



STARBUCKS<sup>®</sup>  
GLOBAL ACADEMY

Resource Toolkit for  
To Be Welcoming Curriculum

# WELCOMING DIALOGUE ON CLASS BIAS



# OVERVIEW

Public spaces and third places are more welcoming to all when we celebrate our shared humanity. By understanding each other, we deepen connections. To encourage more meaningful conversations on this topic, leaders at Starbucks partnered with experts at Arizona State University to create To Be Welcoming, a 15-course curriculum designed to address bias through understanding the human experience.

Below are 4 core resources from the “Welcoming Dialogue on Class Bias” course. This learning experience presents key terms related to class and class bias, statistical figures on poverty in the United States, an exploration of the unequal distribution of wealth and income in the United States, and a guide to encourage dialogue on class bias. Learn more about the program and register for courses at [ToBeWelcoming.com](https://www.tobewelcoming.com).



## RESOURCE 1

### Key Terms and Concepts

---

## RESOURCE 2

### Poverty in the United States

---

## RESOURCE 3

### Wealth, Income and Inequality in the United States

---

## RESOURCE 4

### Dialogue Challenge

We will begin by defining key terms and concepts related to class and class bias. These terms have been defined specifically to fit the context of this course, and will be used to enhance your understanding of the course topic.



### **SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS**

The measure of an individual's economic and social standing. Socioeconomic status accounts for an individual's work experience and economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation.



### **THE GIG-ECONOMY**

Hiring temporary, independent, or short-term workers to perform jobs typically in the service sector. Today, the gig-economy reflects the economy's failure to provide sufficient opportunities for stable, long-term work.



### **POVERTY**

The state in which an individual or a family's income falls below what is needed to meet basic economic necessities, such as food and housing. In the United States, a family is judged to be in poverty if its pre-tax income falls below the poverty threshold (\$25,750 for a family of four in 2019).



### **COST OF LIVING**

The income required to maintain a specific standard of living, often calculated by the average costs of goods and services utilized by an individual or group of people.



### **STANDARD OF LIVING**

A measure of the consumption of goods and services by individuals or groups of people. This includes the levels of wealth, wellness, and material goods available to those in a particular region or class.



### **MIDDLE CLASS**

Adults whose annual household income is between two-thirds and double the national median (mid point) household income (after incomes have been adjusted to household size). In 2014, the national middle-income range was about \$42,000 to \$125,000 annually for a household of three.



### **LIVING WAGE**

The minimum hourly wage that will provide individuals and families with the necessary income to meet the standard of living in their geographic location.



### **THE WORKING POOR**

Those who spend at least 27 weeks of the year in the labor force either working or looking for work, but whose annual incomes fall under the poverty threshold.



### **SOCIAL MOBILITY**

The movement of individuals, families, or groups among social classes.



### **ECONOMIC ANXIETY**

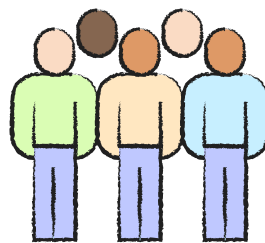
Refers to individual concerns about one's current and future economic security.

**Summary:** Bias of any kind generally stems from ignorance about situations different from the norm, which can lead to prejudice against others. These key terms will help you understand and demystify the "unknown," as well as give a glimpse of the trauma that certain groups of people still endure due to bias.

Media is an important source of information. It can help us learn about what is happening in our communities and around the world, and it can teach us about people who are different from us. When depicting certain socioeconomic classes, media can perpetuate harmful stereotypes that diminish and dehumanize how the poor are treated by economic policy. In 1996, scholar Martin Gillens studied the news media's representation of poverty in the United States. His study found that in comparison with actual statistics, news media depict an abnormally high proportion of the poor as unemployed or African American, and an abnormally low proportion as elderly or working poor. The infographic below shows how poverty affects different groups of people.

## POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES

11.8%



In 2018, the national poverty rate in the United States was 11.8%, or 38.1 million people.

