

# Project Team

**THE CENTER FOR URBAN PEDAGOGY (CUP)** is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, particularly among historically underrepresented communities.

**CITY STUDIES** are CUP's project-based in-class and afterschool programs that use design and art as tools to research the city. To learn more about CUP, visit [welcometoCUP.org](http://welcometoCUP.org).

**CUP TEACHING ARTIST AND PROJECT LEAD:** Jenn Anne Williams  
**PROJECT SUPPORT:** Valeria Mogilevich

**INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL (ICHS)** is a progressive public school for English Language Learners in the South Bronx. To learn more about ICHS, visit [ichs.weebly.com](http://ichs.weebly.com).

**CLASSROOM TEACHER:** Ahassan Susso  
**COMMUNITY COORDINATOR:** Yadira Echevarria  
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After learning more about **MINIMUM WAGE** and the self-sufficiency standard, students examined how income is distributed, questioned the pay gap, and envisioned how economics could be different.



Currently about 80 people have 1/2 of all the money in the United States. Those few income earners make up only 1% of the population.

As the top 1%, I would make over \$380,000 per year. According to trickle down economics, the more money I make the more jobs I will create and may pay my employees more. That doesn't always happen.

If the government increases the minimum wage, according to middle-out economics, employees who make more will spend more to stimulate the economy.

Income inequality has been growing since the 1970s.

1 in 4 NYC residents lives in poverty.

Half of the United States wealth is shared by 318.9 million people. Would increasing the minimum wage create more balance, moving the US towards income equality?

If I want things to change, what can I do?

Let the government know your opinion by contacting the New York State Governor at [www.governor.ny.gov/contact/GovernorContactForm.php](http://www.governor.ny.gov/contact/GovernorContactForm.php) Find events where you can speak with members of Congress at [www.accountablecongress.com](http://www.accountablecongress.com)

If you need financial support, visit [www.mybenefits.ny.gov](http://www.mybenefits.ny.gov) to find out what benefits you may be eligible for and to apply online.

Other government policies that can help a minimum wage worker:  
 -Tax reforms  
 -Access to great education for everyone  
 -Invest in workers' rights organizations





**MINIMUM WAGE** has been a hot topic since President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the first national minimum hourly pay in 1938. Over 75 years later we're still debating the value of a paycheck. Is minimum wage enough to live on? Should the government continue to increase the current rate?

In the Spring of 2015, CUP teaching artist Jenn Anne Williams worked with Mr. Athasson Susso's Economics class at the International Community High School in the Bronx to explore whether the government should be involved in income equality.

To investigate, students attempted to balance a monthly minimum wage paycheck, went into the neighborhood to survey community members on their opinions, and participated in a live debate. This is what they discovered.



The first minimum wage was only 25¢ an hour! What is the minimum wage now?



The federal minimum wage has increased 23 times to reach its current rate of \$7.25 per hour, but tipped workers like waiters make less, at \$2.13.



In NYC, minimum wage is \$8.75 an hour, with tipped workers earning \$5. Is this enough to pay for all the things I want and need?



That's only \$16,800 per year if I work 5 days a week. \$MTWTF\$

A minimum wage employee working a typical 40 hour work week makes about \$1,400 a month before taxes are taken out.



After I pay for my monthly metrocard, food, rent, gas plus electric bills, and other costs, I'm lucky if I have any money left from my paycheck.



I'm thankful that I have a job when there are many people still unemployed, but I will ever get a raise?



There is a current proposal in the New York City Council to increase the minimum wage to \$11.50 per hour by 2016.



Our neighbors agreed the increase would be great, but there were still some concerns.



Even if minimum wage stays the same, is it equal to a living wage?

Will the increase lead to higher product prices? Will small businesses be able to pay employees this new amount? Will businesses and jobs leave NYC to places where the minimum wage is less?

CHS



A living wage is based off of the self-sufficiency or the needs to pay for his or her basic needs. What is it in New York?



A single adult in New York needs to earn at least \$32,350 per year. That's \$15,550 more than what a minimum wage worker currently earns in a year. Why hasn't the government kept up with the living wage?

Congress may set the minimum wage, but it doesn't keep pace with the increased cost of living.

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Should it be the government's responsibility to create a minimum wage that equals a living wage? Does everyone have an equal opportunity to achieve the 'American Dream' to succeed? Is hard work enough?

Are there other things that could be improved to help a minimum wage worker?