



# Nonprofits and the Common Good

Presented by:



**Speaker: Kim Klein**

A project of CompassPoint and Building  
Movement Project

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

# The Common Good

The common good means the social systems, institutions, and environments on which we all depend work for the benefit all living things and the earth itself.



# A common good frame

Defines our work:

“Our job is to create a society in which it is easy to be good.” (Peter Maurin)

Allows us to say:

“Some things are not for sale”

“ People are more important than profit”

Calls us to define healthy communities in terms of:

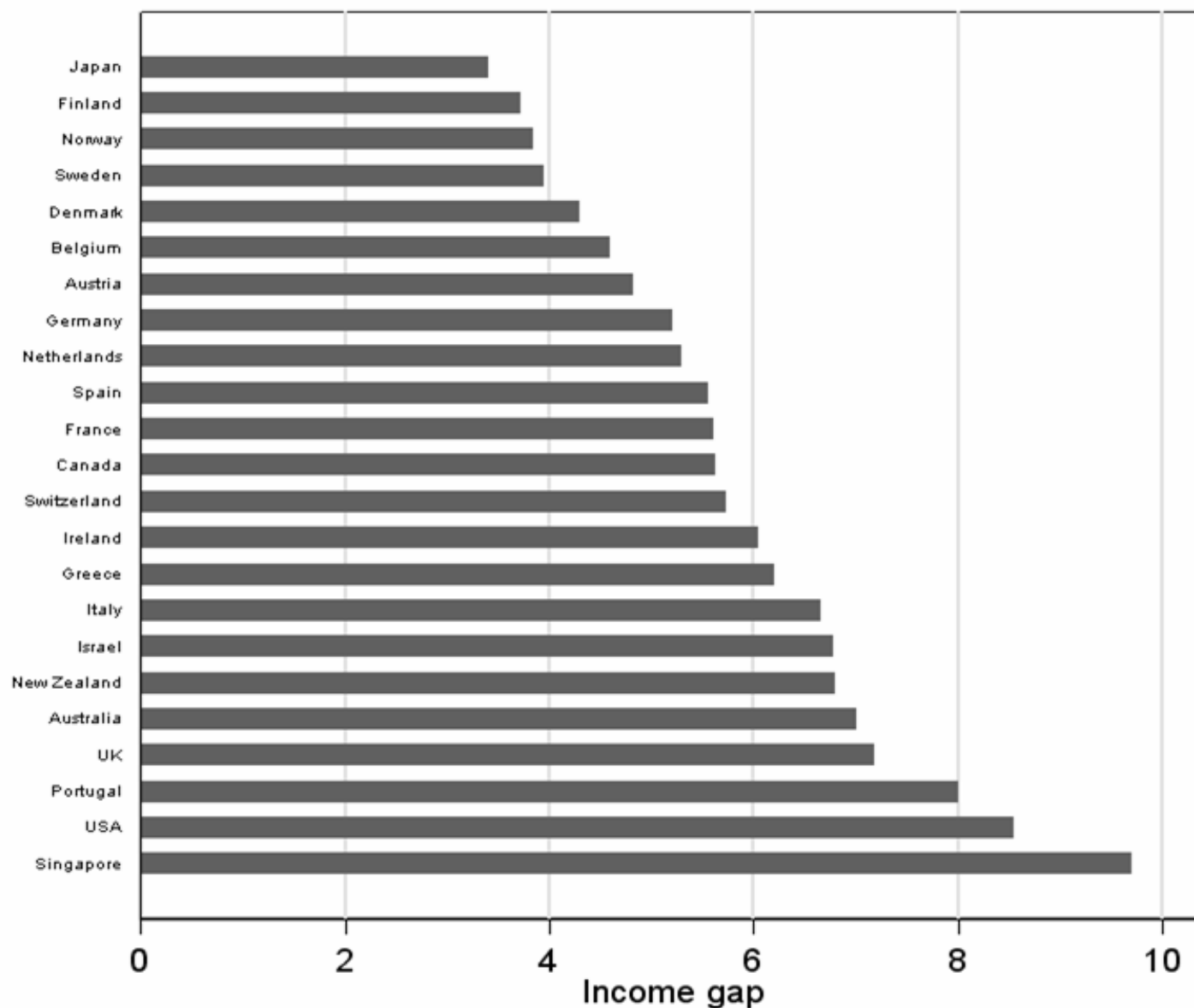
Happiness, trust, community participation

