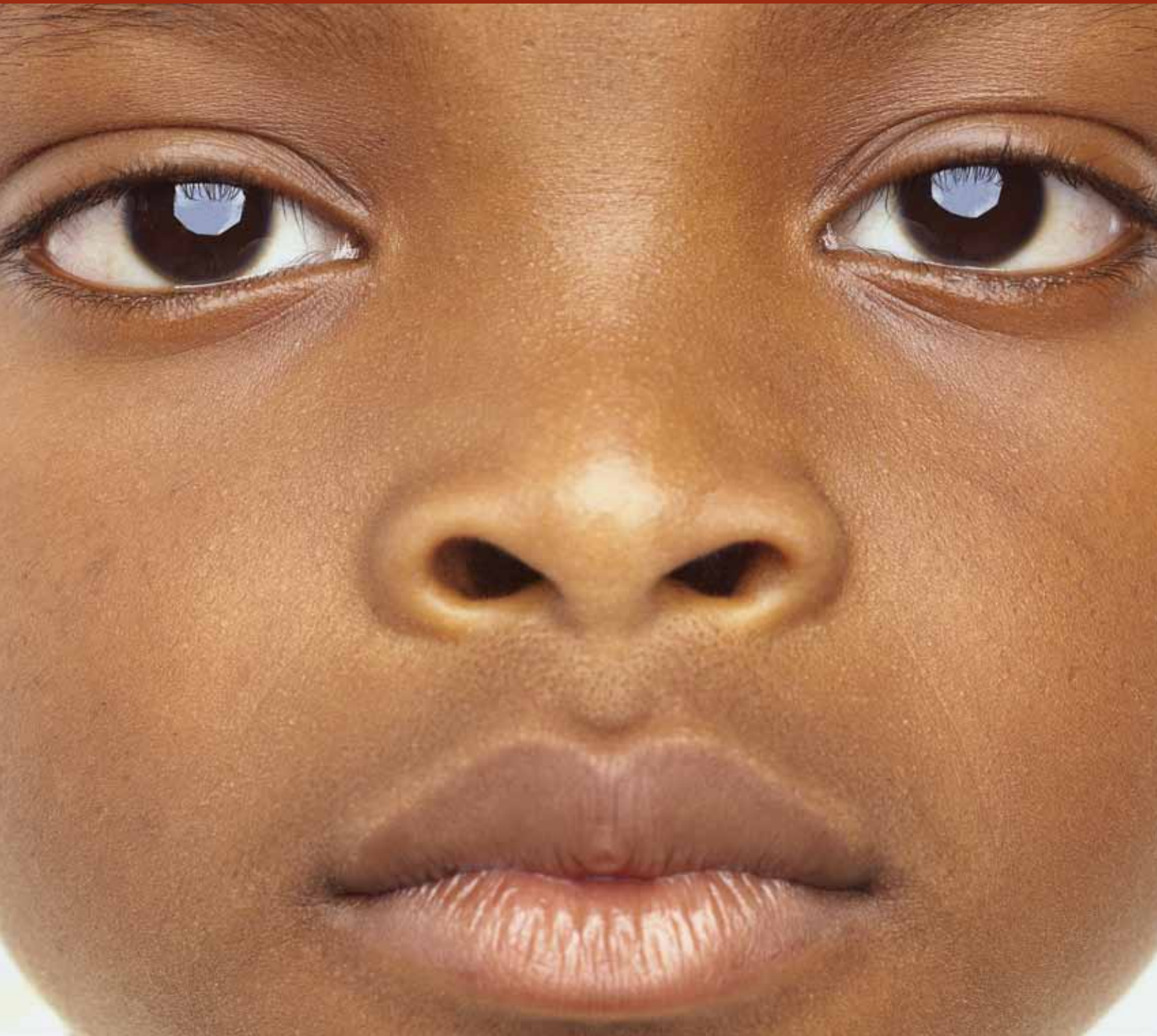




ETS's Addressing Achievement Gaps Symposium  
**A Strong Start: Positioning Young Black Boys  
for Educational Success**  
*A Statistical Profile*



# A Strong Start: Positioning Young Black Boys for Educational Success



Co-sponsored by  
Children's Defense Fund

June 14, 2011  
National Press Club  
Washington, D.C.

## A Statistical Profile of the Educational and Life Status of Black Males

Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), refers to the "toxic cocktail of poverty, illiteracy, racial disparities, violence, massive incarceration and family breakdown that is sentencing millions of children to dead end and hopeless lives and threatens to undermine the past half century of racial and social progress." These ingredients ultimately combine to produce striking gaps in educational success, life expectancy and other important outcomes.

