

# Poverty: a growing problem in america essay



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When you hear the word poverty what comes to mind? One might think of poverty as the poor or the less fortunate. Some may even say deprivation is a great adjective to describe poverty. Others may say something a little more vulgar and go as far as calling people of poverty trash. Well according to the Social Work Dictionary, poverty is the state of being poor and deficient in money or means of subsistence. Other definitions similarly stress the link between resources and livelihood (Colby and Dziegielewski 153).

In America today what are the causes of poverty? When asked that question at first it was tough to answer. We live in a nation that is so rich and full of so many recourses and opportunities to offer people. How is it possible that in a nation as great as America, could we even have "poverty"? The truth is, it is out there and growing faster than we think. In my opinion, the most common and stereotypic explanation is that the poor cause their own poverty; based on the perception that anything is possible in America.

Some have accused the poor of having little concern for the future. Others have accused the poor of engaging in self defeating behavior. Still others have characterized the poor as resigning themselves to a culture of poverty in which nothing can be done to change their economic outcomes. In this culture of poverty which passes from generation to generation the poor feel negative, inferior, passive, hopeless, and powerless.

Another reason why there is poverty in America today is that poverty has to do with the flight of the middle class, including employers, from the cities and into the suburbs. This has limited the opportunities for the inner city poor to find adequate jobs. Minimum wage jobs are not strong enough to

support families when it comes to income and living over the poverty line. For instance, as the country shifts from a manufacturing to a service economy, wages have been dramatically lowered for the average “nonprofessional” worker.

In addition, the feminization of poverty has been exacerbated by persistent disparities in salaries for men and women, as well as the disproportionate economic burden that single mothers face in raising children alone. When asked in what ways can social workers intervene to effect positive change? I didn't know what to think or how to answer. I know the simple and go to answers would be dealing with the welfare system and food stamps. That some under the poverty line may use for assistance.

I also know that would be a challenge as a student to think that is the only way social workers can help people living in poverty. Clearly, there is no single solution that can “cure” poverty. Poverty must be combated on a number of levels. People living in poverty often need increased access to affordable childcare, low-income housing options, mental health treatment, and educational and employment opportunities. I feel that to be a good social worker you need to think outside the box. I feel that social workers could tackle poverty through community organizing in poor neighborhoods.

Community organizing could utilize the community's assets and combine them with additional resources to build up the local systems that support health, education and financial viability. Social workers can also empower people of poverty to be active in leading these efforts by lending their professional skills to facilitate and support local initiatives. All in all, I believe

social workers use their training to look beyond the symptoms and get to the root causes of poverty. Social workers primary goal is to empower people to become vital, healthy members of society.