Rough social equity

# **Nonprofits are part of the common good**

- **But we are also stewards of the common good**
- **Our job is to raise questions of the common good and to suggest solutions based in the common good.**
- **This must drive our strategic planning, our fundraising and our goals.**

## How much richer are the richest 20% than the poorest 20%?

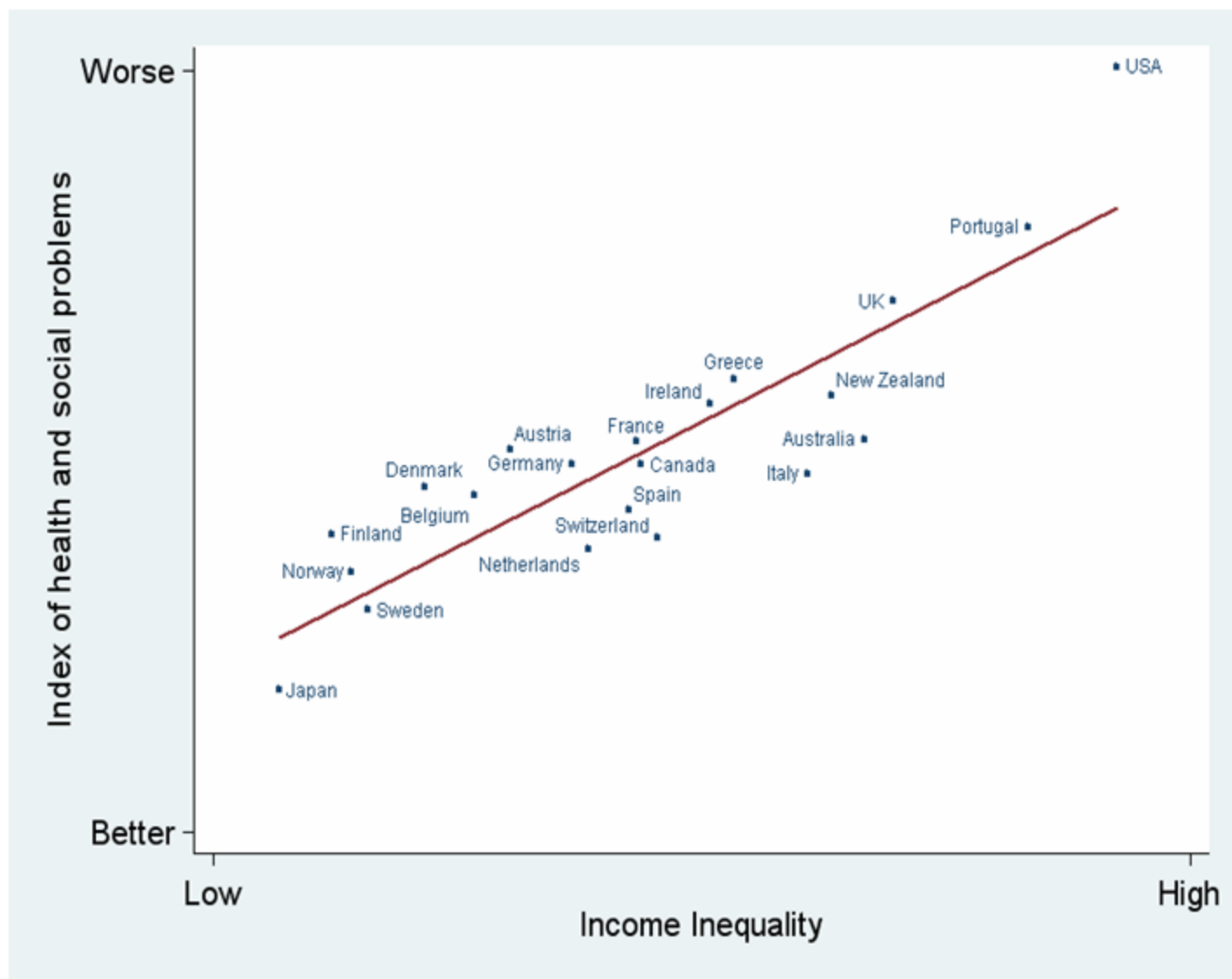


Source: United Nations Development Program [www.nonprofitstalkingtaxes.org](http://www.nonprofitstalkingtaxes.org)

