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**Concept Paper to the XYZ Foundation**

**From National Urban League**

**Introduction**

The National Urban League Policy Institute (NULPI) seeks grant support from the XYZ Foundation to engage intentionally with the LGBT racial justice community on policy and advocacy that focuses on the jobs crisis and economic recovery. As the NULPI conducts its ongoing work to address the economic crisis and advocate for job creation, it will use proactively an LGBT and racial justice lens. In addition, NULPI will partner closely with LGBT organizations committed to racial justice through regular discussions, convening, exchange of ideas, sharing of policy agendas, coalition-building work and other partnership strategies.

Through the proposed grant, we will foster discussions about breaking down the arbitrary silos that often separate the LGBT, African American, and other communities that engage in social justice work. We will also explore strategies that promote sustained partnerships with LGBT racial justice groups committed to addressing economic equality and the economic crisis.

**Need Statement**

The persistent and profound economic recession has taken a particularly heavy toll on the lives of African Americans, many of whom have lost their jobs, homes and life savings. African American unemployment rates are at 16% or higher in many urban communities, and are as high as 20% in Michigan and Ohio.

The high unemployment rates have exacerbated the housing crisis, fueled primarily by predatory subprime lending. According to United for a Fair Economy, in 2009 nearly 60 percent of mortgage defaults were triggered by unemployment. Since 2007, nearly nine million homes have entered the foreclosure process. An estimated 3.8 million residential properties will be foreclosed upon this year alone. The Center for Responsible Lending estimates that 11% of African American homeowners have already lost their home to foreclosure or are at imminent risk.

The foreclosure crisis will result in a $193 billion loss of wealth to African American communities between 2009 and 2012 as a result of depreciated property values alone. Communities of color have seen a staggering loss of wealth in recent years. In 2007, the typical African-American family owned 10 cents of wealth, and Latino families 12 cents, for each dollar of wealth owned by the typical white American family.

The dire economic crisis calls for new effective policies. There is a strong need for tax reform, targeted job creation in high-unemployment communities, job training programs in high-growth industries, increased financial regulation to end predatory lending, modification of bankruptcy laws, foreclosure prevention programs, stabilizing vacant properties and rebuilding the home ownership market. These enormous challenges will require a stalwart campaign that unites constituency groups to achieve a common goal.

The civil rights and the LGBT movements often have avoided developing a shared agenda that reflects the policy concerns of people of color and low-income people of all races and sexual orientations. While civil rights groups often focus on racism, affirmative action, voting rights, and predatory lending, LGBT organizations tend to focus on marriage rights, military equality (Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell), hate crimes laws and AIDS prevention and treatment. Yet, we know that these social problems are not mutually exclusive. There is much common ground. What often impacts the LGBT community affects the civil rights and African American communities and vice-versa.

The African American Policy Forum embraces the value of problem solving across constituencies through ”intersectionality,” which is defined as “ a prism from which to view a range of social problems to better ensure inclusiveness of remedies and to identify opportunities for great collaboration between and across social movements.“ NULPI agrees that a collective, holistic approach to social justice would be well-served by promoting greater awareness among social justice groups and more inclusive coalition advocacy. As NULPI advances its work for economic equality and opportunity, it will collaborate more closely with LGBT and LGBT people of color organizations.

**Project Goals**

Our primary goals are to:

* Increase our capacity to intentionally connect with social justice LGBT groups to educate and engage each other on values and principles that build basic understanding of our common interests and dispel false assumptions;
* Engage in policy work with LGBT racial justice groups to promote job creation and confront the jobs crisis; and
* Strengthen our media and communications infrastructure to publicize intersectional, collaborative efforts and to disseminate widely our research, policy papers and other products related to jobs and economic issues.

