

**Poverty, Welfare, & Religion:
Towards Understanding and Addressing Working Poverty in the United States**

CALL FOR PAPERS & PRESENTATIONS
An Interdisciplinary, National Conference Engaging Working Poverty
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Cincinnati, Ohio – December 4-6, 2016

This conference brings together scholars, researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and clergy to address issues of working poverty in the United States. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics defines the working poor as “people who spent at least 27 weeks in the labor force (that is, working or looking for work) but whose incomes still fell below the official poverty level.”*

This gathering provides a platform for individuals to explore tactics, strategies, and past efforts to engage with key issues of social policy including: What is the state of working poverty in America? How can we evaluate local, state, and federal policy as well as nongovernmental initiatives designed to address working poverty? What have been the successes and failures of these efforts? How can we best direct our efforts to engage with and addressing working poverty moving forward? What kinds of efforts would engage the faith-based and social service community most effectively?

We invite proposals focused around working poverty nationally. The location of this event is not accidental, and the local reality has served to inspire the conference’s goals. According to 2013 federal statistics**, there are currently 10.5 million individuals identified as working poor in the United States. According to a 2016 *New York Times* article (“In an Improving Economy, Places in Distress”), greater Cincinnati experiences a 44% rate of adult unemployment and a “poverty rate” of 31%. Cincinnati has been identified among ten urban core areas whose vulnerable populations have not benefited from growth following the 2008 recession. The city experiences a rate of poverty that is nearly twice the national average despite having a lower than average cost of living. Cincinnati has the second highest rate of child poverty in the nation, and the immediate region features 4 of the top 5 cities (Detroit, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Toledo) experiencing extreme child poverty.

In recognition of these local facts and larger national trends, an effort is being undertaken by two institutions: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion’s (HUC-JIR) Center for the Study of Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems, and Jewish Family Service (JFS), a direct service provider working to alleviate poverty in the area. The HUC-JIR/JFS effort offers a unique opportunity for inter-community dialogue and strategizing; working to bring together academics, clergy, direct service providers and activists committed to advocacy for the working poor.

This three-day conference will feature keynote speakers and a series of workshops, panels, and facilitated discussions. The goal is to promote a rich exchange of information, and to enable individuals to meet one another, share resources, and consider future collaborative strategies challenging working poverty. This conference will be followed up in the future with additional gatherings, as part of an ongoing advocacy effort towards a locally-organized, national effort at better engaging with the working poor.

We are proud to feature keynote addresses from a number of prominent leaders in this field including award-winning author and social critic Jonathan Kozol, and Father Joseph McCartin, the

director of Georgetown University's Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor. These will be joined by dozens of academics, clergy, and other practitioners.

We are inviting academics as well as those engaged with research and practice on poverty—with a focus on whose household incomes are 2-3 times the federal poverty level—to consider joining us in Cincinnati in December. We solicit papers, workshops, case studies, or panels on a variety of topics including, but not limited to:

- State and federal policies for addressing poverty
- Evaluating efforts to address poverty
- Welfare reform and its implications
- Not-for-profit and faith-based initiatives to address poverty
- Intersectional approaches to advocacy (e.g. gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, etc.)
- New insights into working poverty
- Working poverty and race
- Working poverty gender and families
- Working poverty and health
- Working poverty and education

Those interested in proposing an individual paper, workshop, case study, or panel should submit abstracts or proposals (250-500 words), along with a CV or résumé by June 15, 2016. Financial support is available to those accepted to present.

All materials should be sent to:

Dr. Michael Loadenthal (mloadenthal@huc.edu)
Coordinator, Beyond Poverty Project
Dr. Norma K. and Donald J. Stone Fellow
Center for the Study of Ethics & Contemporary Moral Problems.

The conference committee will review all submissions and notify presenters by July 1, 2016. Conference fees will vary and will cover printed materials, as well as food and refreshments throughout. The attendee fees are \$150 for academic professionals and clergy, \$75 for not-for-profit professionals and \$25 for students. Those seeking financial assistance should note this when submitting proposals to Dr. Loadenthal. In doing so, please explain the support required.

We also plan to offer Continuing Education (CE) credit. Additional fees will be charged to those seeking such credit. For more information on CE credits please contact the conference committee, c/o Dr. Loadenthal.

More details about the conference can be found here: www.huc.edu/PWR

Please feel free to circulate this call to anyone who might be interested & we look forward to seeing you in Cincinnati!

* <http://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/cps/a-profile-of-the-working-poor-2013.pdf>

** <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2015/working-poor-over-10-million-in-2013.htm>