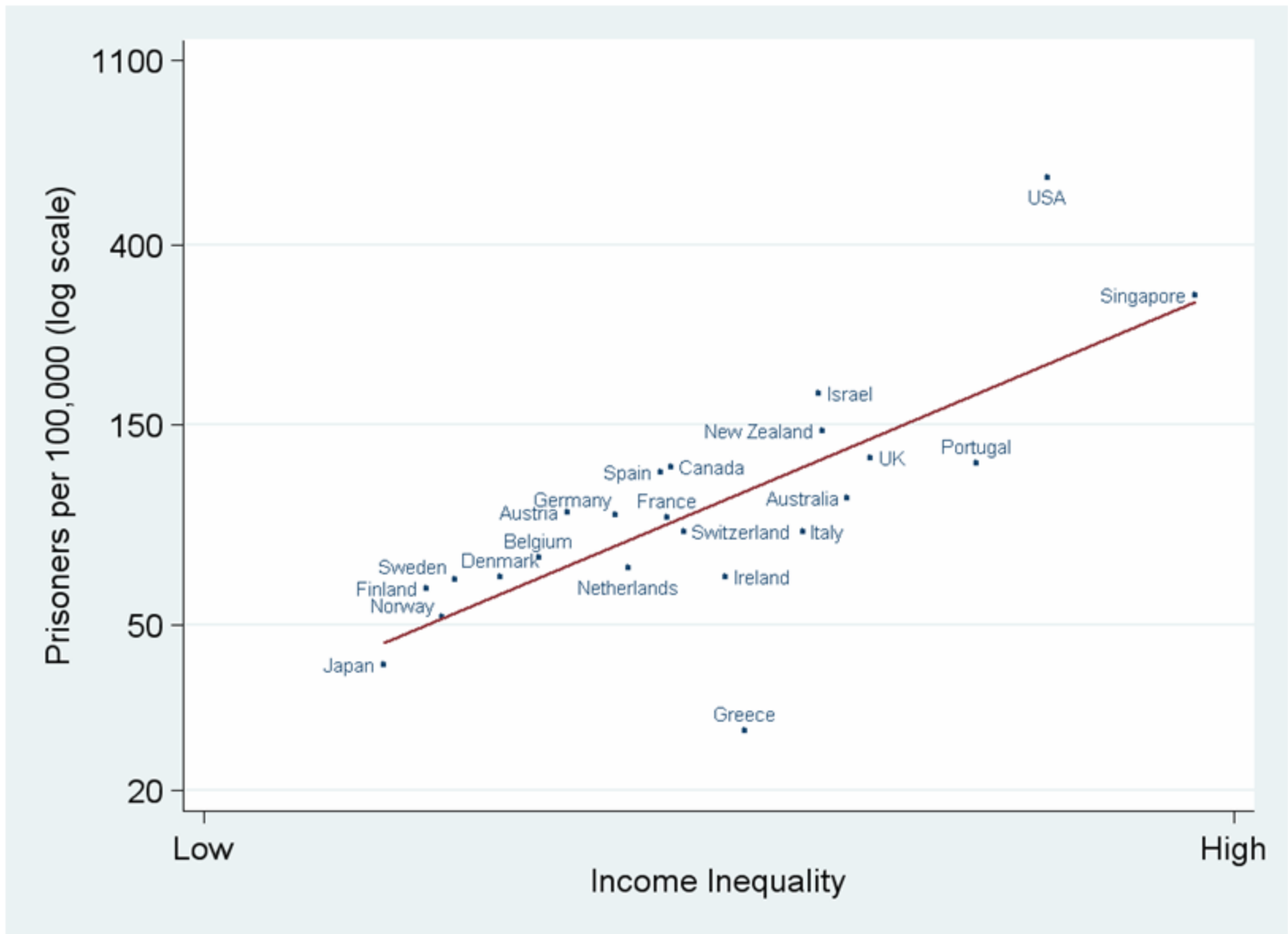
# Health and Social Problems are Worse in More Unequal Countries

## Index of:

- Life expectancy
- Math & Literacy
- Infant mortality
- Homicides
- Imprisonment
- Teenage births
- Trust
- Obesity
- Mental illness – incl. drug & alcohol addiction
- Social mobility



