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## Introduction to Economic Justice Symposium

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## INTRODUCTION TO ECONOMIC JUSTICE SYMPOSIUM

Our third annual symposium was entitled *Economic Justice: Growing Inequality in America*. The following articles are essentially edited transcripts from the thought provoking discussions that ensued from speeches and panel discussions at the symposium. Our annual symposium, including the “symposium issue” that follows, represents the *Hastings Race and Poverty Law Journal’s* continuing commitment to put scholarship into action and to wrestle with the difficult issues of race and poverty.

In many ways, our 2005 symposium can be seen as a reaction to the November 2004 election. In the days and months following the election it seemed that journalists, pundits, politicians and others all wanted to talk about the importance of cultural, moral, or “wedge” issues. Indeed, journalists labeled the 2004 race as the “values election.” As a Journal, we were struck by how little of the debate was focused on issues that affect poor and working-class families: wage protection, housing, health care, jobs, education, and immigration status. Our symposium, *Economic Justice: Growing Inequality in America*, was our effort to refocus the debate on “bread and butter” issues that affect a large segment of the American population.

To be sure, increasing socioeconomic marginalization in the United States manifests itself in various forms. As such, we began our day at the Symposium by remembering that the struggle for economic justice begins here at home—in our communities. Our first speakers took us through a *Living History of the Tenderloin*. Speakers and panelists then focused on issues of federal and national importance when they discussed *Social Security Reform: the Shrinking Safety Net*, and *Immigration Policy and the Legalization of Undocumented Workers*. In keeping with the mission of our journal, we also had a panel discussion on *Wealth Inequality and Race*. Finally, we challenged attendees to consider ways in which individuals can play a more active role in effecting social change through a workshop panel composed of practitioners entitled, *How to Win Progressive Social Change*.

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We hope that you enjoy the following articles and that they enrich your understanding of these complex questions. We look forward to continuing our dialogue with you about issues of race, poverty, social justice, and the law.

- Adam Zapala, Senior Managing Editor