

# This Recovery Will Be Measured By Whether It Creates Greater Equity

November 9, 2020 | Published By Zoë Baird

Co-authored by Zoë Baird, CEO and President of [Markle Foundation](#), [Raphael Bostic](#), President and CEO, [Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta](#), and [Marc H. Morial](#), President and CEO, [National Urban League](#).



The nation's most recent jobs report offered a vivid reminder of how badly the COVID-19 pandemic is battering the economy. More than 11 million people are unemployed, and the unemployment rate for Black workers persists at almost 11 percent, nearly five percentage points higher than the rate for whites.

But here's the sad truth: unemployment is just one part of a broader American jobs crisis. Many Americans have long been stuck in jobs that don't pay well or offer much, if any, job security or opportunities for advancement. Others have seen their hours cut or been forced to take unpaid time off. And while those dynamics impact all Americans, they've posed disproportionate challenges to communities of color, women, and those without college degrees.

There is an urgent need for broad, systemic change in the way people obtain goods job -- across all aspects of the labor market -- especially for workers of color. If the country doesn't act now, America will face even greater income inequality as it emerges from this recession than it faced before.

The most immediate challenge is to address the systemic racism that infects our every institution, from discriminatory recruitment and hiring practices to unconscious bias that hinders employees of color in the workplace. In recent months, the starkly disparate effect of the pandemic-induced recession on Black and Latino workers compared to white workers -- and their disproportionately high death toll -- has served as a shock to the system, contributing to an unprecedented demand for racial and economic justice.

The declining power of workers and long-standing racial inequity in our education system and labor market, meanwhile, have warped our economic system to the point where low-quality jobs are the primary option for too many workers. There are too few opportunities to receive effective, rapid and affordable training that could help people advance to better jobs.

Finally, today's workforce development systems were crafted decades ago making them relics of a nation and an economy that no longer exist. We must modernize these systems to support workers in the short term and prepare them -- and our entire economy -- for the tectonic shift that is remaking the labor market.

We must provide access to useful, accessible information on the jobs that employers will need to fill and show how the skills and talents of workers have already prepared them for those jobs even if they do not have the degree or experience traditionally required. Where needed, we must help those workers secure rapid, affordable and effective training.

We can do this by working with organizations that already reach unemployed workers to tailor resources to the needs of those within their communities -- and by sharing these resources broadly with all organizations that would see benefit from them. Job seekers will then be able to go to the National Urban League or a local workforce agency and have someone guide them through a set of career opportunities, and make well-informed recommendations for the work they can get or the training that would help them build needed skills.

That is why the [Markle Foundation](#), the [National Urban League](#), the [Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta](#), and dozens of the nation's largest employers, civil rights groups, philanthropies and advocacy groups have formed the new [Rework America Alliance](#). We've come together to help millions of workers, in particular people of color, regardless of formal education, move into stable and well-paying jobs. We will provide organizations that support workers with an array of resources designed to help them deliver better coaching and training to the jobless or underemployed. And we will work to support companies to hire and promote workers with talents and experiences the firms need into good jobs, and to create more good jobs and improve the quality of existing jobs.

Our goal isn't just to help people find jobs; it's to help them find good jobs – jobs that will be less likely to disappear if the economic slowdown continues. This task is an economic and moral imperative. We must underpin our economic return with the foundation for future success. We must enable workers to emerge from this crisis stronger, and we must act now.