

## **Major New Project on Race and Cumulative Adversity at Harvard's Hutchins Center**

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***Sociologist William Julius Wilson directs a project that aims to yield important insights on race and poverty.***

A major new project, "Race and Cumulative Adversity," has been launched at the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University. Initial funding for the project includes a gift from the Hutchins Family Foundation and a grant from the Ford Foundation. The project is directed by William Julius Wilson, and includes as co-directors his Harvard colleagues in the Department of Sociology and the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Lawrence D. Bobo, Matthew Desmond, Devah Pager, Mario Small, Robert Sampson, and Bruce Western. Each of these scholars is considered to be among the nation's leading experts in their respective fields, including urban poverty, race and ethnic relations, criminal justice, employment and housing discrimination, community and social supports as well as social policies affecting the poor. By integrating different understandings that reflect these areas of expertise, the project intends to pioneer a new kind of policy-oriented research, one that will play a prominent role in public conversations and policy debates.

This new initiative will focus broadly on the racial dynamics of urban inequality and cumulative adversity. The project will not only combine research on multiple and mutually reinforcing processes of poverty that are typically studied in isolation—neighborhoods, the labor market, social networks, housing, violence, the criminal justice system, and racial discrimination—but will also draw on innovative methods to collect and analyze new data, including original surveys, ethnographic data featuring intensive interviews, administrative data, and field experiments. "This combined effort will apply a mixed-methods investigation of the overlapping spheres of urban inequality with a breadth and depth unmatched by any study to date," stated William Julius Wilson, the Lewis P. and Linda L. Geyser University Professor at Harvard. "In the first few years of this initiative, we expect to have laid the foundation for becoming the premier evidence-based and policy-driven research program on race and poverty in the country."

"This is an incredible opportunity to elevate the discussion about the causes of poverty and inequality in urban communities and how to combat them," said Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and director of the Hutchins Center, where the project will be housed. "Having these experts collaborate on a unique approach to addressing poverty from several perspectives is innovative and timely," Gates stated, "and will fulfill a glaring need among policy makers and providers for more thoughtful information on how to improve the lives of the poor in a sophisticated and coordinated fashion."

In addition to conducting high-quality research, the investigators will work with policy experts and program providers to craft recommendations for more synchronized efforts to address poverty and inequality. They will also train the next generation of poverty scholars by engaging students in every stage of the research process. Ultimately, this research program seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which multiple and interrelated hardships contribute to the persistence of urban poverty and how they can be addressed.

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