

**Click on the following link to hear the audio portion of the presentation:**

<http://128.248.171.69/GP/main/00001b9a538000012ad92de4f497bc>

# Infant Mortality and Racism: What is Holding Us Back and How Do We Move Forward?

Town Hall Meeting In Honor of the 75th Anniversary of  
Title V of the Social Security Act  
Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant

University of Illinois at Chicago  
October 29, 2010

# 1935: Title V of the Social Security Act



- Background
- As a result of the Great Depression, cutbacks in federal health programs, and the declining health of mothers and babies, the Social Security Act was signed into law in August 1935 by President Franklin Roosevelt. Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins enrolled Katharine Lenroot, then Childrens Bureau Chief, to work with her to assure that children were considered by the Committee on Economic Security, which drafted the legislation.
- Impact
- Title V provided programs for maternity, infant, and child care, as well as a full range of medical services for children. Funds were allocated to states to pay for Maternal and Child Health and Crippled Children services, including physicians, dentists, public health nurses, medical social workers, and nutritionists. Title V was not an entitlement program like other sections of the Social Security legislation. It consisted of 4 parts:
  - 1) Maternal and Child Health Services,
  - 2) Services for Crippled Children,
  - 3) Child-Welfare Services, and
  - 4) Vocational Rehabilitation.
- Title V is the longest-standing public health legislation in American history and continues to work to improve the health of women and children.

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# 1935: Title V of the Social Security Act



- “As a result of the Great Depression, cutbacks in federal health programs, and the declining health of mothers and babies, the Social Security Act was signed into law in August 1935 by President Franklin Roosevelt...”

??????

- Because federal programs were being cut
- ...and women and children health was worse
- ...Roosevelt gave us Title V?

# MCH Timeline

from [hrsa.gov](http://hrsa.gov)

- 1928: Child Health Day
- 1930: Prevention of Rickets Milk Fortification
- 1935: Title V of the Social Security Act
- 1938: Initiation of the March of Dimes

(Excerpt on the 1940s from the Library of Congress Web site)

- “Moreover, it was difficult for many to understand why people should go hungry in a country possessing huge food surpluses. Blaming Wall Street speculators, bankers, and the Hoover administration, the rumblings of discontent grew mightily in the early 1930s. By 1932, hunger marches and small riots were common throughout the nation.” (loc.gov)

# Other 1930s Timeline

- (The previous) Great Depression
- Millions demonstrating
- 5 million industrial workers join CIO unions, many organized by the Communist Party  
→ Flint Sit-Down Strike
- One country without unemployment, with universal health care for the population
- Anti-lynching campaign, Scottsboro defense
- Other social legislation (SS, Unempl. Insur.)

# Where did Title V really come from?

- Mass multiracial resistance to unemployment, racism, evictions
- New forms of unionism – more militant, more unified
- A mass movement that threatened the status quo



# More recent history

- 1960s - Desegregation, civil rights protests, anti-racist rebellions
- 1970s - Jobs opened up for millions, election of African American mayors, legislators
- 1980s - Job flight → racist unemployment, home foreclosures

# Infant Mortality in the US

- Glaring racial disparity
- Higher than other countries
- Getting worse, not better
- High white infant mortality rate, too

# Black-White Gap

- Low birth weight\* 1.9-times as high
- Very low birth weight\* 2.7
- Infant mortality\*\* 2.4

\* 2007 data

\*\* 2005 data

# Widening Infant Mortality Gap

Relative Risk = Black IMR / White IMR

- 1950: **1.6**
- 2000: **2.3**

**RACISM**

# Levels and forms of racism

- Interpersonal racism
- Institutional racism
  - Job discrimination
  - Criminal justice (“just us”) system
- Historical (structural) racism
- Ideological racism
  - Scientific racism
  - Internalized racism

# How does it affect health?

- Physical environment
  - Petty hassles
  - Slight, insults
  - Unfair disadvantage
  - Major injustice
  - Powerlessness
- STRESS**



Why doesn't it go away?  
(How do we move forward?)

You've got to be taught, before it's too late,  
Before you are six, or seven or eight,  
To hate all the people your relatives hate,  
You've got to be carefully taught.

