



WE ARE THE ECONOMY

A QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE GROUNDWORK
COLLABORATIVE'S ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE SERIES





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last year, Groundwork Collaborative has hosted a series of roundtables with community leaders, organizers, activists, and academics in nine cities around the country—Charleston, Las Vegas, New Orleans, Des Moines, Detroit, Milwaukee, Seattle, Atlanta, and Philadelphia—to better understand how local progressive leaders conceive of the economy generally and view it in the context of their own social and economic justice work. Throughout the series, we learned about the crucial work of organizations on the ground and observed common themes in how participants view and experience the economy.

We invited people engaged in economic and social justice work at the community and state levels and ensured that each roundtable was inclusive in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, and issue area. Attendees represented unions, state-focused policy organizations, and groups organizing across a wide array of critical issues including immigrant rights and advocacy, gender justice, environmental rights, economic justice, and LGBTQ issues, to name a few. All of the discussions were facilitated by political strategist and organizer Angela Peoples.

These conversations were illuminating. Across all of the cities Groundwork visited, participants expressed deep frustration with an economic system seemingly not designed to include them, and in some instances, designed to deliberately exclude them. Participants said they felt disconnected from the ways in which policymakers and the media assess the economy—Gross Domestic Product (GDP), job growth, etc.—and were much more likely to connect the health of the economy based on how their families and communities were faring. When asked, participants emphasized that they think of a strong economy as one that centers equity and ensures an equitable distribution of power.

WHILE THE CONVERSATIONS WERE RICH AND VARIED BY LOCATION, SOME COMMON THEMES EMERGED:

- **Participants agreed that the economy is doing well only when people are doing well, and preferred human-centered economic indicators—like their own economic stability and security—over more traditional and abstract indicators, like GDP.** Participants found little relevance in the topline unemployment numbers or GDP, instead preferring to assess the economy using measures that more accurately reflect peoples' well-being—such as how much choice and agency people have in their own lives. Participants agreed that a progressive economy would allow people more freedom and autonomy in where they live and work, how they spend their time, and when they rest, in contrast to the way the current economy limits their choices due to lack of opportunity and privilege.
- **Participants felt strongly that the government needs to be reliable—and work for the people.** We heard from a number of attendees that the role of government should be to ensure much greater and equitable access to critical public goods and services for all. Participants wanted to see the government take a stronger hand in creating opportunities for them and their communities to achieve “the American dream.”
- **Participants told us that race is central to any conversation about the economy.** Repeatedly, participants brought the historical experience of racism to the forefront in order to better contextualize why Black and brown people are struggling today. Participants also spoke about how racism is prominent in their work on issues such as immigration, labor, voting access, and housing. Participants agreed that racial exclusion in the economy is both a threat to long-term prosperity and simply unjust.
- **Participants emphasized that people should be treated with dignity—no matter their position, role, background, or aspirations.** We heard that inclusion is fundamental, and everyone must share in the benefits from a strong economy for both moral and economic reasons. There was broad consensus that people and families deserve to have certainty that they will not be left behind if circumstances in their lives change, and that people want and genuinely expect things to be better in the future than they are now, for everyone.
- **Even progressives hold neoliberal views.** While we heard many testimonies that were broadly in line with previous empirical research and our emergent thinking, many statements were not. There was broad agreement on many core progressive themes, but we also heard comments that demonstrated how much work we have to do to replace the conservative economic worldview. It has so thoroughly seeped into the American consciousness that even the advocates for progressive causes attending our roundtables sometimes defaulted to conservative economic frames and narratives—especially when asked about progressive issue areas outside of their immediate scope of work. For example, in a few instances we heard participants implicitly blame families and individuals as the root cause of what are actually structural economic problems, as well as various iterations of the “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” trope that feeds into conservative talking points.

This report is a synopsis of the major themes we encountered at the roundtables, which we hope will help inform our work and the work of our partners and allies.

INTRODUCTION

For the last 40 years, a conservative—or neoliberal—economic worldview has dominated policymaking from the state and local levels all the way to the federal level. Conservatives have advanced a narrative that insists that the existence of wealthy people is beneficial to average citizens who will feel the “trickle-down” effects from the one percent. The neoliberal narrative advances the idea that market dominance is the “key” to America’s economic system, and simultaneously stokes fear of public sector intervention into otherwise perfectly competitive markets. Neoliberalism posits that the public sector is always less efficient than the private one, and that poverty and insecurity are the result of individual failures rather than systemic forces. Most importantly, it fails to address the role that historic power, race, and gender play in the economy. This dominant worldview is as pervasive as it is damaging. It has been reiterated for decades throughout the media and pop culture, and reverberates in our politics and everyday life.¹

I would say that the conservative worldview relies on shame? Deregulation, and privatization of goods and services like banks, schools, health care ... it relies on individuals feeling like crap for not being able to meet “X” standard.

