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“Hot, Jobless Summer for NYC’s Young People of Color”

Statement By David R. Jones, CEO and President of the Community Service Society

Today’s news on the nation’s unemployment situation was worse than expected-- the unemployment rate ticked up to 9.1 percent in May and job growth came in at 54,000, only one-quarter the level for April.

For urban areas with large numbers of people of color these figures do not bode well; the unemployment rate for young people of color, especially young African American and Latino men, remains consistently and significantly higher than for everyone else, including white youth. For example, while the overall unemployment rate in the U.S. last year was 9.6 percent, for young black men 16-24 years old it was 34 percent-- more than three times higher than for everyone else, and more than double the unemployment rate for white youth.

In New York City the approaching summer will be a difficult time for young people of color to compete for jobs, especially those who have left school without a diploma and have little or no work experience. There are approximately 173,000 disconnected youth in the city— 16-24 year olds who are neither in school nor in the labor force. About 70 percent are either African American or Latino. For this demographic competing in the labor market this summer will be especially tough; last summer the country experienced the lowest share of 16-24 year olds employed in nearly 60 years. And for young people without a high school diploma the outlook may be dire; the unemployment rate for New York City’s young black men 16-24 years old without a high school diploma reached over 50 percent through the middle of last year.

Programs to deal with high levels of detachment from the city’s labor force for disenfranchised young people of color are in appallingly short supply. Workforce development programs in the city serve youth in the thousands, but we need them to serve in the hundreds of thousands. General Educational Development (GED) programs for those

who lack a high school diploma are in distressingly short supply. To make matters worse, the city's annual "Summer Youth Employment Program" has been scaled back by nearly half—last year approximately 36,000 slots were offered, but this year only about 20,000 will be, while applications are expected to number well over 100,000. Because of these policy failures it will be a long, hot, jobless summer for many of our most vulnerable youth.

We call on the Governor, Mayor, state lawmakers, City Council members and leaders in our city to recognize that budgetary decisions that ignore the problems associated with disconnected youth are irresponsible.

We need to re-invest in programs that reconnect this segment of our community to educational and skills-based employment opportunities. If those with the ability to make appropriate policy changes forfeit their responsibility, the risk of a "lost generation" will be at hand. The long-term negative consequences could pose a real threat to the city's viability as a place where all New Yorkers, irrespective of their social and economic background, can live, work and contribute to society.

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For 165 years, the [Community Service Society of New York](#) has been the leading voice on behalf of low-income New Yorkers and continues to advocate for the economic security of the working poor in the nation's largest city.