**Project Activities**

During the grant period we will identify key LGBT partners to engage in dialogue to promote better understanding and mutual interests. We will explore national and local partners to work together intersectionally on policy issues and to gain beneficial insights into each other’s mission, values, goals and framework within the social justice movement. Many of our initial contacts may be by phone and email as basic, introductory meetings. Over time we will build upon these relationships to develop stronger ties and to collaborate together on specific projects.

For example, we may partner with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, a group that joined us in signing a letter to Congressman Nadler in support for the Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) Act. This letter demonstrates a clear example of multiple civil rights groups coming together to advocate against discrimination in the federal Fair Housing Act.

**Research and Fellows**

With a focus on jobs in 2011, we will continue to produce our Monthly Employment Report, which summarizes statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ monthly release of the employment situation. Although BLS does not produce statistics for LGBT workers, the information is broken down by race, ethnicity and gender. We will share this information on labor market experiences and current trends with identified LGBT partners and the NUL movement. Our research work will also generate useful reports such as *Achieving Fairness and Efficiency in Unemployment Insurance* (June 2010) and *Untangling the Budget Deficit: Jobs Surge Can Reduce the Budget Deficit by $310 billion* (June 2010). These reports discuss some of the major impacts of the recession: the unprecedented collapse in tax revenues, the extraordinary rise in spending, and the unfair implementation of and restrictions on unemployment insurance.

NULPI’s research provides critical evidence that helps drive policy recommendations and systemic change. Our ongoing research activities for economic issues will take on different nuances as we utilize an LGBT racial justice lens. To help us conduct research and offer a critical LGBT lens, we will seek to recruit research fellows for a new Fellowship Program. With the goal of building a pipeline of talented policy experts, we will launch a new fellowship program and recruit recent doctoral graduates for our research work, as well as to intern on Capitol Hill. Our recruitment will target talented LGBT people of color. The fellowship program aims to support, strengthen and nurture future policy leaders who will serve nonprofits, including foundations. Fellows will gain insight into a wide range of economic and social issues that impact underserved urban communities. They will learn about innovative programs, policies and strategies to restore lives and revitalize communities and our nation.

**Advocacy Issues**

For the past several years, the NUL has advocated for effective polices to help create jobs for low-income workers, confront the foreclosure crisis, promote asset building and close the racial wealth gap.

With grant support, we will continue to analyze and assess the Local Jobs for America Act (H.R. 4812), the recently passed Small Business Jobs and Credit Act of 2010, and the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010, particularly the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Communities of color have been disproportionately affected by the financial crisis, and stand to gain the most from provisions like the newly-created Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the additional investments in the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. The creation of the Office of Minority and Women Inclusion will help address the need for diversity in the workforce of regulators and in contracting.

One key piece of legislation, we will be analyzing and making recommendations upon is the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). In 1998, WIA was designed to consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs, with the goals of improving the quality of the workforce, reducing welfare dependency, and enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of the United States. Although the legislative language of WIA offered the hope of positive employment results for everyone, it has failed in practice to adequately serve minorities and has led to de facto racism. The Office of Management and Budget has plans to improve the existing program. We will assess its activities on areas of improvement that include:

* Working with Congress to reform the Workforce Investment Act. Reforms will consolidate funding for related programs, reduce administrative overhead, increase States' flexibility to tailor services.
* Adopting efficiency measures that are linked to performance outcomes, account for all costs, and facilitate comparisons across Department of Labor training and employment programs.
* Strengthening the quality of youth performance data, specifically supplemental data and administrative records, through data validation.

In 2004, the NUL created the Urban Youth Empowerment Program (UYEP) in partnership with the Department of Labor to demonstrate a comprehensive approach to preparing at-risk youth for the world of work in 27 affiliate sites in 20 states. UYEP strives to prepare out-of-school and adjudicated youth ages 18-24 for entry into the world of work through a comprehensive set of services such as case management, paid community services, educational upgrades, mentoring, private sector internships, on-the-job training, occupational skills training, personal development and unsubsidized employment. This effective program proved instrumental in helping to break the cradle to prison pipeline by offering youth, who had been part of the criminal justice system, a fresh start, with marketable job skills to enter the workforce. In 2011, we will continue to advocate for federal funding to keep this model, replicable workforce development program alive and thriving.