—Nevada

Most Americans know that an economic system that accelerates inequality and insecurity and ignores—and worse, depends on—structural racism and misogyny is one that doesn’t work for the vast majority of people in this country. However, it is not enough to dismantle the conservative economic worldview; we must replace it with something that more accurately reflects both the latest empirical research and people’s lived experiences. In order to do that, policymakers, policy experts, and advocates must engage those with lived experience and those on the front lines of organizing and advocacy around economic justice in shaping this new vision. Progressives cannot hope to replace the dominant conservative economic worldview with a new, post-neoliberal approach without consulting, learning from, and incorporating the expertise of people who are on the front lines of our movement for an economy that works for everyone.

[Conservatives] have co-opted what I think are my values to no longer reflect my values anymore. If liberty and freedom look like that, I don’t want any part of it. I want it to look very differently and my definition of it is very different.

—Felicia Perez, Nevada

¹ We define neoliberalism as an outdated economic set of ideas which has, at its core, the misguided notion that underneath the economy lies some perfect ‘free market’ that can, will, and should determine the best outcomes for us all and also supposes that intrusion into that market, whether in the form of taxes, consumer protections, public investments, or worker organizing, will result in ‘inefficiency’ that will harm us all. For the purposes of this report we use “conservative” and “neoliberal” interchangeably, but in both instances are referring to this definition. For more in-depth analysis of neoliberalism and its effect on the economy, see the Democracy Journal’s symposium, Beyond Neoliberalism (<https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/53/beyond-neoliberalism/>), and the Narrative Initiative’s report, Beyond Neoliberalism: A Narrative Approach (<https://narrativeinitiative.org/resource/beyond-neoliberalism-a-narrative-approach/>).

WHAT WE LEARNED

PEOPLE ARE THE ECONOMY, AND BY THAT MEASURE, THE ECONOMY ISN'T DOING WELL

I think [the people we work with] think [the economy] is a measure of what they do or don't have access to at the moment.

–Janice Gates, Allied Media

COMMON ECONOMIC INDICATORS REVEAL LITTLE ABOUT HUMAN WELL-BEING

We asked participants to tell us what they thought the economy was, and how it showed up in their work. We heard wide-ranging responses, but some core themes emerged. Participants said that there is a fundamental disconnect between how policymakers or the media and most Americans describe and experience the economy. Participants told us that while the traditional metrics—GDP, employment rates, or the stock market—they didn't feel that these measures accurately reflected the health of the economy.

For example, a participant in Milwaukee told us, “[People who live in rural areas] think: ‘Am I going to be able to make it through this next planting season?’ That’s the reality and it is miles away from employment and GDP. It’s each individual person and how they feel at the moment.”

When we're like, 'The economy's booming because of the Dow Jones, blah, blah, blah,' that excludes a ton of people's experiences from the analysis. A lot of poor people aren't doing that great.

–Mariah Montgomery, The Partnership for Working Families

Looking at class size, the privatization of education, the privatization of jobs. Automation... Measuring general happiness. Are you happy? Where's your happy meter? Right now in our economy there's a distinction between your needs and your wants, and who gets to have wants and who can only have needs. So we have this low bar. If you have a roof over your house, you must be happy.

–Felicia Perez, Nevada

Some participants further suggested that the mainstream indicators can actually obscure inequality and suggested that they be augmented to show how equitably goods, jobs, or wages are distributed. Others instead focused on more people-centered indicators like health, access to basic resources, security and stability, and the well-being of the most marginalized people.

Recently, there's been an idea of not even using the term 'economy' because it romanticizes a multi-hidden, multi-faceted thing... The economy to Jeff Bezos has nothing to do with anybody in this room.

–Kim Hunter, Michigan

I know that the economy, or my economy, is doing well when I can go to the grocery store and actually be able to shop, instead of going to the grocery store with a budget in mind—a bottom line ... Being able to say, 'oh, that's a new brand of cookie, do I like? do I not like it?' I can just buy it to try it. I very rarely get a chance to feel like I have three choices in a grocery store to feed myself because I don't feel like I'm thriving [financially].