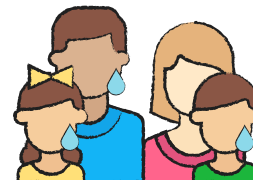
Poor is defined as making less than the Federal government's official poverty threshold. Poverty thresholds are determined by the U.S. government, and vary according to the size of a family, and the ages of its members. In 2018, the poverty threshold was:



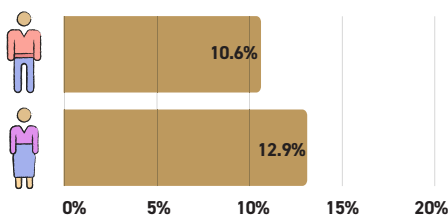
About \$12,784  
for an individual



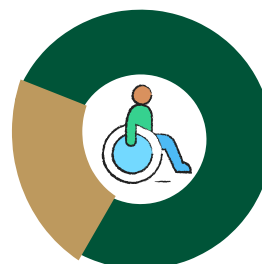
About \$16,247  
for two people



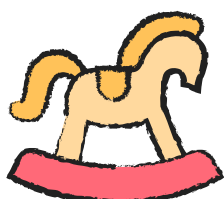
About \$25,701  
for a family of four



In 2018, 10.6% of men, and 12.9% of women lived in poverty.



The poverty rate for people living with a disability was 25.7%



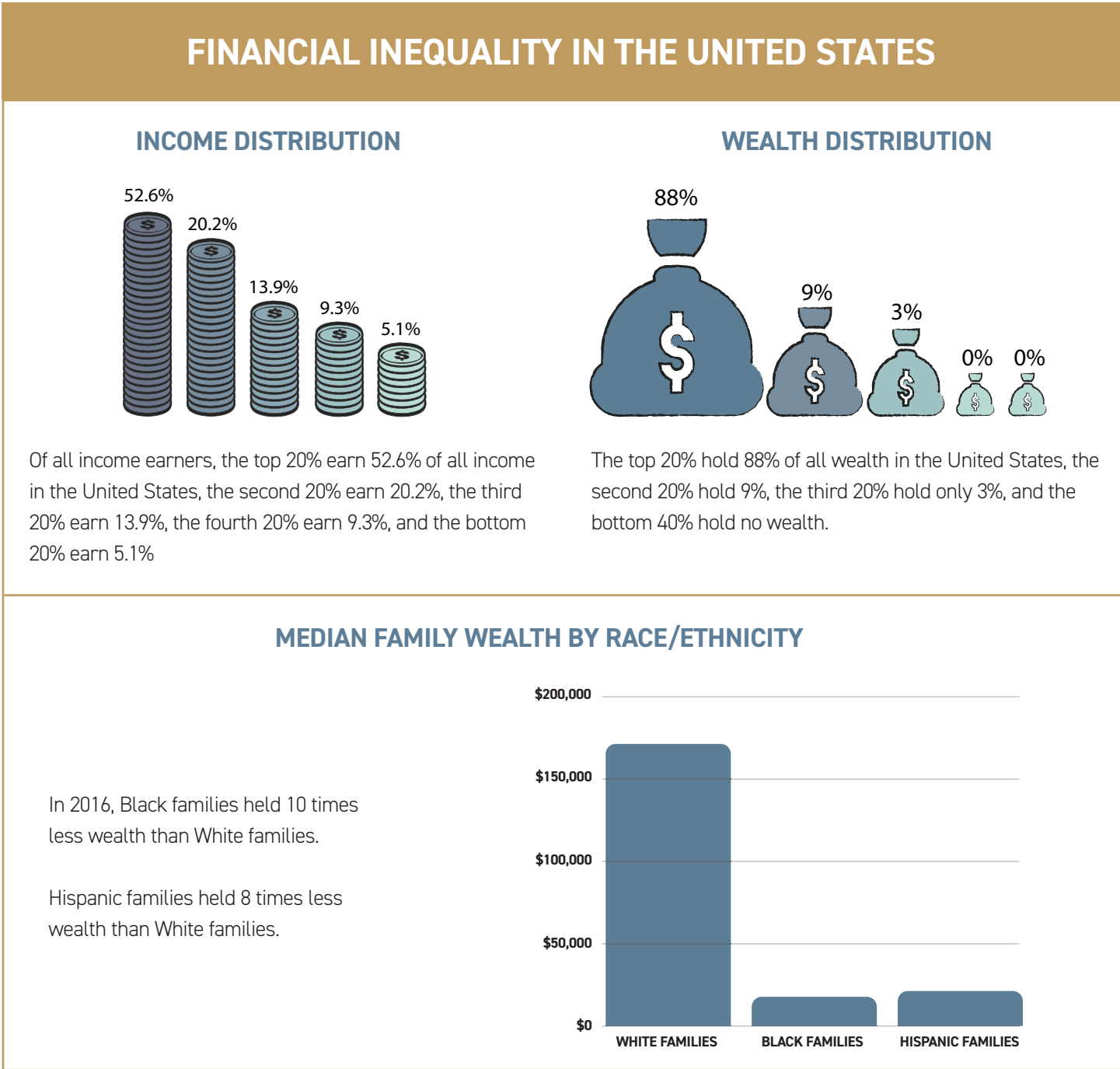
11.9 million children, 1 in 6, lived in poverty in 2018.