# Rates of Imprisonment are Higher in More Unequal Countries



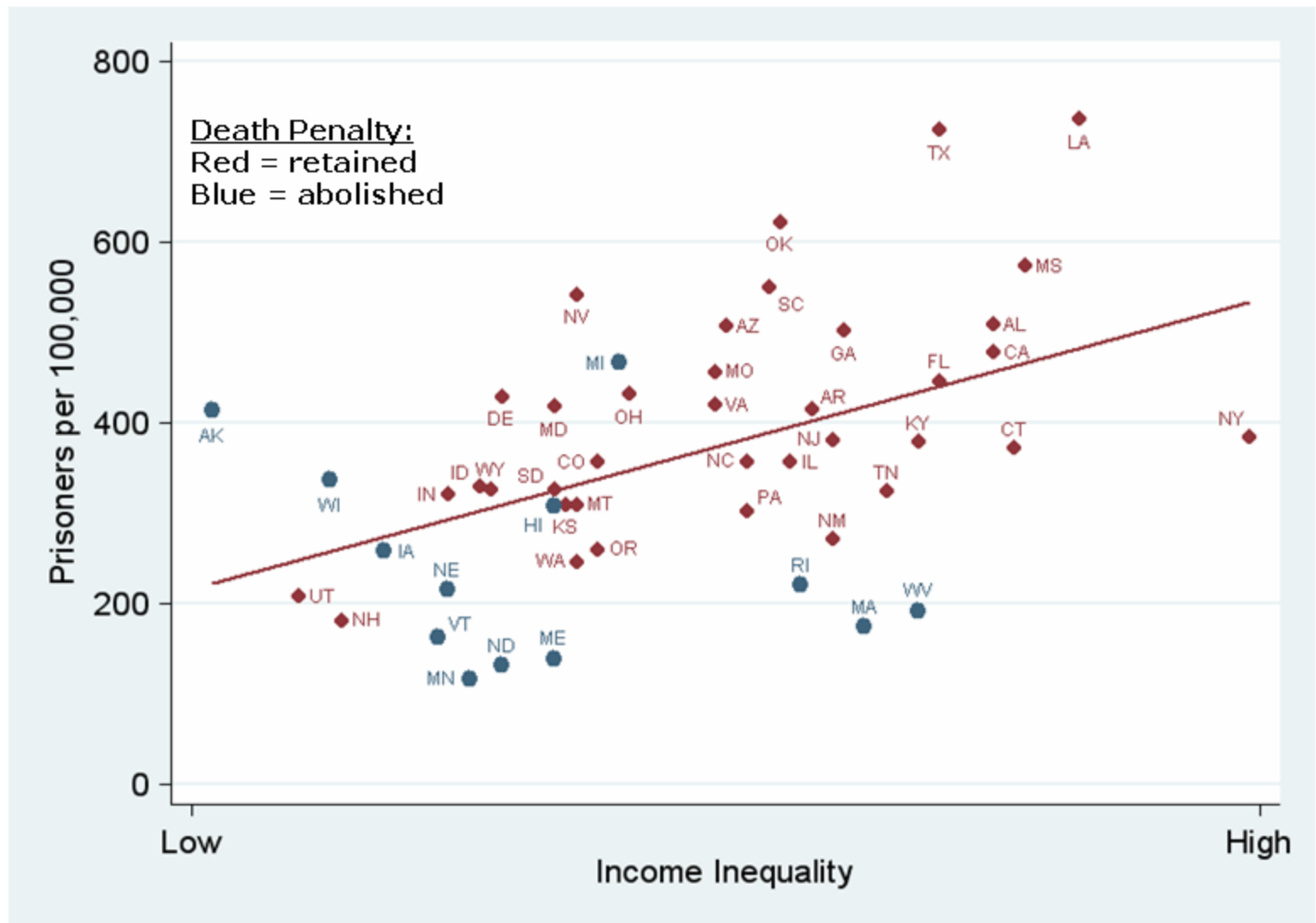
[www.nonprofitstalkingtaxes.org](http://www.nonprofitstalkingtaxes.org)

Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009)

[www.equalitytrust.org.uk](http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk)