–Tihi Hayslett, Philadelphia

MORE RELEVANT MEASURES INDICATE THE ECONOMY ISN'T WORKING FOR MOST PEOPLE

Based on the economic measures that participants preferred, the economy is not working for the vast majority of people. We frequently heard participants talk about how the dominant economic narrative thrives on the concept of scarcity: the idea that there is a fundamental lack of resources for all people. Participants spoke frequently about the instability that the concept of scarcity creates. They talked about how people in the communities in which they work are struggling to pay bills or to take care of their families. They also said the government is failing to intervene, citing the lack of public services and infrastructure as well as growing inequality. We learned that for most people the participants work with, their communities are stuck in a position where they have no other option but to stay focused on survival due to a lack of resources and opportunities.

We also heard participants express frustration about how hard ordinary people are working without getting ahead. They talked about people working longer hours in insecure jobs with insufficient compensation, who as a result must work longer in life to support their families and provide care. They also emphasized that leisure and the ability to take time to rest, experience joy, and be with their families must also be a part of an overall economic vision.

Rooted in dignity, self-determination, thinking about future generations and balance with our planet ... The fruit of what that would look like being joy, laughter, music, elders who live long and whose lives are valued within our society, leisure to create art and pass down wisdom, clean air and clean water.

–Nevada

They were also deeply concerned about the power imbalance between the wealthy and well-connected and everyone else. Exclusion and extraction were common themes, with participants noting that economy is often both framed around and structured to benefit corporations and the wealthy. Patricia

Lockette from Atlanta told us, “When I think about the economy I think about how unbalanced it is. I think about my struggles as a grandmother raising grandkids. Not being employable due to age discrimination and then there are times that I am raising them and taking care of my father before he transitions ... So when I think about the economy, it’s something that I heard from my father for so many years: that the rich keep getting richer, the poorer keep getting poorer.”

THE ECONOMY SHOULD BE CENTERED ON HUMAN WELL-BEING

Participants instead favored a more human-centered economic approach. We heard from participants that an economy can only be thriving if actual people are doing well. Participants said that because there is a systemic lack of access to basic resources (housing, education, health care, etc.), especially among marginalized communities, then, by definition, the economy cannot be “good.”

A human-centered economic vision is not just a good idea, we were repeatedly told. It is a necessary belief system that progressives must internalize in order to shift power and ensure true prosperity. Participants talked about how a more person-centered approach to the economy would ultimately spur economic growth. They said that freedom from worry and instability would help ensure that everyone in the country is able to thrive.

Innovation. When your basic needs are met, you’re able to be creative and you’re able to do the things that make sense. But if you’re spending every day trying to figure out how you want to eat, if you’re going to be able to stay in your home, you don’t get that space to be creative.

**–Courtney Richardson,
Esq. The Ivy Investor**

All the things that I think need to funnel into growth and healing and solidarity are blossoming [in an] economy for all ... things like freedom from oppression, money out of politics, freedom from harm, healthcare for all, bodily autonomy, childcare, guaranteed income, housing, education, social safety nets.

**–Stacey Shinn,
State Innovation Exchange**

GOVERNMENT, PROPERLY WIELDED, HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN SHAPING THE ECONOMY

Across the roundtables, participants told us that the government has an important role to play in shaping the economy, yet they felt that government was abdicating that responsibility and could do much more to ensure economic thriving for all. In some cases, they worried that the government was or could be, used as a tool of oppression towards marginalized people.

GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MEETING BASIC NEEDS

I would love for us to maneuver in this world and understand that we each have an inherent responsibility to take care of each other. I don't mean pay your bills, but I definitely mean that if you're 80 and your whole family is gone, then that just means that we can, as a society, make sure that you eat, that you get groceries to your house, there's gas in your car if you still drive, and someone comes in and make sure that you got medicine, whatever that means. But just having that sense of compassion for each other because we're not moving in this space as singular people, we have to understand that we have a responsibility to each other.

**–Quentin Savvoir,
Make it Work Nevada**

Participants told us that in a progressive economy, the government should be working on behalf of all people and in the service of their well-being. We heard quite a bit about the government's responsibility to ensure everyone's basic needs are met, and how the government could be used as a tool to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources, particularly to the most marginalized. In Atlanta, Kamau Franklin told us, "[a] functional government is one that actually serves the public ... through taxation of large corporations who aren't thinking about how resources are distributed, that is a main goal." Similarly, Cliff Albright from Atlanta said, "The main function of the government is to make sure that short term, those without receive proper support, and long term, that there's no such thing as without."

