

## Voices of “Fed Up: The National Campaign for a Strong Economy”

[www.WhatRecovery.org](http://www.WhatRecovery.org)

November 2014



### **Shemethia (Cee Cee) Butler, OurDC** (*Washington, D.C.*)

“The numbers aren’t telling the real story. I’m lucky if I’m scheduled to work 30 hours a week. I can’t pay all my bills if I don’t get more hours. And, the Federal Reserve and the Department of Labor count me as employed instead of underemployed. Then there are people who want to work but gave up looking after two or three years. They’re not counted as unemployed either. So when we see that the Black unemployment rate in DC is at 17%, it’s probably higher. I am underemployed. I want to work more. Look at what’s really happening on my street—not just Wall Street.”

### **Kendra Brooks, Organizer, Action United** (*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*)

“I always followed the rules and did everything you should to succeed. I have an MBA and 15 years of management experience, and applied for every job I could, but still couldn’t find anything for a year. I have a job now, but it pays half of what I used to make. According to the American Dream, if you work hard, you see the results. But that’s not true anymore. Not in this economy.”

### **Kati Sipp, Director, Pennsylvania Working Families** (*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*)

“Philadelphia has hovered around 8% unemployment for all of 2014—in the black community, it’s over 14%. Every single day, people walk into my storefront office looking for work. It might feel like we’re in a recovery, if the only thing you’re looking at are stock prices—but for many of our neighborhoods, people are still struggling to find work, or aren’t getting enough hours to make a decent living. We need the Fed to start setting policies that work for residents of 60th Street in Philadelphia, not just for bankers on Wall Street.”

### **Jean Andre, Member, New York Communities for Change** (*New York, New York*)

“Since work dried up after the crash, I fought for five years to get a modification on my mortgage, but I didn’t have enough steady income to work out a plan with my bank to keep me out of foreclosure. The banks are the ones that crashed the economy and made it impossible to find full time work, but they’re the ones who got the bonuses and bailouts while workers and homeowners like me were left to drown.”

### **Amador Rivas, Member, Make the Road New York** (*New York, New York*)

“I came to the United States from Cuba almost twenty years ago. I have worked in factories, bodegas, restaurants and warehouses—all low-wage jobs and I have never received paid sick days or other benefits. After the economic crisis, the banks were bailed out, but life is just as hard for working people because wages have not gone up. It’s a constant struggle for me to pay the rent and to put food on the table. It’s also gotten harder to find full-time work. For the past several years I worked at a bodega for 30 hours a week because I could not find a full-time job. Every day I hear from other Make the Road New York members that they’re in the same situation - working multiple part-time jobs, earning poverty wages, and struggling to support their families. We need an economy that works for working people. We need stable jobs with decent pay and benefits. And we need the Federal Reserve to do its part to achieve that.”

### **Reggie Rounds, Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment** (*St. Louis, Missouri*)

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“How can anyone say that we’re reaching full employment when black unemployment is consistently double national unemployment? If you’re saying it’s time to raise interest rates because we’re at ‘full employment,’ you’re saying that I shouldn’t get a job. You’re saying the people of Ferguson shouldn’t get jobs. All communities—including black communities—deserve a recovery.”

**David Carter, Unitarian Universalist Minister, Kansas People’s Action** (*Wichita, Kansas*)

“One of my congregants, Terry, comes to church every week, he’s intelligent, soft-spoken, and earnest, but he can’t find a job because he has a criminal record. After he couldn’t find work for months, despite doing everything he could, his parole officer forced him to stay in a halfway house, separating him from his two young girls, all because he couldn’t find a job in this economy. There are so many people in my church like Terry who just need an opportunity, but they can’t find one. Accepting the economy as it is would have profound intergenerational effects.”

**Stanley Runnels, Minister, Communities Creating Opportunity** (*Kansas City, Kansas*)

“Each month, the food pantry our church runs serves about 2,125 people in our community. We serve the working poor and the underemployed poor because in this economy, even if you work, you can’t make enough to feed your family. A woman receiving help in our pantry worked a late, 5-hour shift at an upscale grocery store out in the suburbs because it was the only work she could get. She lost her car when she got laid off her previous job, so she had to take the bus to work, but the buses were no longer running by the time her work ended. So she walked about five miles home in the middle of the night at the end of each shift. This woman’s story is common in my community: these are the lengths people will go just pick up a few hours of work. People would much rather have a decent job and pay for their own food than come to our pantry for help, but the economy is just stacked against them. People are willing to work hard; they just want a fair share of the wealth of our economy.”

**Anthony Newby, Director, Minnesota Neighborhoods Organizing for Change** (*Minneapolis, Minnesota*)

“Minnesota has one of the worst employment disparity gaps in the nation - with thousands still out of work and many more only able to find part time work. The economy hasn’t improved in communities of color and we’re often the least prioritized when it comes to federal policy solutions. The Fed needs to respond to the needs of real Americans and NOC is asking Janet Yellen to respond to the needs of our community going forward.”