The Equality Trust

## Rate of Imprisonment are Higher in More Unequal US States



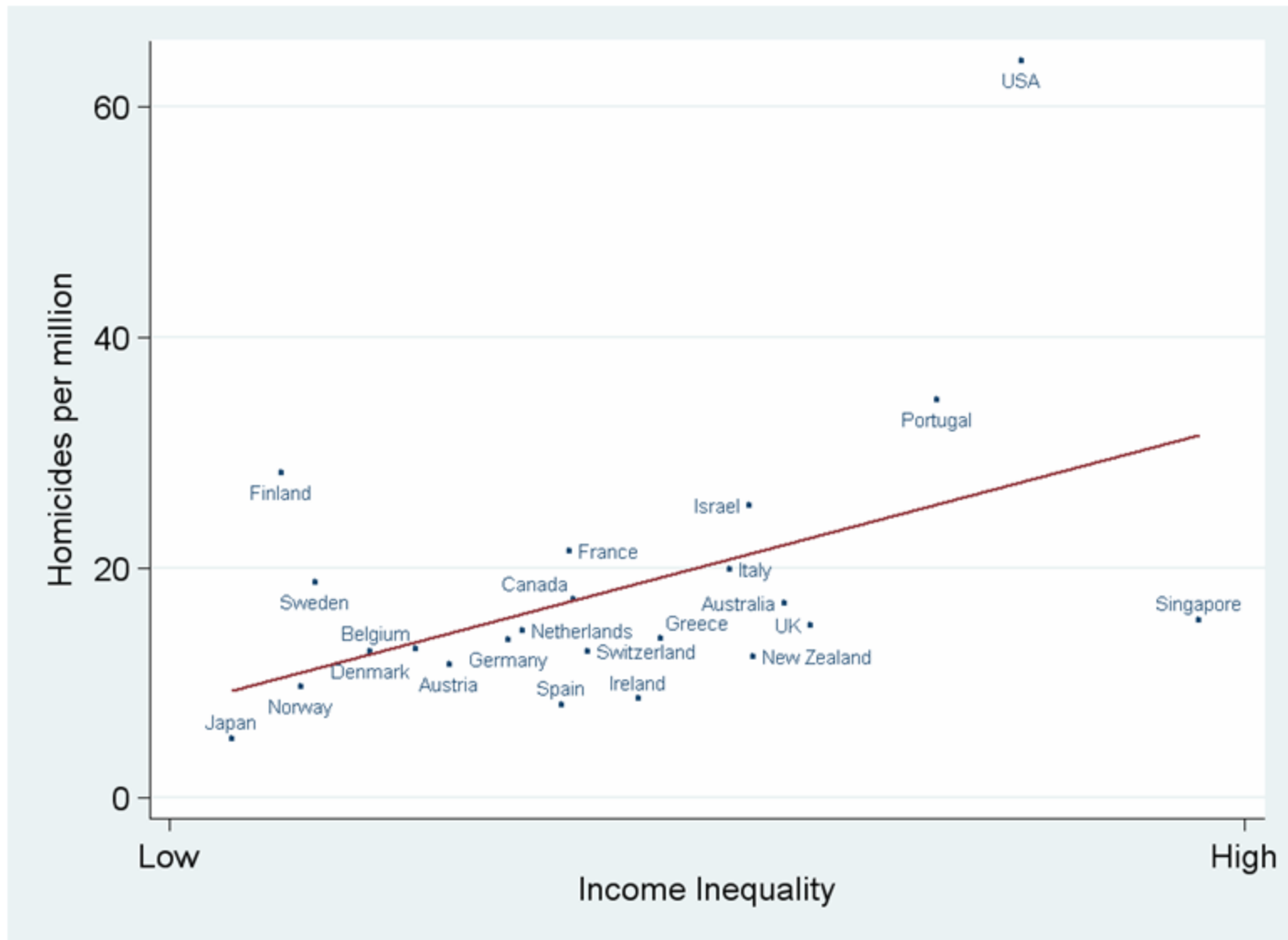
[www.nonprofitstalkingtaxes.org](http://www.nonprofitstalkingtaxes.org)

Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009)

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Equality Trust

# Homicide Rates are Higher in More Unequal Rich Countries



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

Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009)

[www.equalitytrust.org.uk](http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk)

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## Homicide Rates are Higher in More Unequal US States



