Toxic Inequality: How America’s Wealth Gap Destroys Mobility, Deepens the Racial Divide, and Threatens Our Future

About the Book
Economic inequality is at historic highs. But inequality's impact differs by race; African Americans' net wealth is just a tenth that of white Americans, and over recent decades, white families have accumulated wealth at three times the rate of black families. In our increasingly diverse nation, sociologist Thomas M. Shapiro argues, wealth disparities must be understood in tandem with racial inequities--a dangerous combination he terms "toxic inequality."

In Toxic Inequality, Shapiro reveals how these forces combine to trap families in place. Following nearly two hundred families of different races and income levels over a period of twelve years, Shapiro's research vividly documents the recession's toll on parents and children, the ways families use assets to manage crises and create opportunities, and the real reasons some families build wealth while others struggle in poverty. The structure of our neighborhoods, workplaces, and tax code—much more than individual choices—push some forward and hold others back. Toxic inequality may seem inexorable, but it is not inevitable. America's growing wealth gap and its yawning racial divide have been forged by history and preserved by policy, and only bold, race-conscious reforms can move us toward a more just society. Learn More: www.toxicinequality.org

About the Author
Dr. Thomas Shapiro, Director, Institute on Assets and Social Policy and the Pokross Professor of Law and Social Policy at The Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University. Professor Shapiro's primary interest is in racial inequality and public policy. He is a leader in the asset field with a particular focus on closing the racial wealth gap. He co-authored a groundbreaking study, The Roots of the Widening Racial Wealth Gap: Explaining the Black-White Economic Divide. The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality, 2004 was widely reviewed. With Dr. Melvin Oliver, he wrote the award-winning Black Wealth/White Wealth, which received the 1997 Distinguished Scholarly Publication Award from the American Sociological Association. In 2011 he was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study the wealth gap in South Africa.

Panelists
Khadine Bennett is the Director of Advocacy and Intergovernmental Affairs with the ACLU of Illinois. A recognized advocate inside the State Capitol, Khadine is responsible for advancing a wide range of issues under the ambit of the state and federal constitution, from privacy and technology issues, to policing, criminal and juvenile justice, first amendment, LGBT, and reproductive justice matters.

Sodiqa Williams joined Safer Foundation in 2014 as Associate Vice President for Policy and Strategy. In 2016, she was named Vice President, External Relations, also overseeing Safer’s research & analysis, quality assurance, and marketing and communications initiatives.

Carolyn Morales serves as the Worker Center Organizer at ARISE Chicago. As Worker Center Organizer Carolyn meets with workers after they have attended a Worker Rights Workshop to provide options on how to address workplace problems, including organizing co-workers and creating strategies for direct action.

Carlos Nelson is the Executive Director of the Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation (GAGDC). Carlos has been a long-time stakeholder in the Auburn Gresham community; a community he has been a part of all his life. Carlos is partnering with CFED on their Racial Wealth Divide initiative.
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Woods Fund Chicago
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Greater Chicago Food Depository Associate Board
The Food Depository launched an Associate Board in January of 2014. The Associate Board is comprised of young professionals committed to promoting the Food Depository’s mission and becoming advocates for ending hunger in Cook County. Members contribute their time and talent through volunteering, advocacy and awareness building. For more information, visit www.chicagosfoodbank.org.

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