This brief statistical profile provides a snapshot of the rugged terrain many Black boys traverse during the course of their lives. Beginning at birth, the data describe the individual, family, school and community factors that impact a child's development, and suggest important transition points where opportunities to develop human capital are gained or lost.\*

According to Kurt Landgraf, President & CEO of ETS, improving the conditions in which children are nurtured, grow up, attend school, and live can provide "A Stronger Start" for educational success. The upcoming symposium, co-sponsored by ETS and the Children's Defense Fund, will help lay the groundwork of replacing the *cradle to prison pipeline* with a pipeline to college, work and a productive life.

*There are many hands on deck. All across the country, leaders, advocates and organizations are implementing strategic policies, designing innovative programs and visualizing a different future for Black boys.*

*The Addressing Achievement Gaps symposium will highlight some of these promising approaches and creative education models that aim to offset the effects of multiple disadvantages that many young Black boys experience. Examples include CDF Freedom Schools, early childhood home visiting programs and pre-K–third-grade continuum initiatives.*

### The symposium will explore the:

- Connections between early brain development and later achievement in young Black boys
- Advantages of a well-designed pre-K–third-grade continuum
- Promising policy initiatives that address the holistic needs of Black boys in their early years

\*While the focus is on Black *males* and the data are disaggregated when appropriate and available, for some variables the data are presented for both males and females.

## ■ Infant Mortality

The infant mortality rate for Blacks is 13.2 percent, compared with 5.6 percent for Whites.

Source: 2010 Kids Count Data Book, Annie E. Casey Foundation.

## ■ Low Birth Weight

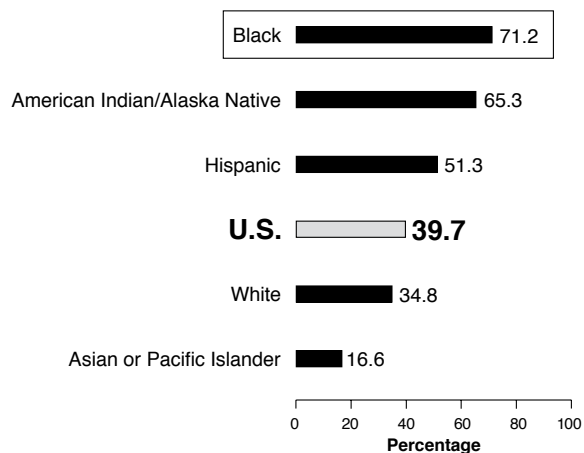
The percentage of low birth weight Black babies is near 14 percent, almost twice the rate for Whites.

Source: 2010 Kids Count Data Book.

*“The percentage of low birth weight Black babies is almost twice that of White babies.”*

## ■ Single-Parent Families

Nearly three-fourths of Black children are born out of wedlock.



Source: National Center for Health Statistics.

*“Nearly three-quarters of Black children are born out of wedlock.”*

## ■ Foster Care

Black children account for only 15 percent of the U.S. child population, but make up 30 percent of children in foster care. Black children also stay in foster care longer than children of other races.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, "The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2009 Estimates as of July 2010," at [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats\\_research/afcars/tar/report17.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report17.htm); and U.S. Government Accountability Office, Report to the Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives, "African American Children in Foster Care: Additional HHS Assistance Needed to Help States Reduce the Proportion in Care," at [http://member.preventchildabuse.org/site/DocServer/GAO\\_Report\\_on\\_Disproportionality.pdf?docID=1861](http://member.preventchildabuse.org/site/DocServer/GAO_Report_on_Disproportionality.pdf?docID=1861).

## ■ Parent Education

13 percent of Black children (ages 6 to 18) have a mother with less than a high school education, compared to 5 percent of White children. 17 percent of Black children have a mother with at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 36 percent of White children.

Source: Susan Aud, Mary Ann Fox, and Angelina KewalRamani, *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 2010.

## ■ Parent Employment

38 percent of Black children live in a household where neither parent has full-time, year-round employment, compared to 19 percent of White children.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, POV 13.

## ■ Insurance Coverage

12 percent of Black children compared to 7 percent of White children are uninsured.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey.

## ■ Disadvantaged Neighborhoods

More than three-fourths of Black children born between 1985 and 2000 grew up in "high disadvantage" neighborhoods, characterized by high levels of unemployment, welfare, poverty, single-parent families, segregation and density of children under age 18. Five percent of that cohort of White children grew up in such neighborhoods.

