



July 6, 2010

National Commission for Fiscal Responsibility and Reform
1650 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20504

Dear Members of the National Commission for Fiscal Responsibility and Reform,

Reducing the national debt should not come at the cost of immiserating America's most vulnerable disabled or elderly workers and their survivors, and making the dream of racial equity a mirage receding to the distant future. Our attached Policy Brief, "[Social Security at 75: Building Economic Security, Narrowing the Racial Wealth Divide.](#)" explains the critical importance of Social Security for people of color of all ages, the differences in the usage of the benefits by people of color and whites, and the historic and current racial inequities in Social Security. It recommends ways to reduce inequities, improve adequacy, and promote solvency.

The Insight Center for Community Economic Development's [Closing the Racial Wealth Gap Initiative](#) is a **national effort to close the gap in wealth between people of color and whites**. As part of the Initiative, we have formed the [Experts of Color Network](#), a **national multi-racial and multi-ethnic coalition of over 150 of the leading minds on asset-building from the African American, Asian American, Latino, and Native communities**. Many of our members are some of the foremost experts of issues related to social insurance programs including Social Security.

We believe that wealth (assets minus liabilities) is the best indicator of long-term economic health for individuals and families. Without savings and other financial assets, economic security is a house of cards that can quickly crumble with an unforeseen event such as job loss or a health emergency. Due to historic public policies that have subsidized asset building for white families but not families of color (such as FHA mortgages that red-lined out communities of color), racial wealth disparities are stark: in 2007, data from the Federal Reserve showed that the average family of color had only 16 cents of wealth for every dollar held by the average white family. A [study](#) released by the Institute on Assets and Social policy in May of 2010 showed that the wealth gap between black and white families **quadrupled** over one generation between 1984 and 2007.

It is no wonder then, that Social Security is a lifeline for so many Americans of color. **Representatives from the Closing the Racial Wealth Gap Initiative's national coalition of experts request the opportunity to address the Fiscal Commission directly on Social Security reform, within the context of the deficit.** The author of the brief and our Washington DC liaison Maya Rockeymoore, President and CEO of Global Policy Solutions (copied here) will follow up with you shortly.

Thank you for your interest and attention.

Sincerely,

Meizhu Lui, Director,
Closing the Racial Wealth Initiative
Insight Center for Community Economic Development