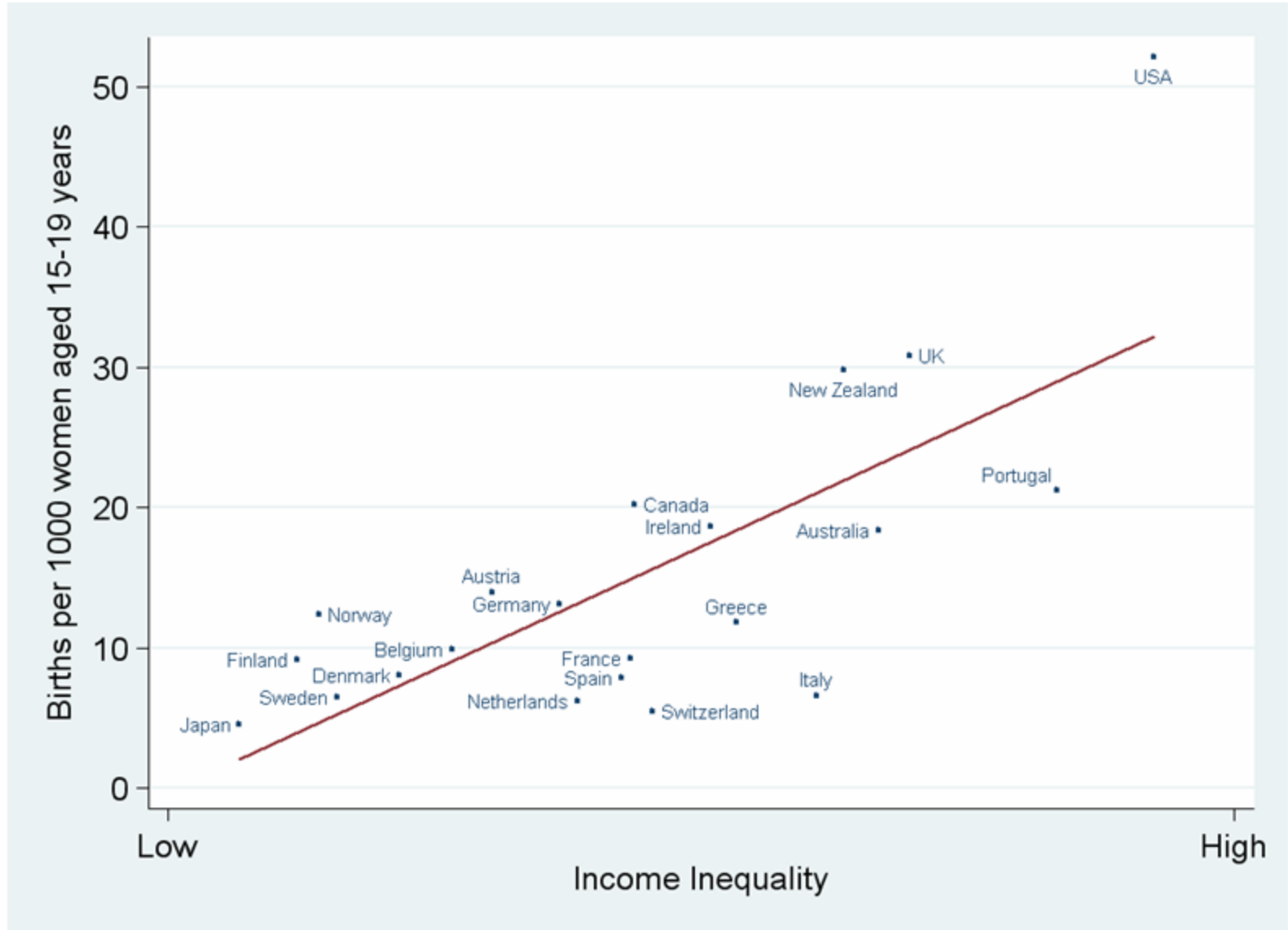
[www.nonprofitstalkingtaxes.org](http://www.nonprofitstalkingtaxes.org)

Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009)

