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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

# What Has Happened to the American Working Class Since the Great Recession ?

**January 11-12 , 2021**

A conference hosted by IRP and AEI

For an ANNALS volume sponsored by AAPSS and edited by  
Jennie Romich, Tim Smeeding and Mike Strain

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# Welcome to the Project and the Conference

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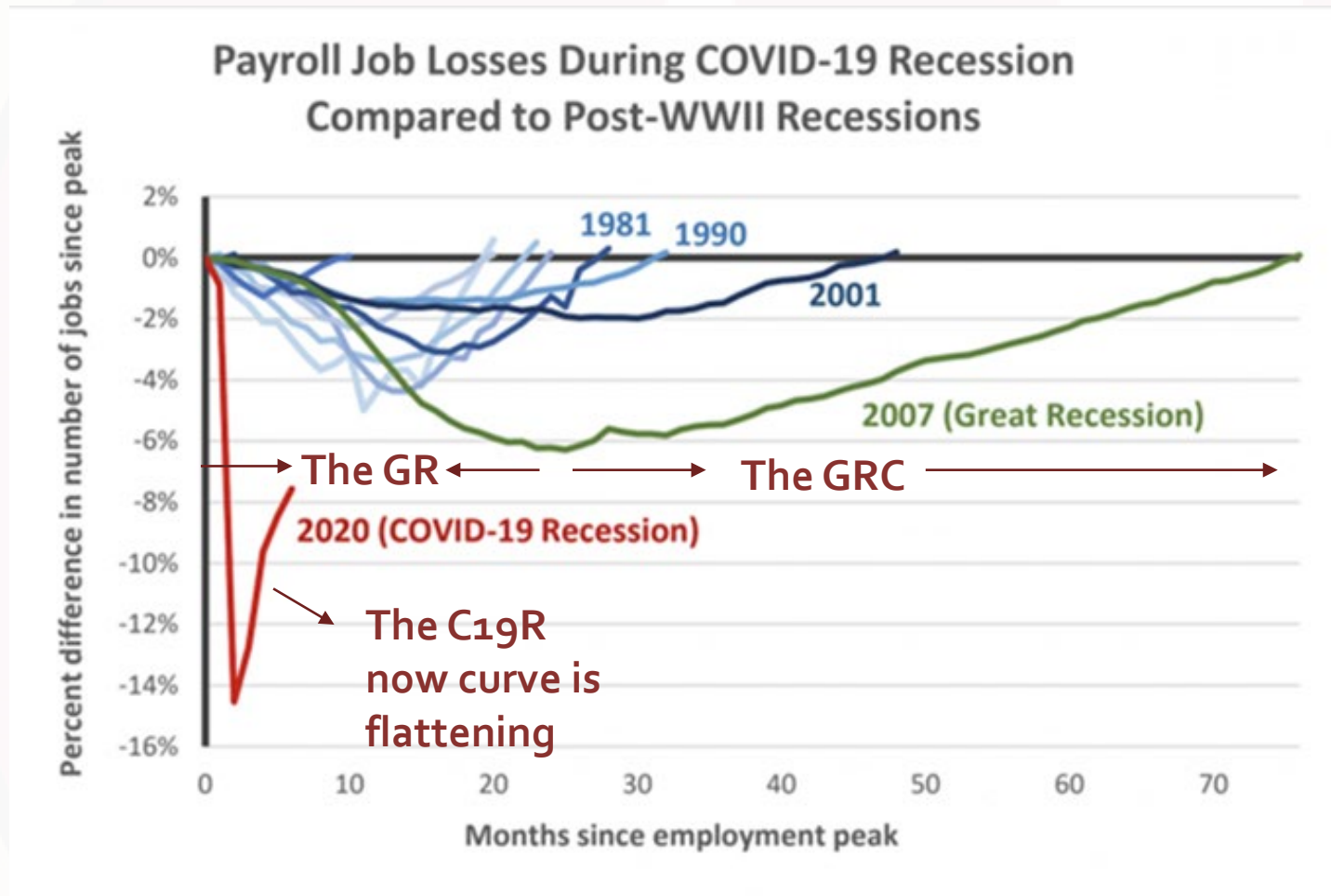
- In late 2019, we started with a question: "What Has Happened to the American Working Class Since the Great Recession? "
- The conference and volume of ANNALS was prompted at that time by the longest post war recovery extant, from July 2009 to October 2019 and then counting, more than 10 years of recovery
- We signed up a great list of authors and papers
- And then things happened: Covid, failed meetings, an election, and the conference and ANNALS volume took on new meaning

# Three key periods in recent American economic life

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- The **Great Recession (GR)** December 2007- June, 2009
- The long **Great Recovery (GRC)** July, 2009- February 2020
- The **COVID-19 Recession (C19R)** March 2020- January 2021 (and continuing )
- We began with trying to capture the GRC and the effects of low unemployment on the working class, not knowing when it would end
- We ended with a challenge to contrast two recessions– the CR and the C19R (see diagram next ) that surrounded the GRC

# Recessions and Expansions



Source: Erica Groshen –ILR Cornell and BLS

# The Conference and Papers

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- Start with 3 broad overviews ( macro, labor market, material well-being )
- Focus in on population outcomes for key groups: workers by education levels; criminal systems involvement; disability; Native Americans; Black workers; wealth groups; Latinx and immigrants
- Focus on institutions: employer practices and worker protections; labor market institutions; income support systems; workforce training and CTE
- Focus on pockets of success and distress: opioids ; communities advancing and not so much
- Have two reaction papers adding policy perspectives to the papers presented

# What questions can be answered ?

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- Who benefited / did not ,and by how much, from the GRC which had a long ,slow, swing upward and then an abrupt end ?
- Who was helped/hurt by the GR, the GRC, and the C19R ?
- If the GR was a “man –cession”, is the C19R is a “woman-cession” ?
- Note the differences between relative progress/regress and absolute progress/regress for various groups
- Is C19R a continuation or acceleration of advantages flowing to higher educated and White workers ?

--- And more as suggested by the papers --

# Thanks to

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- Our sponsors (IRP, ASPE, AEI and especially AAPSS)
- DD ( Dawn Duren) and MM ( Maryanna Mitchell ), always there
- Our IRP-ASPE Employment Self Sufficiency Network (ESS) which brought the three editors together
- Our Authors (who in almost all cases stayed with us, even changing jobs, institutions, and dealing with changing responsibilities along the way )
- Now on with the show !