UYEP will provide a strong platform from which we can draw statistics, data and first-hand experience to help educate and enlighten the policy community and others with regards to innovative strategies that work for minorities. From our lessons learned with UYEP and numerous other workforce programs implemented by the NUL and its affiliate network, we will advocate for principles of racial equity within the WIA reauthorization.

In 2010, we implemented the work of our Legislative Agenda through coalition activities, outreach to Hill and Administration staff, sign-on of various letters and bills, developing grassroots “action alerts” through I AM EMPOWERED.com, policy analyses, and the offering of Congressional testimony. In 2011, we will continue to focus on issues of economic recovery at the legislative level.

Next year we will include new LGBT partners to assist our efforts. In 2010, some of our key nonprofit partners included.

* Jobs for America Now to coordinate efforts to advance job creation strategies and legislation (particularly Youth Summer Jobs and unemployment insurance)
* The Leadership Conference – Executive Committee, Technology and Economic Taskforces
* Transportation Equity Caucus – invitation from PolicyLink to ensure the transportation bill reauthorization benefits underserved communities
* Civil Rights Education Coalition – develop response to White House Elementary and Secondary Education Act Reauthorization Blueprint

Our administration partners were:

* Debt Reduction Taskforce – President Morial serves with support from NULPI staff
* NULPI continues to receive requests to participate in public hearings and closed door meetings and to receive requests for technical assistance from the White House and a number of administrative agencies.

NULPI is committed to a wide-array of policy activities to educate, inform and engage policy makers and thought leaders on key issues that advance economic empowerment and help to close the racial wealth gap. With funding, we seek to use our experience, political muscle, and inside track to advocate for effective policies that will advance the racial justice movement and in doing so, the LGBT community.

**State Of Black America, Economic Recovery Roundtables, and Legislative Policy Conference**

Our 2010 State of Black America Report (SOBA) focused a response on the jobs crisis. In the report, we articulated a 6-point job creation plan entitled, *Plan for Putting Americans Back to Work*. As with each SOBA report, this year’s included, our Equality Index, an aggregate measure of the relative status between Blacks and Whites in America, based upon five sub indices: Economics, Education, Health, Social Justice and Civic Engagement. The overall 2010 Equality Index for Black-White comparison stands at 71.8%, compared to last year’s index of 71.2%.

In 2011, we will also focus on the jobs crisis. Our in-depth essays in SOBA, will examine jobs of the future, including green jobs, and the need to ensure that low-income workers have the training necessary to participate in the new job markets. Through our partnerships with LGBT community leaders and organizations, we will have a better understanding of the intersection of job issues on other social justice communities.

Each year, the Policy Institute hosts a 2-3 day Legislative Policy Conference (LPC) in D.C. The mission of the LPC is to raise the visibility of the Urban League movement on Capitol Hill. The LPC provides an opportunity to enhance the relationship between local Urban League affiliates and their Congressional delegations. Through face-to-face meetings affiliate and congressional leaders address the most pressing issues impacting urban communities. Affiliates also receive valuable technical assistance and advocacy training.

During NUL’s 2010 Legislative Policy Conference in March, staff from local Urban League affiliates attended workshops and plenary sessions on a variety of economic empowerment policy issues. Members from Obama’s Cabinet spoke at many sessions. In addition to this, Urban League CEOs and their delegations were briefed on current economic policy related to job creation and financial regulatory reform via the following events:

* A Centennial Jobs Symposium featured members of the Congressional Black Caucus and focused on how the U.S. economy arrived at the present jobs crisis. Members provided their own perspectives on legislative vehicles for creating jobs and stimulating the economy. The event was attended by NUL affiliate CEOs, legislators and the local policy community (March 23, 2010).
* A panel discussion on “Financial Regulatory Reform: What it Means to You”offered insight into the causes and consequences of the financial crisis and how proposed financial regulatory reform will impact communities of color (March 25, 2010).