*South Pacific* Rodgers and Hammerstein



# Political economy of racism

- US working-age population:  
129 million white  
19 million African American
- Income ratio AA/White:  
1974 69% (\$12,770 less)  
2005 64% (\$14,481 less)
- $19\text{M} \times \$14,481 = \$275$  billion per year

# “Continuing Racist Education”

- School
- Employer
- TV News
- Realtors
- Newspapers
- Movies
- Pop music



**RACIAL TENSION**

Awkward!

Racism is one of the  
fundamental mechanisms  
that stabilizes a social  
system overdue for  
upheaval.

# 2005 Infant Mortality Rates

<b>Population</b>	<b>IMR (deaths/1000)</b>	<b>Int'l Rank</b>
Hong Kong	2.3	1
United States (all)	6.9	29
US (white non- Hispanic)	5.8	24
US (African American)	13.6	52

The other health disparity:

**CLASS**

# Excess infant deaths

- African Americans: 11.3 excess deaths per 1000 live births  $\Rightarrow$  **6,509** excess deaths
- Whites: 3.5 excess infant deaths per 1000 live births  $\Rightarrow$  **8,064** excess deaths



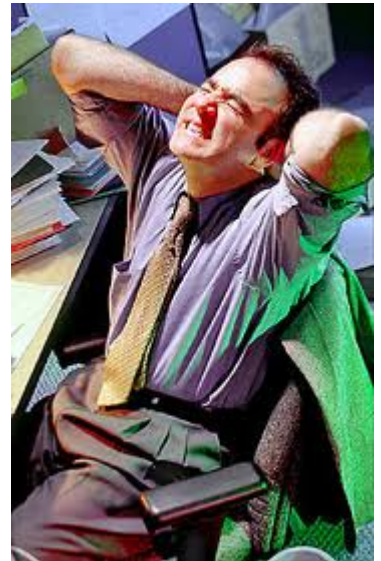
**6,509**



**8,064**

# Class in the US

- Most whites are not CEOs
- Government policy is pro-corporate
- 1% of the US population owns most stock



# Whitehall I and II Studies

Marmot et al, *Lancet*, 1984 and 1991

- British civil servants in 6 job grades
- Higher morbidity and mortality (3-fold increased risk of death from CHD)
- Key risk feature: job strain

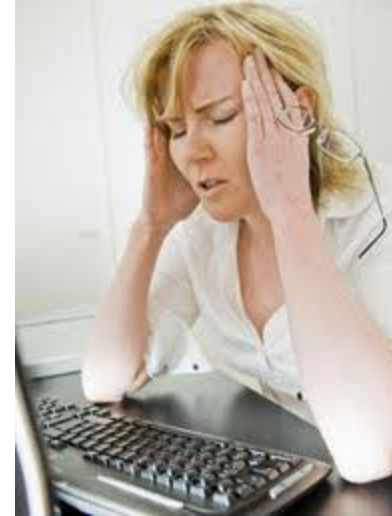
# Job strain

- High demand, low control
- Associated with higher rates of major diseases
- Inversely related to social class (income, education, social recognition)

# How does job strain in working women affect their health?

- Physical environment
- Petty hassles
- Slight, insults
- Unfair disadvantage
- Major injustice
- Powerlessness

**STRESS**



## Quebec working mothers study

- Cases (1,242) and controls (4,513) compared on job-related experiences
- 2.7 times the risk of delivery before 34 weeks with high job strain compared to low

