



Cal State San Bernardino event to focus on poverty



Author and journalist Sasha Abramsky will be the keynote speaker at the March 11 Poverty Symposium at Cal State San Bernardino. COURTESY

By **Michel Nolan**, *The Sun*

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Some of the finest minds in the Inland Empire will tackle the issue of poverty in our area next week at Cal State San Bernardino.

The 2016 Poverty Symposium on March 11 will feature a veritable think tank of experts to take an in-depth look at poverty and strategies that have proven effective.

Hosted by Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County, the daylong event features author and journalist Sasha Abramsky as the keynote speaker.

Following his presentation are six workshops led by expert panel members including Rep. Pete Aguilar, D-San Bernardino; Assemblywoman Cheryl Brown, D-San Bernardino; San Bernardino County District Attorney Mike Ramos; Time for Change Executive Director Kim Carter; and Ted Alejandre, San Bernardino County Schools superintendent.

“We have a great lineup and our keynote speaker is a passionate humanitarian,” said Marlene Merrill, CAPSEC spokeswoman.

“Panelists will talk about poverty in this area and what programs they are familiar with that would help – we are targeting people who have a say in what programs get funded – we have the need here,” she added.

They plan to discuss what infrastructure has to take place to work on barriers that keep people from achieving economic stability, Marlene told me.

The symposium, which takes place from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the Santos Manuel Student Union on campus, begins with keynote speaker Abramsky, a graduate of Oxford University, with a master’s degree from Columbia University School of Journalism.

He is the author of several thought-provoking books on poverty and other social issues.

Following his talk is the general morning session with an expert panel presentation on Economic Security, moderated by Rialto Mayor Deborah Robertson.

Discussion topics include homelessness, affordable housing, employment services, and affordable childcare.

“We’re putting all the issues in the forefront – we want to remind them the whole community suffers when there is so much poverty,” Marlene said.

The afternoon session includes five workshops with expert panel presenters. Symposium attendees will have the opportunity to choose two workshops:

- Food Security
- Health Services
- Criminal Justice
- Education
- Children/Youth Services

Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County is a nonprofit that provides programs and services to more than 800,000 low-income individuals and families to help lift them out of poverty.

The Community Action Partnership Food Bank helped with food assistance in 385,418 households in 2015, but the need exceeds the resources, according to Marlene.

The Poverty Symposium is free to attend, however, seating is limited to first registered, first served. Optional box lunch is available for \$15.

Organizers ask that community members RSVP by Friday. Cal State is at 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino. For more information, contact Marlene Merrill at 909-723-1517; or Delphine Galba-Bright at 909-723-1514; or go to

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www.capsbc.org/2016PovertySymposium.html.

After the symposium, Marlene said they will ask participants for commitment to work on the issues.

I think we’ll all be looking forward to their ideas.

Michel Nolan appears in *The Sun* on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. Reach her at michel.nolan@lannews.com or on Twitter @MichelNolan.

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