



NEWS RELEASE

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American Human Development Project Releases “A Century Apart,” Revealing Alarming Disparities in Well-Being among U.S. Racial and Ethnic Groups

*Asian Americans in New Jersey are Fifty Years Ahead of National Average,
Native Americans in South Dakota are Fifty Years Behind*

New York, NY – The [American Human Development Project](#) (AHDP), a nonpartisan, nonprofit initiative that seeks to augment GDP as a national measure of economic well-being, today released the latest update to its pioneering American Human Development (HD) Index. The American HD Index uses official government data to create a composite rating of overall well-being based on health, education, and income levels within states and across the country. The update, “[A Century Apart](#),” measures the well-being of African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and Alaska Natives, Asian Americans, and whites in the nation as a whole as well as in each state. At the national level, Asian Americans score the highest, followed by whites, Latinos, African Americans, and Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

“There is increasing consensus, on the left and right, that we as a country need a more comprehensive measure than GDP for fact-based policy debates about progress in the U.S. While GDP asks how the economy is doing, the American HD Index asks how people are doing,” said Kristen Lewis, co-director of AHDP.

According to “A Century Apart,” Asian Americans in New Jersey, with the highest Index scores, experience levels of well-being that, if current trends continue, the country as a whole will reach in about fifty years. At the other end of the spectrum, Native Americans in South Dakota lag more than a half-century behind the rest of the nation in terms of health, education, and income. Asian Americans in New Jersey live, on average, an astonishing 26 years longer, are 11 times more likely to have a graduate degree, and earn \$35,610 more per year than South Dakota Native Americans.

AHDP co-director Sarah Burd-Sharps added, “Two days from now, the Bureau of Economic Analysis will release its next GDP estimate for the first quarter of 2010, yet GDP describes only a fraction of our progress as a society.”

Other findings from “A Century Apart” include the following:

Health

- Asian Americans live the longest (86.6 years), followed by Latinos (82.8 years);

- African American life expectancy today is on par with that of the average American three decades ago; and
- Latinos outlive whites, on average, by over four years, and in all but four states, Latinos either equal or surpass the national average in life span.

Income

- In no U.S. states do African Americans, Latinos, or Native Americans earn more than Asian Americans or whites;
- Asian Americans and whites earn the most; Latinos and Native Americans earn the least. Native Americans' median earnings are less than \$22,000, while whites' are more than \$30,000; and
- African Americans in Maryland earn almost \$16,000 a year more than African Americans in Louisiana.

Education

- Nearly one in five Asian American adults has a graduate degree;
- Latinos lag in education; nearly four in ten adults age 25 and older did not complete high school;
- In Florida, Maryland, and Virginia, about one in five Latino adults age 25 and older have obtained at least a bachelor's degree.

"A Century Apart" builds on the methodology introduced in *The Measure of America: American Human Development Report 2008-2009* (Columbia University Press, 2008), which uses a composite index to rank the well-being of people by state and congressional district. The 2008-2009 report included HD Index rankings for racial and ethnic groups at the national level.

About the American Human Development Project

The American Human Development Project is a nonpartisan, nonprofit initiative of the Social Science Research Council working to stimulate fact-based public debate about and political attention to issues that affect people's well-being and access to opportunity. A hallmark of this work is the American Human Development Index, a measure that paints a portrait of Americans today and empowers communities with a tool to track progress in areas we all care about: health, education, and standard of living. This Index is based on the well-honed international Human Development Index, published annually by the United Nations. The Project is made possible through the generous support of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the Lincy Foundation.

About the Authors

Sarah Burd-Sharps and Kristen Lewis are co-directors of the American Human Development Project. Previously, Sarah worked with the United Nations for over two decades, most recently as Deputy Director of the Human Development Report Office of

the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Prior to this, she worked with UNIFEM in China and in a number of African countries on gender issues and economic empowerment. Sarah holds an M.I.A. from Columbia University. Kristen also comes from an international development policy background, having worked primarily in the areas of gender equality, governance, environment, and water and sanitation. Kristen is co-author, under the leadership of Jeffrey Sachs' Millennium Project, of the 2005 book *Health, Dignity and Development: What Will It Take?* She worked at the United Nations for some ten years, first with UNIFEM and then in UNDP's policy bureau, and has served as a consultant for many international development organizations. Kristen also holds an M.I.A. from Columbia University.

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