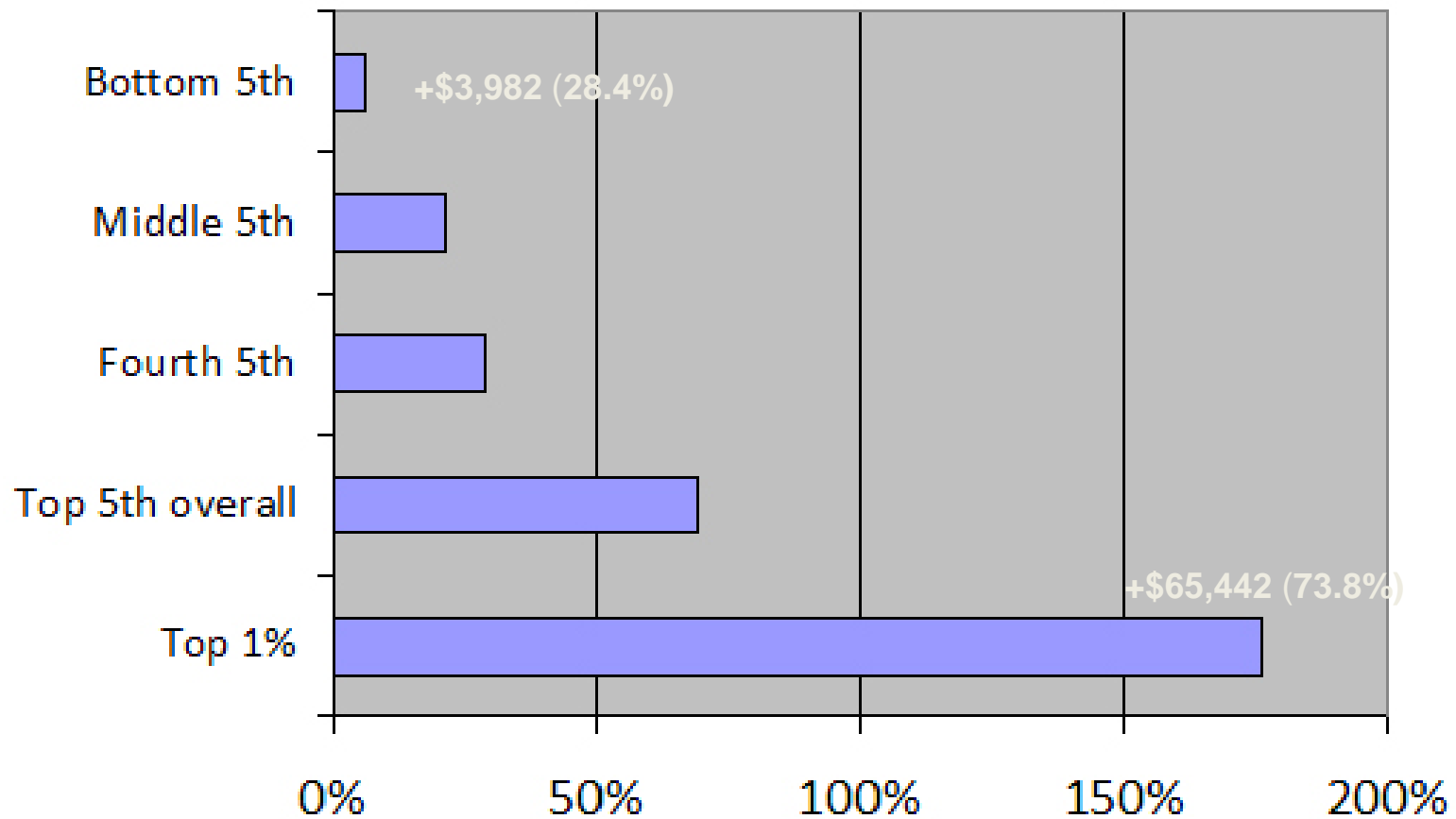
Croteau et al, *Am J Epidemiol*, 2007

# Working women in the U.S.

- Highest rate of job force participation in history
- Longer work hours than women in any other industrialized nation



# Income Inequality Over Recent Decades:

Increase in income for the top 1% and the four quintiles, 1979 to 2005



Why doesn't it go away?  
(How do we move forward?)

# Political economy of racism, II

- US working-age population:
  - 129 million white
  - 19 million African AmericanIncome ratio AA/White:
  - 2005 64% (\$14,481 less)  \$275 billion
-  Diving down white wages (divide and conquer)
- 129M – 10% \$4,022 = \$ 519 billion

What is to be done?

Vote?

# The role of government

- Taxpayers in Chicago, Illinois will pay \$1.8 billion for proposed total Iraq and Afghanistan war spending in FY2011.

For the same amount of money, the following could have been provided:

- 962,684 Children Receiving Low-Income Healthcare for One Year

US democracy:

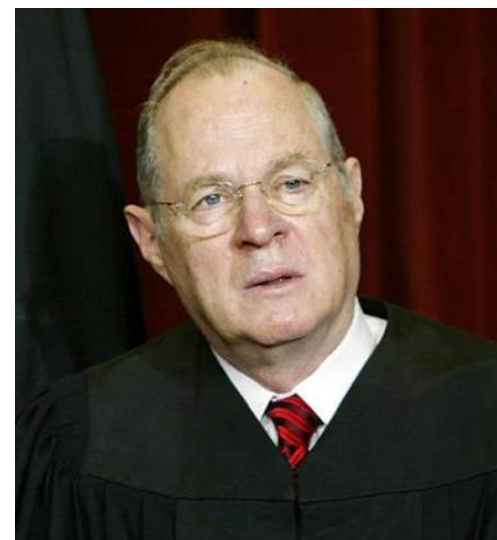
popular or corporate?

