

# The Social Justice Column

## *The Audacity to Create Jobs*

By Fadhel Kaboub, Denison University



President Barack Obama was elected in 2008 in the midst of the Great Recession with the cliché slogan “Yes we can” which was inspired by ideas from his 2006 book *The Audacity of Hope*. Two years later, millions of Americans are still suffering the consequences of unemployment, foreclosures, poverty, and homelessness. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 43.6 million people, that is about one in seven Americans, lived below the poverty level of \$22,000 for a family of four in 2009. This represents an increase by 4 million people from the 2008 data. These numbers pushed the national poverty rate to a 15-year high of 14.3 percent. What is even more alarming is that the number of people with incomes less than half the poverty line which hit a record high of nearly 20 million, or 6.3 percent of the population. And if that isn't

enough bad news, the Census Bureau reports that one in three African American children lived in poverty in 2009, compared to one in five for the national average.

I think that we've had enough “hope” already, what we need today is *The Audacity to Create Jobs*, 30 million jobs to be specific. There is no better way to reduce poverty, child poverty, homelessness, and foreclosures than to give individuals the opportunity to have a decent paying job. The problem with the kind of “stimulus spending” that has been disbursed over the last two years is that very little of it has been geared towards direct job creation. Most of the \$787 billion stimulus money come in the form of tax cuts and support to existing programs to relieve the consequences of mass unemployment. The recently announced \$50 billion infrastructure spending is a step in the right direction, but it is definitely not sufficient to remedy the massive problems that the U.S. economy is struggling with.

How about Green Jobs? Germany has been leading the way in solar panel manufacturing, installation, and servicing. The Financial Times reports that in 2009 photovoltaic cell installations in Germany amounted to more than one half of those in the world. What a great way to simultaneously tackle the environmental crisis and the economic crisis. The government must directly finance green jobs creation rather than announce tax incentives and hope that struggling businesses and consumers will have the audacity to take risks in these uncertain economic times to do the right thing. It only costs \$727 billion to directly create 30 million jobs in the United States. The federal government would pay \$10/hour for 40 hours a week plus \$10,000 worth of benefits. And if we estimate \$50 billion to cover material cost, the entire program amounts to an annual cost of less than 5% of GDP (\$727 billion).

Let us keep in mind that full employment would significantly reduce the costs of financing welfare programs and other social services that would become redundant when we create useful and productive jobs for all. In addition, eliminating unemployment also eliminates all kinds of social problems related to it such as homelessness, crime, domestic violence, child abuse, substance abuse, prostitution, suicide, etc... This is a comprehensive social justice program. The only thing it requires from the federal government is the audacity to spend, and the audacity to create jobs. Will all the spending cause inflation? That will be the subject of the next installment of *The Social Justice Column*. Stay tuned, and check out the next issue of *Street Speech*.

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### **Displacement in the Forecast...** (continued from page 5).

summer have been the highest since 1973. Climate change is destined to also affect large portions of America in different ways. The US Global Change Research Program predicts that if emissions increase or continue at current levels, Illinois will have the climate of Texas by the end of the century. The forecast for the American Southwest is even bleaker – including a possible 10 degree temperature increase, and a 30-40% reduction in rainfall by the end of the century.

There are three main ways in which climate change is going to affect migration, according to the October 2008 issue of the *Forced Migration Review*. Some areas will experience warming and drying which will reduce agricultural potential and the availability of clean water; other areas will be subject to “extreme weather events”; finally, certain coastal areas will have to be permanently evacuated as ocean levels rise.

If that doesn't seem so bad (maybe you're willing to trade a sweltering summer for a not-so-frozen winter), consider the findings of a study

undertaken jointly by the University of Delaware and University of Oklahoma which linked certain weather patterns to increased death rates in US cities. The study, titled *An Evaluation of Climate/Mortality Relationships in Large U.S. Cities and the Possible Impacts of a Climate Change* was published in January of 1997. The findings are as follows: “Using models that estimate climate change for the years 2020 and 2050, it is estimated that summer mortality will increase dramatically and winter mortality will decrease slightly, even if people acclimatize to the increased warmth. Thus, a sizable net increase in weather-related mortality is estimated if the climate warms as the models predict.” Doesn't exactly sound like your average Indian summer, does it?

As much as certain news agencies might poke fun at the idea that over a trillion metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions produced globally by human machinery over the past century (according to the World Resource Institute) could somehow impact the weather, these impacts are not trivial, and there is no indication that they will



“Humanity St.” Flooding from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Photo by Jocelyn Augustino/FEMA.

get better. In order to prevent further loss of life and suffering, world leaders must act together to curb the effects of climate change and respond with compassion to those who have already suffered the consequences of inaction.

### **VENDOR CODE OF CONDUCT**

Sale of this paper is approved by the City of Columbus Licensing Department. Street Speech vendors are members of the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless and are trained and supervised by Coalition staff. Vendors agree to abide by the following Vendor Code of Conduct when selling the paper:

1. Street Speech will be distributed for a donation of \$1. I agree not to ask for more than \$1 or solicit donations for any other purposes while selling Street Speech. If a customer donates more than \$1, I am permitted to keep the donation. I will be clear that the donation goes to me and not CCH.
2. I will purchase papers only from the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless at \$0.25 per paper. I will not sell to or buy papers from other vendors.
3. I will present my badge when buying papers and display while selling papers. If I do not have my badge, I cannot buy or sell papers.
4. I understand that my badge is property of Street Speech and I will not deface it. If I lose my badge, I will purchase a new one for \$3. If my badge becomes ruined or weathered, I will purchase a new one for \$1.
5. I agree to treat others—customers, staff, and other vendors—with respect. I will not use abusive or forceful language when selling papers. I will not be aggressive, threatening, or continue to ask after a person has said no.
6. I agree to stay off of private property while selling Street Speech. I will not sell door to door.
7. I will not sell any additional goods or products while selling Street Speech.
8. I agree to respect the space of other vendors, particularly those who have been at a spot longer. If I encounter another vendor selling papers, I will move to another location before selling papers.
9. I will not sell or purchase Street Speech under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
10. I will attend monthly meetings at the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless the first Friday of every month. The next month's papers will be released at the meeting.
11. It is my responsibility to police fellow vendors. I will report violators of these rules to CCH. The value of the paper depends on keeping it credible.
12. I understand that any violation of these rules will result in suspension of my privilege to sell Street Speech and possible termination from the program. Badges and Street Speech papers are property of CCH and must be surrendered upon demand.

Any alleged violations of these rules should be reported to the Coalition by calling 228-1342 and must include the badge number of the vendor.