

Poverty: A Universal Dilemma

Since the beginning of mankind, poverty has affected people and been the heart of countless conflicts. Poverty is universal, but does vary from country, even neighborhood. According to the World Bank, poverty is hunger, lack of shelter, not having the ability to see a doctor when necessary, limited or no education, and restricted representation and freedom. In short, poverty subdues the natural democratic rights and ideals that all persons rightly merit. Poverty is the main issue that the United States needs to tackle to make itself and the whole world a safer place.

Poverty is the foundation of numerous crises in society; past and present. In third world countries, it is not uncommon for parents to conceive a high number of children as a source of labor. Not only do these kids often receive slight or no education, but large families in these countries are the main contributor to global overpopulation. To these children, opportunities are very limited as a basic education is more than often necessary for employment in contemporary times. Thus this lack of education contributes not only to unemployment, sweatshop labor, and human trafficking, but crucially to ignorance. Ignorance is synonymous with vulnerability. These people are often targeted by extremists looking for recruits. It is no surprise that in Afghanistan, one of the strongholds of the radical Islamic movement *Al-Qaeda*, the poverty line lies astonishingly at almost 60% (CIA World Factbook). According to the US Census in 2004, about 36 million Americans live below the poverty line, or about 12.5% of the total population. Impoverished areas are often shrouded in theft and gang violence and education is often below par, limiting opportunities.

Poverty has damaged society frequently in the past and continues to do so. Preceding Germany's loss in World War I, Germany was in an awful economic crisis and extremely impoverished. At that time desperation began to creep into people, who began looking for a savior. He came in the form of Adolf Hitler. He picked up the German nation in the time of catastrophe, and knowing the vulnerability of the German people he spread his propaganda of Aryan superiority, then mobilizing the nation for a marginally unsuccessful world conquest, killing tens of millions in the process. A modern example that has traumatized this nation and many others were the September 11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York. At least three of the nineteen hijackers come from countries in which the poverty line lies at around 30% (Federal Bureau of Investigation). In addition, the leader of *Al-Qaeda* - the movement responsible for the attacks - Osama bin Laden is widely known to operate in Afghanistan, who as aforementioned has one of the highest poverty rates in the world. The lack of medical assistance in poor countries is also a grave problem. Diseases such as malaria can easily spread without vaccinations. Furthermore, in South Africa, an astounding 18.1% of the adult population is living with HIV/AIDS (CIA World Factbook). Elaborating from that, more than 50% of their nation lies below the poverty line. Not only is this problem a lack of medical help, but also perhaps of knowledge and awareness.

So what is the importance of poverty to the United States? Certainly a 12.5% poverty rate is something that could be improved on. Some consequences of poverty include unemployment, theft, violence, and homelessness. But poverty abroad also directly affects the United States. America is considered to be the land of freedom and opportunity. Hence, people seeking a new life will often immigrate to America. But many

of these immigrations are illegal. A heating issue today is illegal immigration with solutions such as a wall between the U.S. and Mexico being suggested. But illegal immigration has also caused an imbalance in the labor force as they will often work for lower wages than their American counterparts. This creates obvious conflict between the two groups. Finally, as the richest and the most influential nation in the world, America has an unwritten duty to make the world a better place for all; a place where democracy can flourish without any hurdles.

So what is the best form of action that the U.S. should take? How does one “eliminate” poverty? Eliminating poverty will always be impossible; a social imbalance is natural in any society whether democratic or socialistic, although one may be more imbalanced than the other. What needs to be done is to open up opportunities; give all people the right to unlimited options of success. Education should be imperative, and anyone who wishes to go further in education should be able to. Medical assistance must be improved, and vaccinations need to be made more available. Diseases kill millions a year, leaving children orphaned or a family without a loved one. Moreover disease research should be invested in to make humans healthier and less susceptible to dangerous diseases. Finally, clean water should be made available as dirty water may often be infected with lethal diseases, and food supply should be given to countries in need instead of needless war supplies. The United States has a obligation to make this world a better place, and the first point of action should be to reduce poverty.

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