We also heard immense frustration from participants who felt like government wasn't living up to this role, and that people across the country were suffering as a result.

We almost require people to be poor to access childcare or other benefits. We're smart people, we can figure this out. We can figure out a way to graduate this stuff, so we give people a hand up. We're not doing that. The system is rigged.

–Ken Sagar, Iowa AFL-CIO

GOVERNMENT CAN BE A CHECK ON PRIVATE CONCENTRATIONS OF POWER

We also heard that government can act to ensure that power, wealth, and resources are not concentrated. Power was a frequent topic of discussion and participants both expressed frustration at the inequitable distribution and emphasized that a progressive economy could ensure that ordinary people are able to exercise more power over their lives. Participants focused on gaining more power themselves and obtaining more power at the community level and within their workplaces.

The narrative that the American dream has to be met by pulling yourself up, [and] that there really shouldn't be any systems in place to help you achieve that goal ... I think having a real conversation around that is important and really thinking about how government is or isn't working for us ... [People] feel like, 'Hey, I should be able to do this. Everyone else does it. You know, Alice can work hard and achieve these goals. Why can't I?'

–Nevada

GOVERNMENT MUST NOT BE USED—AS IT HAS BEEN IN THE PAST AND PRESENT—AS A TOOL OF OPPRESSION

Participants expressed skepticism that a government that has engaged in oppression could actually produce an economy that works for marginalized people. For example, Maurice Weeks in Detroit told us, "One thing that I've been thinking is, do we want to go back to this period of time? ... We kind of think of that time as great—unions were strong, everyone had a job, chicken in every pot—but unions excluded Black people and women and there were no workplace protections for people who were Black and Latinx and like government was exploitative ... We just need to build a new thing."

I was just thinking about whether or not we recreate systems of oppression. To me, it's predicated on whether or not we give them the work of changing hearts and minds and shifting culture ... I can imagine a scenario where we burned this shit to the ground and then we recreate the exact same systems of oppression.

–Las Vegas

I think the economy comes up when folks are talking about the investment in gentrification that has been happening here [in Detroit]. It's just like, "oh the government somehow has the money for [gentrification] but they are still closing public schools.

–PG Watkins, Michigan

Finally, while there was substantial agreement about what government should be doing, it is worth noting that there was some skepticism about what government is capable of doing— and what government will actually do. As noted above, we heard some classic conservative talking points about public sector inefficiency. We also heard deep-seated distrust of the government from activists who have seen state power turned against their communities—particularly immigrant communities and communities of color—time and again. This is not a reason not to center bold public action in a progressive worldview, but simply an acknowledgement that building progressive public power will require rebuilding trust in government among progressives, as well as among the general public.

RACE IS CENTRAL TO THE ECONOMY

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO DISCUSS THE ECONOMY WITHOUT TALKING ABOUT RACE

The centrality of race and the effects of racism on every aspect of work was mentioned without prompt during every single conversation. Participants made it clear that people are thinking and talking about race at the local level and fighting to make sure that it is recognized in policies that affect their communities. Participants made it clear that race is always part of a conversation on the economy, even when it is not explicitly raised.

We heard that race, and the historical context of racism in America, must be central to a progressive economic worldview. Participants talked about how white supremacy has dictated our economic structures since before the country's founding, blocking people of color from justice and economic opportunity. Participants made clear that the impact of this fundamental power imbalance remains observable across every facet of American life from inequitable school funding, to mass incarceration, to the racial wealth gap, and more. Participants emphasized that our economy is hamstrung by these structures and progressive rhetoric and policy that deemphasizes race will inevitably lead to policies that perpetuate economic disparities by race.

We're living in a time where like infant mortality rates among Black women is really high. People are having real challenges with health care, like my parents who are old and retired, and pay hundreds of dollars a month despite having pensions or healthcare. People have transportation challenges. Like even the people who are building out the infrastructure of our internet, they still have really challenging ways of getting to work. They can't get there or they're having housing issues ... So 'prosperity,' I can grasp that, but some people, that's a really hard term to grasp when you have all of these basic needs that you're having all of these challenges or hard times obtaining.