**The New York Times**

## Justices, 5-4, Reject Corporate Spending Limit

*Published: January 21, 2010*

WASHINGTON — Overruling two important precedents about the First Amendment rights of corporations, a bitterly divided Supreme Court on Thursday ruled that the government may not ban political spending by corporations in candidate elections.



Justice Anthony M. Kennedy

## **\$4.2 billion on political races, 2010**

“Anyone who doubts the corrupting effect has not been paying attention. Our elected representatives have been acutely sensitive to the needs of Wall Street...”

Robert Reich  
Oct. 28, 2010

US democracy – Which is it?

**popular** – policy and priorities set by majority

**corporate** – biggest shareholders chose board, board must fulfill its responsibility:  
profits

Racism is one of the fundamental mechanisms that stabilizes a social system overdue for upheaval.

Racism has a unique history in the United States which is related to “class-free” politics here.

# The truth about class in the US:

- Most blacks and whites are workers
- Government policy is pro-corporate
- 1% of the US population owns most stock



# Continuing Mis-Education

- School
- University
- TV and radio
- Newspapers
- Movies
- Pop music
- Advertisements

- Identity politics
- Pseudoscience
- Objectification
- Cult of Experts
- Consumerism
- Nationalism
- Market worship

# Anti-racist activism and decreasing class inequality

- 1930s: Anti-lynching agitation and Scottsboro defense with Unemployed Councils and CIO unions
- 1960s: Affirmative action for medical school admissions and federal capitation grants

What is to be done?

Rx:  
Take one daily to  
eliminate social  
injustice and related  
health problems.



# Rebuild the mass movement

- Multi-racial unity to demand a better life
- No war budget, no racism
- 



Protest Against Housing Discrimination

New Orleans, July, 2006

Government must serve the people first,  
not just corporate interests

**January, 2007** Hospital workers protest massive service cuts by Cook County Board



Work in unions, APHA, churches, CityMatCH, PTA, etc. to

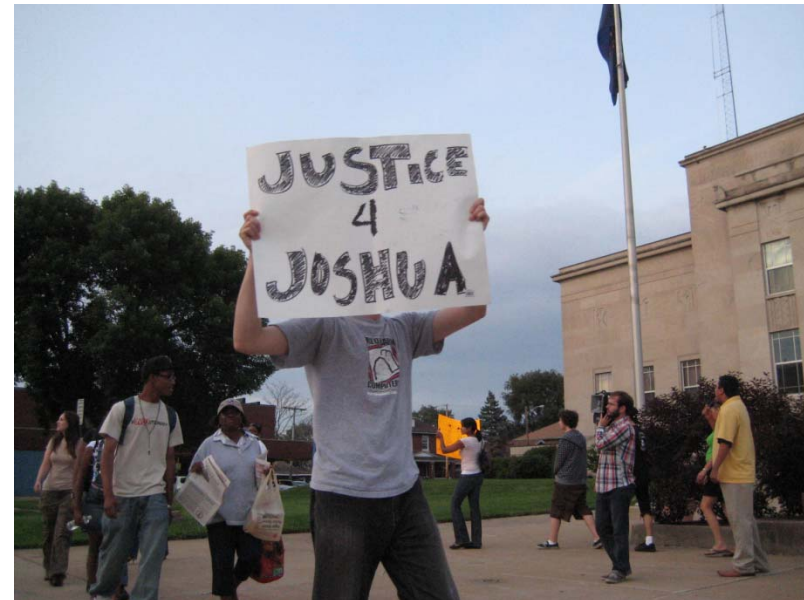
**educate**  
**strategize**  
**organize**



**It's OK to step out of our usual role**

**August, 2009**

Health workers and community members protest indifference of Gary City Council to racist attack on African American child, Joshua B.



# Political-economic approach

- Understand class (numbers, role)
- Know friends and foes
- Fight for core values
- Let them call you names

“When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a Communist.”

Hélder Câmara  
The ‘Bishop of Corum’