Source: Patrick Sharkey, *Neighborhoods and the Black-White Mobility Gap*, Pew Charitable Trusts, 2009 (derived from Figure 2).

*“More than three-fourths of Black children grew up in 'high disadvantage' neighborhoods.”*

## ■ Poverty

The poverty rate for Black children is 36 percent, compared to 12 percent for White children.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2009 Annual Social and Economic Supplements, Table 3. Poverty Status of People, by Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1959 to 2009. Available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/historical/people.html>.

18 percent of Black children live in “extreme poverty,” compared to 5 percent of White children. This group is defined as having a family income below 50 percent of the poverty line. A person living in a family of four at this level of poverty is in a household where the daily income is below \$33.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2009 Current Population Survey.

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***“The poverty rate for Black children is three times higher than the rate for White children.”***

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## ■ Hunger

35 percent of Black children were in “food insecure” households in 2009, compared to 17 percent of White children.

Source: Mark Nord et al., “Household Food Security in the United States, 2009,” ERR-108, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, November 2010.

## ■ Early Cognitive Development

At 24 months, Black babies scored significantly lower than White babies on the cognitive assessment administered as part of ECLS.

Source: Tamara Halle et al., *Disparities in Early Learning and Development: Lessons from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)*, Child Trends, Washington, DC, June 2009.

At about age 4, 28 percent of Black children were proficient at letter recognition and 55 percent were proficient at number and shape recognition. The percentages for White students were 37 and 73, respectively.

Source: Aud, Fox, and KewalRamani, 2010.

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***“Black babies scored significantly lower than White babies on the cognitive assessment.”***

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## ■ Early Care and Education Programs

Nearly two-thirds of Black 2-year-olds were in regular non-parental care, compared to about half of White children. Black children were much more likely to be in day care of low quality — for example, 61 percent were in low-quality home-based care compared to 20 percent of White children.

Source: Gail M. Mulligan and Kristin Denton Flanagan, *Age 2: Findings from the 2-Year-Old Follow-Up of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)*, U.S. Department of Education, NCES, August 2006.

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***“Young Black children were more likely to be in low-quality day care.”***

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## ■ Teenage Births

Black teens were about 2.4 times more likely than White teens to have a baby. The rates are 63.7 per 1,000 Black girls ages 15 to 19, compared to 26.6 per 1,000 White girls of the same age.

Source: Lewis and Burd-Sharps, 2010.

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***“Black teens were about twice as likely as White teens to have a baby.”***

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## ■ Achievement in School

At grade 8, only 8 percent of Black males attending large city schools are “proficient” in reading. For White students, nationally, 33 percent are proficient. In math, the respective percentages are 10 and 44.

At grade 4, only 11 percent of Black males attending large city schools are “proficient” in reading. For White students, nationally, 38 percent are proficient. In math, the respective percentages are 14 and 53.

Source: Sharon Lewis et al., *A Call for Change: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Black Males in Urban Schools*, Council of the Great City Schools, October 2010.

## ■ Teacher Quality

Black students are more likely than White students to have lower-quality teachers. In high schools with 50 percent or more Black enrollment, 25 percent of the teachers have neither a college major nor standard certification in the subject that is their main teaching assignment (math). The percentage for schools with White enrollment of 50 percent or more is 8 percent.

Source: Aud, Fox, and KewalRamani, 2010.

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***“Black students are more likely to have lower-quality teachers.”***

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## ■ School Segregation

39 percent of Black students attend an intensely segregated school (the school is 90 to 100 percent minority).

The average Black student attends a school where the percentage of low-income students is 59 percent. The comparable percentage for the average White student is 32 percent.

Source: Gary Orfield, *Reviving the Goal of an Integrated Society: A 21st Century Challenge*, The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA, January 2009.

## ■ Grade Retention

25 percent of Black males repeated a grade in school, compared to 11 percent of White males. Note that this does not include those who dropped out.

Source: Aud, Fox, and KewalRamani, 2010.

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***“25 percent of Black males repeated a grade in school.”***

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## ■ School Suspension and Expulsion

50 percent of Black males in grades 6 to 12 have been suspended, compared to 21 percent of White males. 17 percent of Black males have been expelled, compared to 1 percent of White males.

Source: Aud, Fox, and KewalRamani, 2010.

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***“50 percent of Black males have been suspended from school.”***

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## ■ High School Dropout Rate

Using a measure developed by the U.S. Department of Education (averaged freshman graduation rate), the high school graduation rate for Black students is 62 percent, compared to 81 percent for White students.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2007-08 (NCES 2010-341), tables 2 and 3. Data from “NCES Common Core of Data State Dropout and Completion Data File,” School Year 2007-08, Version 1a, at <http://dashboard.ed.gov/>.