—Janice Gates, Allied Media

Participants also talked about the exclusionary nature of our economy, as well as the exclusionary nature of how the economy is discussed and evaluated. For example, Martell Echols in Milwaukee said, “[w]hen they say the economy is doing well, it's not doing well for most of the demographics of people that we worked with at this table. I know, Angela, you do a lot of work in [these area codes]. Part of that would be looking at those particular area codes and what's going on in those area codes, because just the nation as a whole are looking at the state as a whole. It looks like we're doing great, but those are the people who ... are forgotten about.”

WHITE PROGRESSIVES MUST CENTER RACE IN THEIR ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

[It's about] white folks being okay that [they're] not included [when centering race]... I want a table for myself. Right now, I'm fighting to sit at a table that's not mine. It's okay that we don't see eye to eye all the time, but you can't force me to integrate and to sit at your table when you [white people] can feel comfortable.

–Darrol Gibson, Milwaukee

On several occasions, attendees told us that white people in the progressive movement must directly address structural racism within their organizations and begin centering marginalized communities in their work. Throughout several roundtables participants also expressed the need for white people to be better about proactively reaching out to communities of color to uplift their needs and concerns.

Our communities won't change because of oppression. Our communities have not thrived because of oppression.

–Rhonda Willette, 9to5 Wisconsin

We also heard frustration from both white and non-white participants at the lack of cross-racial solidarity among white progressives, with participants conveying how urgent it was for them to both center race in their analysis and affirmatively elevate the voices of communities of color. Kamau Franklin from Atlanta told us, “[s]o, throughout history, one of the biggest issues in the United States is working class whites siding with corporations, power, racism, white supremacy because they feel like it’s better [...] therefore, that doesn’t improve the economy; that causes more destruction and fear and people fighting, literally fighting.”

We also heard that because white people experience the economy differently, that they may not have a full appreciation of the unique challenges facing communities of color. Participants emphasized that acknowledging those differences were crucial to building solidarity among progressives at large.

CONVERSATIONS ON RACE MUST FOCUS ON STRUCTURAL BARRIERS, NOT INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR

Participants also lamented that even in their own organizing and advocacy work, they hear people promoting deficit-based economic narratives about people of color. They expressed that there is a need to change the conversation around race and the economy as to not obscure structural disadvantages faced by people of color. For example in Detroit, Nkenge Browner told us, “I think about some of the arguments within the Black community, one of which that I’m often a part of, is that Black women spend too much money on their nails. And the argument is that we don’t have enough money to buy essential items like food and housing, so how dare we spend any money on these non-essential survival items. When I think about people who have money, they don’t argue about stuff. It’s like, ‘I had a tough week, I’m buying myself a boat.’”

INCLUSION CANNOT BE AN AFTERTHOUGHT

Economic justice is gender justice is racial justice and social justice, it all intertwines...

–Ashlyn Preaux

INCLUSION MEANS DISMANTLING WHITE SUPREMACY AND OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPRESSION

Throughout the economic roundtables, participants emphasized how essential it is to level the playing field for all by ensuring that gender, race, class, immigration status, sexual orientation, etc. are not a barrier to economic success. There was a clear consensus from participants that inclusion and justice were themselves key ingredients to a well-functioning, prosperous economy.

Participants remarked how conservatives have effectively used exclusion and white supremacy to their advantage to construct a government and economy that centers the experiences of heterosexual, cisgender, wealthy, able-bodied, white men. Kim Hunter from Detroit stated that “the sense of ‘we’re going to be okay’ is for white people and is tied to their whiteness. That’s the Trump voter. They said the Trump voter was about race, but it wasn’t just about race—it was about the fact that their whiteness was supposed to guarantee them a good place in the economy.” We heard this idea echoed again and again—that white supremacy, patriarchy, xenophobia, and anti-LGBTQ sentiment foster an unjust and dysfunctional economy—and that, in effect, these structures have created a self-reinforcing cycle that determines who is allowed to succeed and dictates everything from health outcomes to who occupies the types of jobs deemed valuable or worth protecting.

THE MOST MARGINALIZED PEOPLE MUST BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF ANY ECONOMIC NARRATIVE

We heard from participants that a deliberate strategy of economic inclusion is essential to building an economy that actually produces prosperity and abundance for everyone. That means ensuring that the most marginalized people in America are considered in policy-making decisions and when assessing the potential outcome of said policies. Right now, many participants said they felt that marginalized people get attention from politicians during election cycles—and then don’t see their communities addressed once those politicians are in power. Participants said that inclusion means that political candidates stay connected with rural voters, queer voters, and voters of color outside of election cycles.

