

What is Poverty

By definition it is an inability to provide a family with nutritious food, clothing and reasonable clothing.

The Structural and Cultural causes of poverty

Structural causes :

Most poverty according to supporters of the structural school of thought should be traced to some structural factors that is inherent to the economy and several institutional environment which tend to favor certain groups over others. This is usually based on race , class or gender, among the various institutional environment that tend to sustain a multitude of economic barriers to different groups, it is the discrimination based on race or gender that has the most insidious obstructions. Due to a patriarchal society, poverty amongst women is very evident , due to this the rise of poverty among women is an important structural level variable to consider.

Race also is one variable, discrimination against blacks is also quite evident. It is very evident on the economic disparity, it is clearly seen when one views the data on white and black median income, the percentile of the black median income relative to the white income in 1947 was 51%. In the year 2002 the figure has risen to only 62%(US census 2002). In 1993 Massey and Denton argued that in general institutional racism and residential segmentation in particular is very much indeed a critical structural level cause of severe poverty in the black community. Very clearly racial prejudice not only emanate from institutional racism but rather reinforces it, therefore it has sustain the barrier that prohibit or bar other non white Americans and blacks from shedding the idiosyncratic cultural adaptations that they have made to live and survive with.

Cultural causes:

It is believed that individuals are not to be blamed for their poverty but rather the individuals belief , attitude , values and general patterns of behavior are what causes their poverty, if not it is what keeps them in their poverty. Oscar Lewis an anthropologist working in slum areas and shanty towns in South America came up with this theory after he observed that people in this environment realized that they exhibited quite a different culture, these people held an attitude of fatality (it is their belief that it is hopeless to try and improve their situations) these people also have a present time orientation (they only live for today instead of for tomorrow) due to this characteristics this people are likely to see education as their way out of poverty these people also does not see the point of saving money and according to Lewis this are some of the cultural reasons why the poor keeps their state of poverty.

Why do we have poverty in America :

Several views and arguments come up in providing an in depth analysis as to why there is poverty in the United States.

The first view is poverty varies over time and place , to be poor in the 12th century is not the same as today , and the standards that that will constitute being poor in the United States is not the same as other developing countries.

The second view is poverty persistence in the United States reflects more than just and aggregation of individual failures, the way we understand and define poverty , features that are inherent in our economic system that produces social equities, income equities are some of the structural factors.

The third view is, the shift in family structure is not the most important factoring explaining trends in American poverty rates. Economic changes such as economic growth and

income in equality has the strongest association in overall rates regardless of how we measure poverty.

The fourth view is , the policies against anti poverty is a small part of the federal budget and has a minimal and moderate impact on poverty.

Why do people who work full time still live in poverty :

Some 10 million Americans are still in poverty despite the fact that they work. It is quite ironic that work should pay and people who works should stand up to the society on their own, the 3 key reasons why people who work full time are still in poverty.

1. Low Earnings: the biggest single cause for poverty is low wage work, with below poverty earnings
2. Involuntary part time work : although everybody wants a full time job with full pay check majority only find part time work and due to this majority falls below the poverty line.
3. Unemployment : job loss or failure to find a job will definitely be a reason why one falls in poverty

Should working full time assure that you don't live in poverty , and what is it culturally and structurally in the United states assure you that a full time worker could escape poverty :

If we are ask the question “ is employment the answer to poverty “ the answer is both yes and no. Why ? Employment will reduce an individuals dependence on government benefits , however it does not necessarily improve the individuals well being. For a nation where there were 4.8 million who worked full time jobs. last year 8 million poor people lived in a household that has 1 or 2 who was fully employed throughout the year. It is difficult to relate personal earnings to poverty for it is dependent on the individuals family income and family size, it is not

rare to find a person that earns a minimum wage who is not poor if he lives alone, however this same individual would be poor if the entire family depended on him for their day to day existence. In the American society the fundamental problem is that work doesn't often pay enough to keep people out of poverty or in kind are necessary to make ends meet , many jobs that are in our society really pay less

In conclusion in order to arrest this problem following recommendations are suggested :

1. Increase in minimum wage should be taken, since the minimum wage has fallen way behind the average wage.
2. Employment and training programs can definitely help and is really very important since these programs help individuals qualify for better jobs and higher incomes.
3. Safety net programs should be carefully studied , programs such as Medicaid , food stamps , welfare and earned tax credits to name a few will only worsen the situation since it will create a culture of over dependability to the said programs, thus making it difficult for the people to rise from poverty.
4. A progressive tax policy should be implemented so that people with a higher income scale pay more than those at the lower scale.

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Working but poor in America

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