In many large urban districts, more than half of Black males drop out of high school.

Source: *Yes We Can: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males*, Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010.

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***“In many large urban districts more than half of Black males drop out of school.”***

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## ■ Educational Attainment

18 percent of Black males over the age of 25 have attained a bachelor’s degree or more, compared to 34 percent of White males. At the other end of the attainment spectrum, 39 percent of Blacks in that age group have no more than a high school education, compared to 32 percent of Whites.

Source: Calculated from U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Internet release date: April 2010.

## ■ Employment

In February 2011, the unemployment rate for Black males age 20 and over was nearly twice that of White males (17.5 percent versus 9.1 percent).

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Table A-2. Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age.

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***“Black males are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as White males.”***

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## ■ Income and Wealth

Black men earn about two-thirds of what White men earn. The 2009 median earnings for Black men was \$26,644 compared to \$40,157 for White men.

Source: Lewis and Burd-Sharps, 2010.

Differences in wealth are even larger. The wealth gap between Black and White Americans increased fourfold between 1984 and 2007, from \$20,000 to \$95,000.

Source: Thomas M. Shapiro, Tatjana Meschede, and Laura Sullivan, "The Racial Wealth Gap Increases Fourfold," Research and Policy Brief, Institute on Assets and Social Policy, Brandeis University, May 2010.

***"The wealth gap between Black and White Americans increased fourfold between 1984 and 2007, from \$20,000 to \$95,000."***

## ■ Home Ownership

Blacks are much less likely than Whites to own the housing unit that they occupy (45.6 percent compared to 73.4 percent).

Source: Lewis and Burd-Sharps, 2010.

## ■ Homicide

The homicide victimization rate for Blacks (20.6 per 100,000) is more than six times higher than the rate for Whites (3.3).

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Homicide Trends in the U.S." <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/homicide/tables/vracetab.cfm> (accessed May 11, 2011).

***"Young African-American men in Philadelphia and Jefferson Parish (Louisiana) face a higher chance of death by homicide than do military personnel in Iraq during deployment."***

Source: Lewis and Burd-Sharps, 2010.

## ■ Victimization

Blacks are 1.7 times as likely as Whites to be victims of violent crimes and more than twice as likely to be victims of aggravated assault than Whites.

Source: Jennifer L. Truman and Michael R. Rand, "Criminal Victimization, 2009," Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, October 2010, NCJ 231327.

## ■ Incarceration

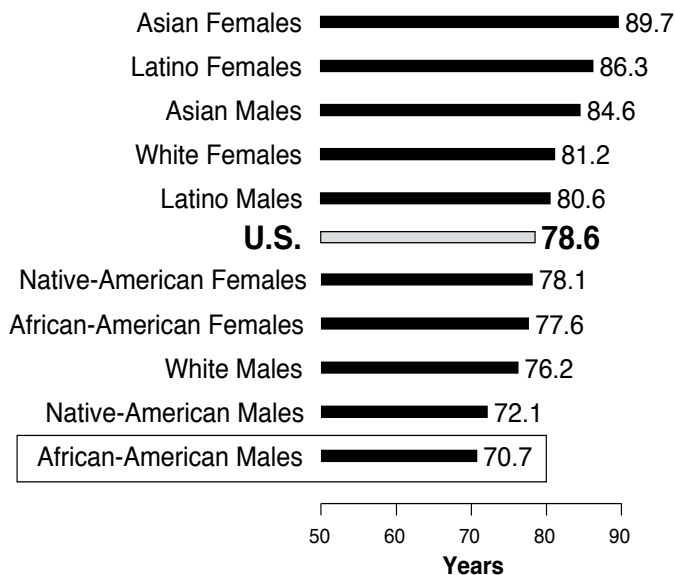
The imprisonment rate for Black males is more than six times higher than that of White males. The rate among Black men is 3,119 per 100,000.

Source: Heather West, William J. Sabol, and Sarah J. Greenman, "Prisoners in 2009," Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, December 2010.

***"Black males are more than six times more likely to be imprisoned than White males."***

## ■ Life Expectancy

The life expectancy for African-American males is 70.7 years, the lowest of any group.



Source: Lewis and Burd-Sharps, 2010.



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This profile was written by Richard J. Coley, ETS Policy Information Center, with the help of the Children's Defense Fund's staff.

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