EVEN PROGRESSIVES HOLD NEOLIBERAL VIEWS

One striking observation we made was that even the roundtable participants—all self-identified progressives—hold neoliberal economic worldviews. While participants repeatedly discussed the need for higher wages, reliable access to quality and affordable healthcare, more leisure time and time to connect with their families and communities, and a future with less physical strain and more peace and relaxation, some occasionally repeated tropes associated with the dominant conservative worldview.

For example, we heard some participants venture into narratives that promoted “bootstrapping,” the idea that economic success is possible for anyone if they just work hard enough. This is a classic conservative argument that, at its core, is about convincing people that the system we have is the best one available. We also heard tropes that paint young people and low-income people as financially irresponsible and an emphasis on “financial literacy” as a solution to economic woes. Both of these tropes put the onus of improving economic conditions on the individual rather than examining the broad structures in place that influence economic conditions for everyone.

We also heard some comments that show how deeply “respectability politics” have been ingrained. Occasionally, participants would suggest that it’s necessary and normal for people to conform to socioeconomic standards set by institutions created by the wealthy and powerful.

Some participants even placed “business owners” at the center of the economic story, implying that they are the key way to move forward and strengthen the economy, which is a striking testament to the power of the neoliberal framework and how ingrained it has become to think of how the economy works in terms of GDP and the stock market rather than how we are all faring. We consider it a key lesson learned from these roundtables that partners on the ground have many important insights to offer on how to think and speak about a progressive economic future—many of which are captured below—and also that there continues to be significant work to do helping people identify their internalized neoliberal views and embrace a truly progressive framework for how the economy works.

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC WORLDVIEW

We have a role in redefining the goal of the economy.

*—Maurice Weeks,
Action Center on Race and the Economy*

The discussions we had across the country showed us that the people doing urgent and consequential work on the ground want to advance a bold progressive vision for the economy that centers the most marginalized.

The key takeaway from these roundtables is that progressives working in different cities and across different facets of the movement share some key goals and values around the economy, and to some extent, a broader vision for how it should function. Participants agreed that:

- The economy they envision is not the one that we have now.
- Structural exclusion, inequality, and extractive policies perpetuated by a system rigged in favor of the wealthy all stand in the way of creating an inclusive, equitable economy that offers prosperity and abundance to all.
- The communities they serve know exactly what policy changes need to happen in order for them to thrive, including access to better public education, higher wages, affordable housing, and better opportunities.
- Progressives across the board should ensure that race and gender are central to every conversation and policy created, that all people should be treated with dignity, and that the government should be working for all people.
- While many of the people we spoke to share this vision, they also struggled in some cases to describe what it would take to get there and articulate that the fact that we don’t have the world we want is due to the stronghold of neoliberal ideas and policies.

We heard time and again from leaders on the ground—who are engaged in fights to raise wages, limit corporate power, and advance racial and gender justice, among others—that there is a tremendous appetite for rethinking and reshaping our economy so it truly delivers for all of us. We were energized by the conversations we had with these leaders and see a clear role for national organizations to partner more closely with the people engaged in transformational economic justice work in local communities across the country.

As we work together to build a more inclusive economy that delivers prosperity, stability, and growth, we need to prioritize listening to and learning from the progressive grassroots community. People exist beyond polling data. We all know the power of stories and lived experience and grassroots organizers and activists are a direct line to understanding what people actually want and need. Their voices should be heard loud and clear. These individuals are experts on the economic challenges that they face every day, and are influential in their communities, among their friends and neighbors, and with local and state organizations. Most importantly, they are doing the work necessary to make sure people's lives are a little bit better every day. We cannot make a more just economy without them. They are ready to do the hard work, and it's up to national organizations to stand with them in solidarity.

We hope this report will help influence economic policymaking at the national level by encouraging national organizations to engage more directly with the people who are doing important grassroots policy and advocacy work to advance economic policies that advance our shared goals.

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The Groundwork Collaborative is extremely thankful for all of our partners who participated in the economic roundtables across the country, and we will continue to host variations of economic roundtables, organizer events, and conferences to continue to build a collaborative network to break silos, and support and amplify each other's work.

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Groundwork Collaborative is dedicated to advancing a coherent, persuasive, progressive economic worldview and narrative. We collaborate with a diverse array of partners to advance an economic system that produces strong, broadly-shared prosperity and abundance for all people, not just a wealthy few.



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