

# Introducing the Institute for Economic and Racial Equity (IERE)

*Research. Health. Assets. Change.*

## **A Mandate for Our Times: Racial, Social, and Economic Justice**

Last summer, under the leadership of our new Director, Dr. Maria Madison, the Institute on Assets and Social Policy began the process of creating a unified vision for its next stage. After much deliberation, we decided to adopt a new name that clearly reflects this vision – [\*the Institute for Economic and Racial Equity\*](#), or IERE. Centered on bridging research to policy, action, and practice, we will build on our track record of excellence in community-engaged work and investigate racial inequity and gaps across under-served or maligned identities, utilizing our assets-grounded lens to expand the scope and impact of our work. Our new title reflects this renewed agenda.

Our work builds from our three main foci – racial wealth, health, and economic equity, housing and community stability, and work and opportunities pathways. Over the years, we have worked on intergenerational wealth transfers, student loan debt, community-created and led systems for economic empowerment, and more. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, we are studying the widespread social and economic effects of the virus, as well as [\*ways that stakeholders, for instance, the Children’s Savings Accounts field, have adapted to the pandemic.\*](#) In the coming months and years, we will be broadening our focus to include more of the areas in which structural racism reinforces inequities, including education, health, and the legal system (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Our Vision for IERE**  
*A Holistic Approach for Sustainable Change*



We recognize that identifying workable solutions for inequity, however, requires a holistic vision that includes the many systemic factors that drive inequality. The historical roots and persistence of segregated housing are coupled with, for example, differential rates of incarceration over generations. This fuels disparate rates of physical and mental health issues, coupled with a lack of access to quality health care. A lack of access to quality jobs, fair wages, and opportunity pathways is related to a lack of access to quality, affordable education. The ability to benefit from high-quality education relies on access to affordable, nutritious food, stable housing, and safety in a community. We believe that focusing our research on just one or a handful of these problems is not enough. Rather, our research portfolio must reflect our understanding that both inequities and solutions to inequities flow across subjects, disciplines, and practices.

The strength of our work as IASP was rooted in our desire to work with and across communities, stakeholders, and funders. This will not change. We will continue to center affected communities in our work and will make community-engaged research a larger part of what we do. At the same time, we will engage more partners and stakeholders, building broad coalitions to have a larger, more sustainable impact. We know that forming a broad, multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural team will move us closer to a holistic response to our nation's chasm of disparities. We will increasingly be able to address the myriad issues that disproportionately affect particularly Black and Indigenous communities, persons of color, immigrants, and those living in poverty. In order to meet our goals, we will be:

- **HIRING** and partnering with racially and ethnically diverse visiting and permanent scholars across disciplines who have expertise in our mandate toward putting whole communities in view. We will also be hiring dedicated staff for development, operations, and communications.
- **ENGAGING** a pipeline of young scholars of color through a postdoctoral program and new and existing stakeholders through convenings.
- **CREATING** an interdisciplinary, multi-cultural advisory board to work with us to build our capacity and connect across constituency priorities

## To Our Next Phase

We are energized to share our vision for IERE. Over the next few years, you will see new faces joining our team, new and innovative projects, and a stronger institute, better positioned to tackle the inequities that continue to plague the United States. Building upon a strong foundation, we hope to grow into an institute that is known to be in dialogue with activists and communities – one that can respond quickly to the current moment and co-develop solutions and strategies with those most affected. Finally, we hope to create pathways for the next generation of researchers who are able to take social policy research to effective new heights. As we embark on this new chapter, we would love to hear from you, your ideas, and strategies you might have in mind that can help us meet our goals.

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## Highlights of our work:

### Scaling Children's Savings Accounts

(2015-)

*Charles Stewart Mott Foundation*

We serve as the strategic learning partner in documenting and supporting the growth and development of the Children's Savings Account field.

### Empowerment Economics

(2016-)

*Primary: National CAPACD*

We serve as the research partner in a tri-organizational partnership, developing and expanding an AAPI-led holistic framework to build community wealth and power.

### HPOG-UP 1.0 & 2.0

(2011 - 2020)

*Administration for Children and Families*

In these federally-funded community partnerships, we co-developed and evaluated equitable solutions for career advancement in the entry-level healthcare workforce.

### Secure Jobs Massachusetts

(2012-2017)

*The Paul & Phyllis Fireman Charitable Foundation and Massachusetts DHCD*

We conducted a multi-stakeholder implementation and impact evaluation of a statewide initiative linking housing and employment services for homeless families.

## Highlighted Reports and Publications:

**[Stalling Dreams: How Student Debt is Disrupting Life Chances and Widening the Racial Wealth Gap](#)** (2019) by *Laura Sullivan, Tatjana Meschede, Thomas Shapiro, and Fernanda Escobar*

**[Quick Guide to CSA Research: An Overview of Evidence on Children's Savings Accounts](#)** (2018) by *Shira Markoff, Rebecca Loya, and Jessica Santos*

**[The Asset Value of Whiteness](#)** (2017) by *Amy Traub, Laura Sullivan, Tatjana Meschede, and Thomas Shapiro*

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# Brandeis

THE HELLER SCHOOL  
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