

AIR TIME

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Applied Information Resources is a non-profit, public policy research and community information organization dedicated to:

- Citizen education on public issues.
- Assisting human service organizations in evaluating their programs, and
- Providing the best possible information to decision makers responding to changing human and urban needs.

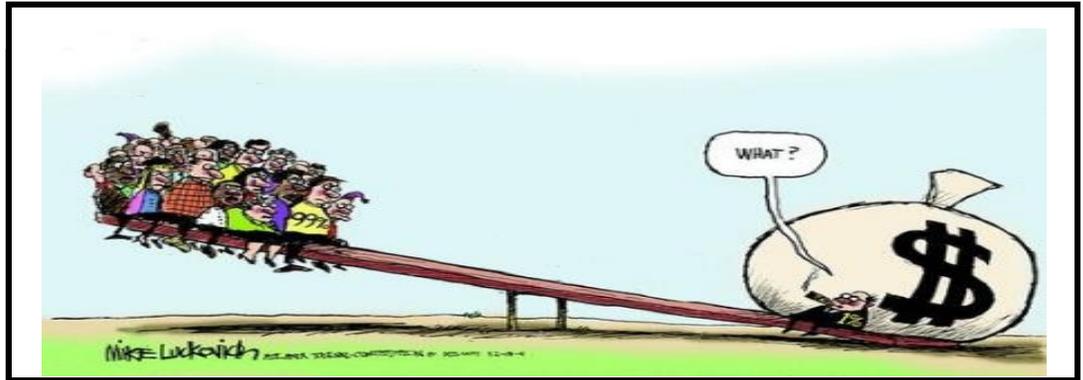
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Air To Convene Income Inequality

If the Dow is so high, why do people feel so low?

A recent report by the Federal Reserve confirmed what many sense – that only the rich are getting ahead in today’s economy. Median income after inflation declined 5% in the period 2010-2013. Persons without a high school diploma suffered the worst(-17%), but all categories declined except college graduates which experienced an increase of only 1%! Meanwhile, house-

holds in the top 10% saw their income rise 2%. At the national level concerns are trumpeted about ‘upward mobility’. Such matters are inherent in each of the local initiatives described below.

There are many components of the labor force that face even greater challenges. Women, minorities, immigrants, and offenders have borne the brunt of the economic imbalances of our current system.

The Christ

Church Community Issues Forums this fall concentrated on presentations focused on the topic of Income Inequality. In the course of identifying specific issues and speakers, we became aware of the wealth of activities and organizations working in this general field.

AIR, Inc. will bring together representatives of these initiatives so they can share ideas and experiences. Some have suggested we work toward

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CONTRIBUTIONS HELP AIR, INC. WITH COMMUNITY WORK

AIR depends on individual contributions to support our work. We are a charitable 501(c)(3) organization and your contributions help fund such projects as campaign finance reform, and studies in racism and homelessness in Cincinnati. We invite you to assist us as AIR takes on community issues and challenges.

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organizing the equivalent the *Green Umbrella*. For our part, this is just an investigative first step.

Here is a partial list of some of the groups we have identified.

