

Has welfare reforms benefited the poor? essay sample



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Abstract

The Welfare program ended the 60-year federal benefits to the poor as a result of President's Clinton's signing of 1996 Personal Responsibility Act to end dependency on social welfare. The impact of these reforms has elicited divided opinions on their impact to the poor. This research however shows that Americans have actually been both positively and negatively affected by these reforms.

Introduction

For a long time America existed without a Social welfare program. The only players in the field were private groups that included the church and miniature state welfare programs. It was not until 1935 that Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC) became law under President Roosevelt that laid the platform for the current Welfare program. The clauses in the bill provided for allocation of \$18 every month for a single child and \$12 for every additional child. It also included programs on state infrastructure. It was limited to single parents. 50% of funds went to widow supported children, 17% to those that had incapacitated father, and abandoned women received 21% and leaving a paltry 2% to children living or supported by single women (Snyder, 2004).

Literature Review

President Lyndon Johnson is hypnotized as the father of social welfare to end poverty. Since then aid to families have been dwindling over the years (Pimpare, 2000). Murray argues that reduction of support has the effect of

reducing dependability on the welfare programs. It worth noting AFDC rolls plunged after 1996 Welfare reform, a valid reason to back his argument. This in contrast to the 60's and the 70's when the rolls surged because the eligibilities were waived (Winship, 2004).

Arguments for Welfare Reforms

According to Snyder (2004) welfare program have benefited the poor seen by the increasing rolls in the 1960/70's meaning they were thriving on the program. Several reasons have been advanced to support the reforms. To begin with, the rise in rolls of the 1960/70's raised fundamental questions on the logic and the benefits of the effectiveness of AFDC programs. The resulting increases in the women headed households might just have been the results to get more welfare funding form the program

Divorce rates had been rising steadily since 1860 but there was a landslide increase from 1960 into to late seventies. The notion that women could make more money than staying married through social programs made the divorce rate to sky rocket. It is worth noting that some of these women later remarried. The never married group has been increasing, partly attributed to parents having children out of the wedlock. The escalating single parenthood denied care of males on the growth of their children's.

According to Snyder (2004) figures compiled between 1968 and 1985 on the returns from the welfare for teen births against the non-teen births showed a mean range of US\$ 2, 907-3, 069. 9 received by teen births below 20 years against US\$2, 184-2, 703. 3 for non-teens. This implies there is more

monetary advantage to giving birth under twenty years! Most of the funds is <https://assignbuster.com/has-welfare-reforms-benefited-the-poor-essay-sample/>

utilized in bringing up the baby, Medicare, baby meals etc. This welfare social program is designed to make teens rich even more than those who are working, the more reason why reforms were necessary.

The study also established that the abstaining from giving birth carried huge gains among the whites than for African American. This skewed social system saw whites bag \$47, 732 against \$15, 575 for African Americans necessitating the need for reform. This unequal allocation is partially attributed to racisms that existed at the time. But this was later corrected by stringent federal laws and the trends reversed culminating in 1995 announcement by the US Bureau of Census that 25 percent of AFDC had gone to black mothers and 7% to white mothers within the age interval of 15-44 years. Also, if recipients worked and earned beyond a certain limit the benefits were terminated that gave rise to a cycle of poverty.

A study done by the Survey Research Center from on the welfare of the children born in the late 60's and the early 70's and followed their history up to 17 years of their age, revealed that an overall 43% of which 88% were African American, took between 11-16 years on welfare(Snyder, 2004). It revealed dependency on this program. It should be noted that before enrollment at the Social welfare program, most of these black women worked harder compared with the whites. But after the welfare reform program, we have less unequal employment among women across the race.

The implementation of the 1996 Welfare Program which brought barriers and obstacles against work caused the number of single working women to rise sharply from 63. 6% in 1996 to 73. 5% in 2000. The welfare program

provided for 2 years of consecutive aid and a lifetime guarantee before termination.

Another result of the AFDC is the significant drop of Africans in employment especially among the males and sharp decreases in education degrees (Piven, 1996). There is certainly a reduction in poverty especially among the blacks with about 10% drop between 1994 and 2000. Presidents Lyndon's historic 'Great Societies' initiative in the sixties saw the increase of welfare programs from a mere 45 to a high of 435 where federal spending on social welfare rose sharply from \$ 9. 9 to \$25. 6 between 1960 to 1968. After the 1996 Welfare program one will expect that wage fall as a result of more people compelled to work. But that was not the case. According to the Economic Policy Institute data during the 1990's a sustained unemployment rate of 4% caused wages to rise to post inflationary and cumulative figure of 14% and an hourly rate of \$8. 46. (Abramowitz, 1999)

Arguments against Welfare Reforms

Federal move to sanction recipients for alleged behaviors has caused a 10% drop in welfare rolls putting the fate of these benefactors in jeopardy. It also argued that the inclusion of \$250 billion dollar medical aid package for the next 7 financial years is too massive and strains the federal fiscal budget. Reform program has dealt a death blow to the 60 years of successful reforms in poverty reduction (Kirk, 2000)

About 62. 8% of companies do not hire welfare applicants because of lack of clear legislative policy to employ them. An overwhelming 94% of Americans on welfare do not have a vehicle has completely eroded their chance of <https://assignbuster.com/has-welfare-reforms-benefited-the-poor-essay-sample/>

employment. About one in five American are poor and they stand to lose more in the wake of these reforms.

Parent's duty in nurturing the children especially during the early developmental stage, has not been considered. The implementation of the welfare program has been linked to the rise in murders, abandoned babies, and drug abuse among social vices negatively impacting on the American social well being.

Implications

Welfare reformists argue that there have been remarkable changes in the lives of Americans. For instance, welfare rolls have reduced considerably to a historic low of 49% thereby increasing of employment among the single mothers. It is said that states that implemented the program have had a drastic reductions in poverty rates. But others feel the welfare reform package is not very compressive and that it's undermining the gains made by its parent AFDC program by scrapping benefits to deserving Americans.

Conclusion

It is clear that the AFDC package has helped pull most American families from poverty going by the statistics available and therefore there is no denying the fact it has done quite well. Millions, who could not put food on the table and other basics, found the much needed help. But many have abused this noble AFDC scheme by deliberately refrain from to be employment. This has had the result of increasing dependency at the expense of independence and enterprise. These and others created need for

reforms. But it is important that this needs to welfare program incorporate tenets from the AFDC program. Re-legislation is necessary to address genuine concerns from both parties so that the Welfare program can be a safe haven and platform for eradicating poverty.

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