Though the official census data says the poverty rate of seniors is only 9.3%, the Supplemental Poverty Measure raises the senior poverty rate to 14.5%.

Wealth and income go hand in hand, but they are two entirely different concepts. Income refers to the total amount of money that flows into the household over a given period of time. Wealth refers to the total value of assets that families own at a given point in time, minus the value of all debts. The assets can either be financial or non financial. Wealth provides many advantages that income does not. Wealth can be inherited or transferred from parents to children, invested, generate income, and serve as collateral for loans and credit. Compared to income, wealth is more stable and does not require participating in the labor market. It provides a cushion when emergencies come up.

The following infographic demonstrates how wealth and income are unequally distributed in the United States.



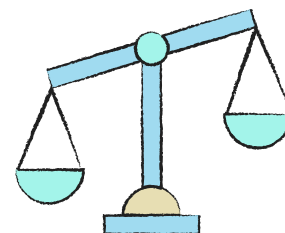
Source: Urban Institute calculations from Surveys of Financial Characteristics of Consumers 1962 (December 31). Survey of Changes in Family Finances 1963, and Survey of Consumer Finances 1983-2016.

Talking about class bias requires a complex and creative communication skill set. This series introduced you to the role civility, empathy, and dialogue play in navigating critical conversations around bias. As you practice these skills, your awareness will increase and you will get better at engaging in critical conversations on sensitive topics.

It can be difficult to start a dialogue on these issues. Use the following list of questions to guide your conversation on class bias.

## DIALOGUE CHALLENGE

I'm learning about the role civility, empathy, and dialogue play in critical conversations around class bias in the To Be Welcoming Series featured on Starbucks Global Academy. One of the activities is a dialogue challenge where I am encouraged to engage in dialogue with a close family member or friend on their perceptions of class. Do you mind if we discuss your perspective? Thank you.



How old were you when you realized there are different social classes (economic groups)? What group did you believe you belonged to?



Now that you are older, how do you distinguish between people of different economic classes? How would you identify your class? What about you puts you in that class?

How would you define the term "wealthy"? What about "poor"?

What has influenced your perception of the differences between socioeconomic groups?



What are your experiences with people who belong to a socioeconomic class other than your own?



How have you seen wealthy people and poor people portrayed in the media? Do you find those portrayals accurate based on your real-life interactions with those people?

Do you think your perception of people with lower financial means match with the views held by the majority of society? What about your perception of those with more means?



Do you have a specific image of who the "working poor" are? What do you think are the most common biases the working poor face in society?

Do you think wealthy people and working class people have the same opportunities as others in the U.S.?

What similarities do you believe you share with people who are working class? What about those who are wealthy?

# COURSE AUTHORS



## **Dr. Jessica Solyom**

Associate Research Professor  
School of Social Transformation  
Arizona State University

Jessica Solyom, Ph.D., received her doctorate in Justice and Social Inquiry from Arizona State University. She has worked in research, program development, and program evaluation for postsecondary institutions in promoting diversity in curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom management for over 10 years. Her research focuses on diversity, belonging, and justice. Her scholarly publications have explored the justice-related struggles of historically underrepresented students including explorations of race and gender in student leadership, persistence for students of color in predominantly white postsecondary settings, and education rights activism among Indigenous college students. She is currently an Associate Research Professor and teaches courses on Research and Inquiry, Critical Race Theory, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Dr. Solyom serves as a mentor at the Center for Indian Education (ASU) in preparing and training rising students of color as community embedded researchers and servant-leaders.



## **Nicholas Bustamante**

J.D./Ph.D. Student  
Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law  
School of Social Transformation  
Arizona State University

Nicholas is a current joint law and doctoral student in Justice & Social Inquiry at Arizona State University. He has worked in research focused on the school-to-prison pipeline in Arizona for Native, Latino, and African American Students. In 2017-2018 he co-developed a critical legal studies program for first generation students interested in a legal career. Scholarly publications have focused on critical race theory, education, ethnic studies and Indigeneity. His doctoral research focuses on surveillance technologies and privacy rights for communities in the southwestern borderlands. Nicholas also volunteers at local immigration initiatives.