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Equality Trust

# Teenage Birth Rates are Higher in More Unequal Rich Countries



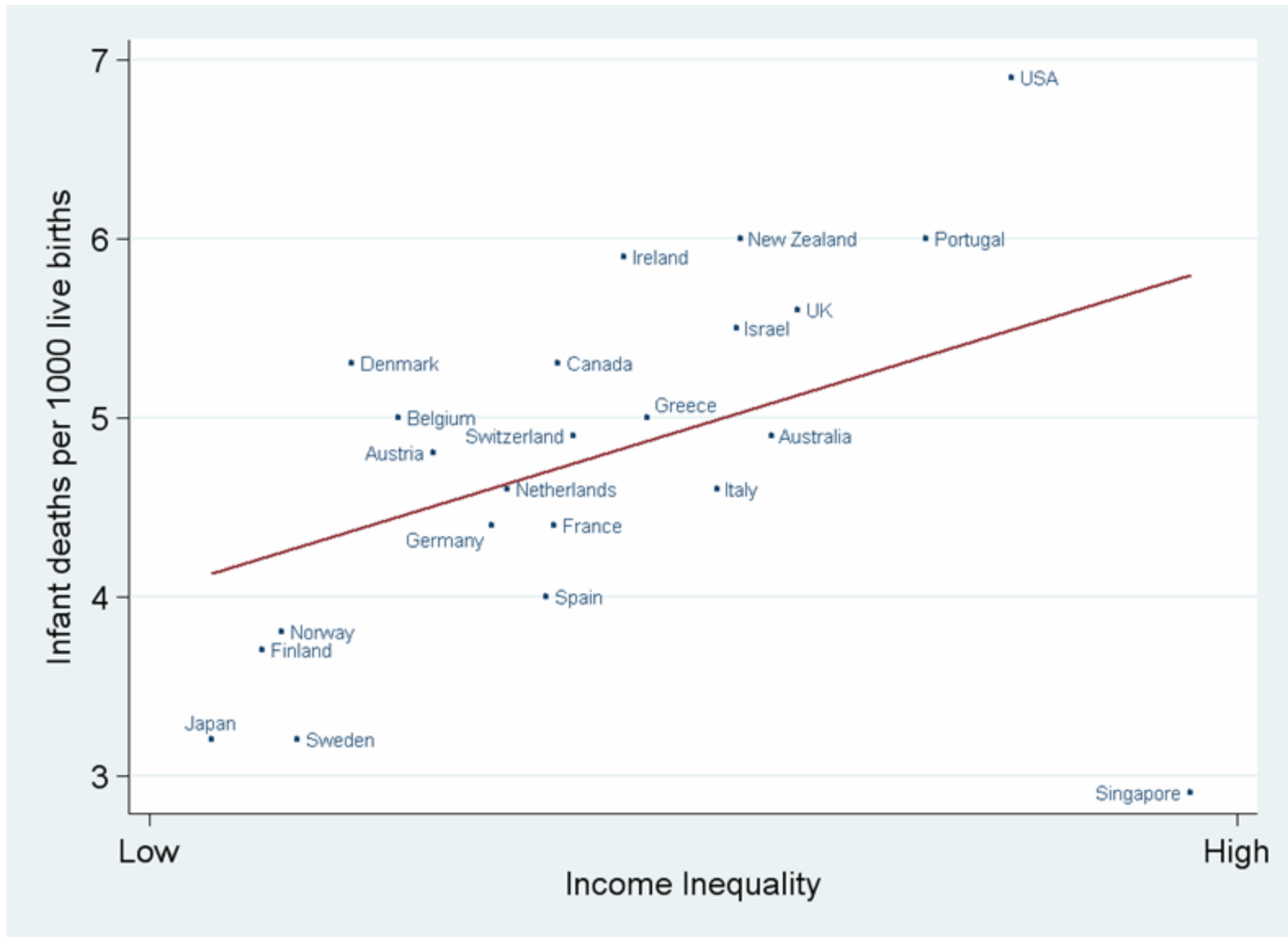
[www.nonprofitstalkingtaxes.org](http://www.nonprofitstalkingtaxes.org)

Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009)

[www.equalitytrust.org.uk](http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk)

The Equality Trust

# Infant Mortality Rates are Higher in More Unequal Countries



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

Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009)

[www.equalitytrust.org.uk](http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk)

The Equality Trust

# Life Expectancy is Longer in More Equal Rich Countries



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

Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009)

[www.equalitytrust.org.uk](http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk)

The Equality Trust

**In California,  
this is what we see:**



- **31% high school drop-out rate**
- **6.7 million people with NO health insurance\***
- **5 of the most polluted cities in the United States**

\* Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute analysis of the U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, March 2009 Supplement. American Lung Association  
[www.nonprofitstalkingtaxes.org](http://www.nonprofitstalkingtaxes.org)

**AND**

**We become:**



**48<sup>th</sup> in education, but**

**4<sup>th</sup> in the size of our prison system**

**(in the world)**

**In fact, in 23 years we built 23 prisons and one  
University of California extension.**

***Does this reflect our values?***

# What is True Now

**“Economic growth, for so long the great engine of progress, has, in the rich countries, largely finished its work. Further improvements in the quality of life now depend on community and how we relate to each other.”**

**The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality  
Makes Societies Stronger**

**(Pickett and Wilkinson)**

# Reducing Income Inequality

**If the USA could reduce income inequality to the average of the four most equal countries (Japan, Norway, Sweden and Finland):**

- Mental illness would be cut by 66%**
- Teenage birthrate would fall by 50%**
- Prison populations would shrink 75%**
- We would work 2 months less per year for the same wages and better benefits**