- **AMOS**, a coalition of area congregations has launched their 'Exodus' campaign focusing on Children in Poverty. Troy Jackson is the coordinator.
- **Economics of Compassion Initiative [ECI]** – Exploring the core concepts of our current economic structures and investigating such ideas as neighborhood base small entrepreneurship, worker owned cooperatives, creative designs for homeownership, small business financing and debt forgiveness. Key actors are Peter Block, Carolyn Reisinger, Damon Lynch III and XU professor Nancy Bertaux.
- **Wage Theft** – Led by the Workers' Justice Center [Brennan Grayson], this group is seeking a local ordinance which would require fair treatment of workers on issues of overtime, job classification, tax payments and issues around immigrant labor. Temp employment agencies?
- **Wage Stagnation** – A group (including Impact for Health and Urban League) led by Col Owens is considering the causes and response to the failure of wages to increase as the economy improves.
- **Living Wage** – Efforts at the city level led by P. G. Sittenfeld hold the only promise for the various efforts to break through the fixation on *minimum wages*.
- **Minimum wage increase** – Although the term has more than one definition it is City Councilman P.G. Sittenfeld is promoting a voluntary approach, congratulating local employers who pledge to pay employees a minimum of \$10.10. Various governmental entities [usually Federal] have various 'living wage' requirements for contractors and condition many grants with 'prevailing wage' requirements.
- **Pay equity/gender disparity** – The conventional wisdom that women receive less than 80% of their male counterpart's wages is the most glaring and understood equity issue.
- **Skills gap** – Increasingly there are reports of employers complaining because they have jobs which are unfilled because there are no workers with the skills the position requires. One successful approach involved contractors and unions jointly training workers for various construction skills.
- **Fair Hiring** – A state wide effort led by the Ohio Justice and Policy Center [Stephen JohnsonGrove, Deputy Director] is seeking state legislation to mitigate the disastrous impact that state laws impose on ex-offenders

REMEMBERING JUDGE S. ARTHUR SPIEGEL

Cincinnati just lost one of its irreplaceable leaders. Judge S. Arthur Spiegel died on the last day of 2014. Besides his achievements as an attorney, a legal scholar, and a federal judge, Spiegel was a World War II hero, a pilot, a painter, and an author. In this age of specialization, his many accomplishments entitle him to be called a “Renaissance man.”

Although he was ninety-four years old and in ill-health, Spiegel continued to ably serve as a federal judge for the Southern District of Ohio. Just a week before Christmas, he held forth at a book signing of his recently completed autobiography at a special event hosted by the Cincinnati Bar Association. Environmental attorney D. David Altman relates that he enjoyed a lively conversation with the judge at that event concerning a case involving Spiegel and Murray Seasongood, Cincinnati’s reform mayor in the 1920s.

Judge Spiegel piloted planes for most of his adult life. As a U.S. Marine in the Pacific during World War II, he flew a small, single engine plane to scout enemy positions. During these missions, he often came under intense fire. His love of flying continued after the War, and he flew a private plane during his careers as an attorney and as a federal judge.

Before Judge Spiegel was appointed to the federal bench by President Jimmy Carter in 1980, he compiled a distinguished career as a local attorney who championed civil rights and human rights in general. During those pre-judicial years, Spiegel took on civil rights case often pro bono. Examples of this work include his successful efforts to convince several private clubs to include Jews and African-Americans as members.

After his appointment by President Carter, Judge Spiegel presided over a number of important cases. He ruled that Cincinnati’s anti-gay Charter Amendment of the 1990s was a violation of civil liberties. He oversaw the settlement of the case involving the Fernald Uranium Plant. In a series of cases, he improved conditions for inmates of Ohio’s prisons and ended the civil rights’ violations experienced by African-American inmates.

David Altman, who argued several environmental cases before Judge Spiegel, offered this commentary about his work. “Judge Spiegel was decisive, and he could offer a penetrating analysis of a case often as early as the first status conference. It did not take him long to see injustice and require it to be corrected.”

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I came to know Judge Spiegel because of my friendship with his wife Louise. In her own right, Louise Spiegel is another irreplaceable Cincinnati leader. While the Judge made his contributions through the practice of law, she makes her mark as a civic activist who dedicates herself to championing the diverse voices of citizens in local decision making. She was a founder of the Urban Appalachian Council, and she continues to support

the work of the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission, the Woman’s City Club, and Applied Infor-



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AIR, INC.

*Public Policy and
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Suggested Reading For Economic Justice

Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered, E. F. Schumacher

What Matters? Economics for a Renewed Commonwealth, Wendell Berry

Humanizing the Economy: Co-operatives in the Age of Capital, John Restakis

Humanity's Most Pressing Needs, Muhammad Yunus

Enough Is Enough: Building a Sustainable Economy in a World of Finite Resources, Rob Dietz

The Power of Just Doing Stuff: How Local Action Can Change the World, Rob Hopkins

The Economics of Happiness: Building Genuine Wealth, Mark Anielski