Poverty and Place: Exploring the Legacy of Persistent Poverty in America

Speaker Biographies

Gregory Acs is vice president for income and benefits policy at the Urban Institute, where his research focuses on social insurance, social welfare, and the compensation of workers. Previously, he served as unit chief for Labor and Income Security in the Congressional Budget Office's Health and Human Resources Division and as vice president of the Association for Policy Analysis and Management. His recent work examines economic and social mobility and economic security with a focus on low-income working families. In the past, Acs has studied the employment patterns of young women to determine the paths women take to obtain jobs paying enough to leave them better off working than on welfare. He has also examined the well-being of children across living arrangements, the ways welfare policies influence family composition, the status of families leaving welfare, and how policies affect the incentives families face as they move from welfare to work. Acs has a PhD in economics and social work from the University of Michigan.

John M. Eason is senior fellow and equity scholar in the Justice Policy Center and the Office of Race and Equity Research at the Urban Institute. He is also the Watson family university associate professor of sociology and international and public affairs at Brown University and author of Big House on the Prairie: Rise of the Rural Ghetto and Prison Proliferation. He is a mixed-methods researcher specializing in ethnography and rare events and has research interests in health disparities, punishment, and race across rural and urban communities. He recently served as a member of the University at Buffalo's inaugural Center for Diversity Innovation's Distinguished Visiting Scholars cohort. Eason has faculty affiliations across Brown University, including the Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice. After serving as an associate professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin–Madison from 2018 to 2022, Eason maintains affiliations with the university's Institute for Research on Poverty, the Applied Population Lab, and the Carbone Cancer Center. From 2010 to 2013, he was an assistant professor at Arizona State University before moving to Texas A&M University from 2013 to 2017. Before receiving an MPP and PhD from the University of Chicago, he worked as a congregation-based community organizer, focusing on housing and criminal justice, and served as a political organizer, most notably for then–Illinois state senator Barack Obama. His work on COVID in confined spaces and prison proliferation is funded by the National Science Foundation.

Corianne P. Scally is a senior fellow in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center at the Urban Institute where she explores affordable housing and community development policy and practice from large cities to rural towns. From evaluating federal programs to assessing philanthropic investments, Scally's research focuses on multiple social determinants of health—from the affordable housing supply to quality drinking water to access to health and human services—and the policy environments and stakeholder capacities that affect community opportunity and well-being. Scally leads mixed method research projects, directing extensive primary data collection via site visits, interviews, focus groups, and surveys, and analysis of secondary and administrative data to evaluate program processes, performance, and outcomes. Recent studies have focused on how technical assistance is provided to housing organizations, how service coordination works for residents of public housing, how to preserve and increase affordable rental housing supply through innovative finance and collaboration, and how to improve rural data and support asset-based development via a national typology of rural census tracts. Her work has been published in books, research reports, policy briefs, and refereed journals and featured on

NPR, Marketplace, the *Washington Post,* and *USA Today*. She started her career as a housing and community economic developer and earned tenure as an associate professor of urban planning. From 2015-2016, she led data and research initiatives at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Housing Service under contract with the Urban Institute. She received her PhD in urban planning and policy development from Rutgers University.

H. Luke Shaefer, Ph.D. is the Hermann and Amalie Kohn Professor of Social Justice and Social Policy and Professor of Public Policy at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan. At U-M, he is also the inaugural director of Poverty Solutions, an interdisciplinary, presidential initiative that partners with communities and policymakers to find new ways to prevent and alleviate poverty. Through Poverty Solutions, Shaefer acted as a special counselor on anti-poverty policy to the director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services from 2019-2021. Shaefer is one of the nation's leading scholars of poverty and social welfare policy. His research has been published in top peer-reviewed academic journals in the fields of public policy, public health, health services research, sociology, social work, and history, and his work has been supported by the National Science Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and U.S. Census Bureau among other sources. He has presented his research at the White House and before numerous federal agencies, has testified before the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, and has advised a number of the nation's largest human service providers. His work has been cited in media outlets such as the New York Times, Washington Post, The Economist, and The Atlantic, and he has been featured on such programs as PBS NewsHour, Marketplace, 1A, The World, and CNBC's Nightly Business Report. The New York Times and TIME Magazine, among other outlets, have credited Shaefer's research as one of the driving forces behind the expanded Child Tax Credit of 2021 that led to a historic decline in child poverty, pushing it to its lowest level on record. His book with Kathryn Edin, $2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America, was named one of the 100 Notable Books of 2015 by the New York Times Book Review, and won the Hillman Prize for Book Journalism among other awards. He was recently awarded an Andrew Carnegie Fellowship. Shaefer received his B.A. in politics from Oberlin College and A.M. and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, School of Social Service Administration.