“Power concedes nothing without a struggle”

-Frederick Douglass

# What Can Nonprofits Do?



# Understand our influence



# The Nonprofit Sector Nationally

- 1.6 million nonprofit organizations generate:

\$1.4 trillion per year in income from:

- Government : 30%
- Earned Income: 50%
- Private Sector: 20%

*The private sector includes gifts from living individuals, gifts from bequests and gifts and grants from foundations and corporations*

# Aggregate Our Power

**California has 2<sup>nd</sup> largest nonprofit workforce in the USA**

**112,000 nonprofits generate:**

- **\$160 billion per year**
- **Employ 10% of workforce, or about 1.3 million people**



# Form A Collective Identity

Work across issues:

- Arts organizations support social services
- Health orgs support education
- Environment supports job creation
- Housing supports animal welfare

We all become the “Common Good Lobby”



# **Elevate Common Good Values**

**Add questions to all evaluations about how the common good is being considered.**

**Make common good practice part of “best practice”**

**Make sure the common good is one of the questions used to determine new programs and their outcomes**

# What Can You and Your Organization DO?

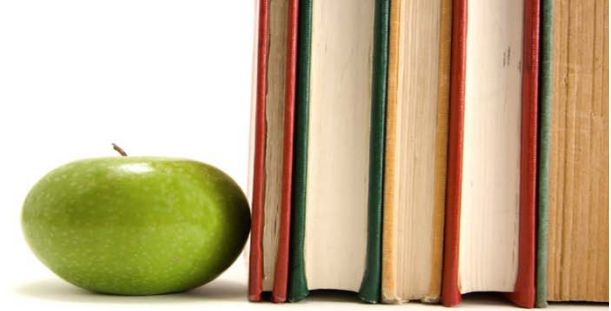
YOU



YOUR ORGANIZATION



# Some examples



- Nonprofits in a rural community agree to keep their Post Office open by buying all their stamps there and not ordering on-line
- “Little Free Library:” promoting the idea of libraries by having micro libraries in neighborhoods
- Create “Buy Local” directories and encourage nonprofits to buy local

# The Common Good Must be a Common Conversation



“er...  
swing vote in the bitter election battle  
now being waged between our best and  
our worst possibilities.”

Leonard Peltier

# Lead Commons Discussions

Retirement Age: how about lowering it to 60, with full benefits. Result: full employment. (James K. Galbraith)

Voting: how about making it mandatory?

Result: 99% turnout, realization of people who normally don't vote that voting makes a difference

Property tax: how about making it higher on neglected properties, and decreasing when properties are maintained and used?

Result: Clean up of poor communities, converting abandoned buildings to housing, vacant lots to parks, etc.

# Discuss Issues Affecting NPs

- **The Charitable Tax Deduction:** should we have it when only people who itemize can take advantage of it?
- **The Estate Tax:** a tax that distinguishes aristocracies from democracies. Should it exist at all? How high should it be?
- **Foundation Pay Out Rate:** currently foundations must spend 5% of their assets every year. Should this be higher? Should the 5% be grants only?

# Discuss the Importance of Voting

**VOTER REGISTRATION**



**VOTER EDUCATION**



**GETTING OUT THE VOTE**



# Understand that tax policy is a mirror of values



# Where do I start?

1. Set up a free workshop at your workplace-  
[www.nonprofitstalkingtaxes.org](http://www.nonprofitstalkingtaxes.org)

2. Join the Conversation Online:

[www.facebook.com/npstalkingtaxesCA](http://www.facebook.com/npstalkingtaxesCA)

3. Follow us on Twitter: NPsTalkingTaxes

4. Recommend places we can give this workshop:

[npstalkingtaxes@compasspoint.org](mailto:npstalkingtaxes@compasspoint.org)

Remember, it's free and it can be tailored to the time available!

# More Resources

Alliance for Justice: [www.afj.org](http://www.afj.org)

Building Movement Project:

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

California Budget Project: [cpb.org](http://cpb.org)

California Participation Project: [caparticipates.org](http://caparticipates.org)

On the Commons: [www.onthecommons.org](http://www.onthecommons.org)

Too Much: [www.toomuchonline.org](http://www.toomuchonline.org)

Equality Trust [www.equalitytrust.org.uk](http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk)

CompassPoint: [www.compasspoint.org](http://www.compasspoint.org)

National Priorities Project: [www.npp.org](http://www.npp.org)