Next year, LPC will focus on Jobs for America’s Future. We will have the opportunity to invite leaders of the LGBT racial justice community to attend the event. Another major event that will garner input from LGBT leaders is our new Economic Recovery Roundtable series. These discussions will discuss our key economic empowerment issues such as job creation, housing and financial services.

**Communications & Media Strategies**

One of our main communications goals will be to elevate the national discourse regarding the urgent need for policy reforms that benefit low- and moderate-income workers and target job creation in cities where it’s needed most. This may require that we reframe the debate on tax reform and on the national budget deficit. To ensure that our research, policy and advocacy work is noticed in the mainstream progressive movement, we will need to allocate resources to a communications/media staff person.

This person will play an important role in publicizing our partnerships with LGBT groups and our effective coalition work. In addition, we have an opportunity to publicize important data and compelling research to a broad array of stakeholders and constituents. With grant support, the Policy Institute’s fact sheets, written material and original research products will be disseminated widely. We will disseminate the economic recovery, affordable housing, consumer protection, and WIA reform work through multiple platforms including: the *State of Black America* report, online newsletters, stand alone issue reports and “white papers,” email lists, websites ([www.nul.org](http://www.nul.org) and [www.IAMEMPOWERED.org](http://www.IAMEMPOWERED.org)), our State of Urban Jobs microsite, and direct mail to name a few. We will also host Economic Roundtable discussions and salon events that include speakers and invitees from LGBT and racial justice partner organizations.

With appropriate funding and staffing, the Policy Institute plans to develop its own website to ensure easier site navigation and to add new internet tools. We will also update content on website on a frequent basis. The Policy Institute will also increase its number of briefings, presentations, convenings, media partnerships and grassroots organizing to have a deeper impact and to more effectively communicate our advocacy and policy agenda. We plan to conduct speaking engagements at policy conferences, foundation conferences, and at White House meetings. We will also offer expert testimony on Capitol Hill. Through our media relationships, we will seek opportunities for press coverage and appearances on CNN, CNBC, CSPAN, MSNBC, ABC News, and other major media outlets.

**About the National Urban League**

Founded in 1910, the National Urban League is the leading civil rights organization dedicated to empowering African Americans and other minorities to enter the social and economic mainstream. Through a network of 98 separate 501(c )(3) affiliates in 36 states and the District of Columbia, the NUL provides direct services to more than 2.1 million people annually and reaches millions more through its public policy and advocacy efforts, communications and publications.

Headquartered in New York City, the National Urban League is well positioned to achieve its mission to enable African Americans to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power, and civil rights. NUL has developed a five-point social change strategy entitled the “Empowerment Agenda” to bring about its mission by focusing work around the following issues areas: Education and Youth; Economic Empowerment; Health and Quality of Life; Civic Engagement; and Civil Rights and Racial Justice.

In addition to our extensive network of local affiliates, we also partner with numerous organizations to advance the social justice movement. We work closely with the Black Leadership Forum, Congressional Black Caucus and other major civil rights organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Leadership Conference for the NAACP Legal and Educational Defense Fund, the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, the National Council of Negro Women, National Council of La Raza, and the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights under Law.

The National Urban League Policy Institute is the research, policy, publications and advocacy arm of the National Urban League movement. The Policy Institute advances this mission through advocacy, research, policy analysis, legislative education and publications that create a favorable climate for the NUL’s programs and policy positions. We target a broad audience including: policymakers, government officials, community leaders, media, corporations and businesses, the policy community, voters, and the general public. With more than 60 years of experience, our policy office has a long history of attaining positive results that improve services, systems and conditions.