programs without the benefit of solid research that properly defines the problems that they are expected to resolve.

The Institute proven experience in convening groups to conduct research and develop proposed policies and programs that address knotty workforce and economic development problems. Therefore, we see our role as bringing together stakeholders and researchers to achieve a better understanding of how work is accomplished, of the directions that it is heading, of the consequences for workers and legacy businesses, and of the implications for public policies and programs, especially those at the state and local levels. We also see our role as supporting these stakeholders in the development of policies and programs that will serve as the basis for a new social contract that is adaptable to even unforeseen changes.

**Second**, the conferees were loud and clear that they believe that the conversations we had at the conference need to be held locally and among "everyday" people. Large change can only occur if there is support for that change at the ground level. The process of building that is through personal engagement. Abstract debates in Congress or at the White House rarely reach the average person except in sound bites and 280-character tweets that do more to divide than to inspire or inform. Local conversations provide context and put real faces onto groups. Future conversations do not need to start from scratch. The Many Futures of Work conference offers a rich source of thinking and ideas. It also provides a model as to how other conversations can occur in allowing people time and giving them the tools in advance to have in-depth, construction discussion.

Our plan is to partner with area foundations and community stakeholders to engage people in communities across the country in conversations about the many futures of work. These conversations will be cumulative and will start with the resources and thinking from the Chicago conference. Like the Chicago conference, each community event will be cognizant of the roles played by business,

government, workers as well as race, gender, age, disability, immigration and other elements that affect the life trajectories. Each local conference will focus on those issues that are front and center for that community. The goals are to come up with a set of ideas on what to do and a plan of action for next steps. In addition to planning and facilitating these gatherings, the Institute will commission additional working papers from subject matter experts who will help frame the conversations and provoke fresh thinking.

**Third**, the recurring theme about language and metaphors brings the Institute back to a core question: How can we stimulate and inform conversations about the economy and society among families and friends in “normal everyday” conversations around kitchen tables and community gatherings. More than ten years ago, we concluded that people do not necessarily have the background information, access and ‘tools’ to clearly articulate their expectations of policy makers, business and union leaders, and others who depend on the public for their own survival. The Institute will relaunch our idea to develop the information, language and tools that will lend themselves to supporting constructive and informed conversations in homes, places of worship, at community gatherings, in book clubs, taverns, water coolers, on-line forums and other gathering spots. It will help people realize the potential of individuals acting collectively. It will also challenge actions that interfere with workers’ efforts to organize and bargain. This is different from other efforts focused on messaging. Our effort will be directed more at the language and logic of how to think and act with respect to the changing structures of work, and not only about what to say.

We will take up the idea proposed by the working group on economic justice to develop a toolkit for organizing and engaging people so that they may have an effective voice in shaping changes in the structure of work. The toolkit will advise on how to organize and identify who should be involved. It will also suggest the roles that each person may play (e.g., who initiates and agitates, who does the research, who does the talking, and who does the wooing). The toolkit will offer a vocabulary for talking to power structures and set out the steps for mounting a campaign. Our goal is to encourage civil discourse and to empower people in making their expectations known to those who set policies and institutional practices.

**Fourth**, we believe that the Institute should serve as a national forum to knit together local conversations and kitchen table discussion, facilitate information exchange, and provide means and venues for new thinking as it pertains to the futures of work. Our goal is to support groups to act collectively in behalf of stakeholders who are often on the outside looking in on decisions. Much of this will take advantage of electronic platforms and the Institute’s experience in organizing systems that support the transfer and reuse of knowledge. Some of the resources include virtual gatherings, a knowledge exchange, and downloadable resources. Also, some exchanges may occur at large scale gatherings - especially events that are in partnership with other organizations.