

Reimagining Poverty Solutions

Rethinking Poverty

Victor Chambers - 2020

What Is Poverty?

Poverty is the state of not having enough material possessions or income for a person's needs. (Wikipedia)

Absolute Poverty

AKA Extreme or Abject Poverty:

1990: \$1.00/Day

World Bank 2015: 1.90/Day

Relative Poverty

**Social Perspective: Can they
maintain a prescribed lifestyle.
Based on a fixed income level.**

Situational Poverty

Poverty from a particular circumstance
which is temporary in nature such as
environmental disaster or lost
employment.

Generational Poverty

**When two or more generations
are born into poverty.**

Racial Poverty

Ten cents to the dollar in wealth. De facto versus de jure segregation. Drug war. Criminals. Ghetto. Felonized. Post jail. Less access to jobs. Suburbanization affects. These are some specifics which contribute to African American poverty and sometimes to Mexican or Native Americans.

Rural Poverty

Poverty in areas with less than
50,000 in population.

Urban Poverty

Poverty of populations greater
than 50,000.

Poverty Of The Soul

Absence of metaphysical
experiences in life.

Myths Surrounding Poverty

Racial: They can't manage
income.

Truth: Especially relative to African Americans, Jim Crow Laws, Lynching, Fear Tactics and Destruction of affluence. Institutional Racism, Redlining. Sub Prime Lending. Ex. Black Wall Street.

You can't solve poverty.

Poverty has many solutions. Society is the primary enforcer of poverty through beliefs and laws. Most poverty solutions enacted by government and organizations are ineffectual so the perpetuation that poverty is not solvable continues.

The poor make bad decisions.

The poor make crisis decisions, not bad decisions. The working poor sometimes make cultural decisions which incubate poverty (this too is a societally created by wage inequality).

Poor people aren't smart.

Poverty does not discriminate. The intelligence of the poor are varied. Making assumptions linking poverty and intelligence perpetuates false beliefs and narratives which reinforce poverty.

Poor people are lazy.

Some poor people are inherently lazy; but, poverty is societally created and reinforced, therefor many poor people work as hard, or harder than those who are not poor; this has more to do with wages and monetization.

Why People Are Poor

Mental Illness

Depression, anxiety and other mental illnesses make it difficult for individuals to function well in society.

Opting out of society.

Some individuals are so disheartened by the society they see, they opt out. Opting out of society will typically make it difficult to survive.

Institutional Racism.

Institutional racism can include any institution such as schools, courts, congress, prisons etc. Typically institutional racism creates poverty through blocking particular people from participating in society.

Low Wages

Minimum wages didn't exist prior to the 1930s. The federal minimum is still at the 2009 figure of 7.25. A modern livable wage varies by demographic but may be calculated between 12 and 15 dollars an hour.

Expensive Housing

Costs of housing has increased disproportionately to the cost of wages. In NYS the Minimum is 11.80 31 Dec2019. Housing costs for family of 4, \$780. This is around 38% of wages from a full time job.

Expensive Energy

Electricity in most locations is created and maintained in an electric grid. It cannot be stored. The source of electricity depends on where you live and some sources are cheaper than others. Inclusion of renewable sources may allow costs to be reduced over time.

Expensive Life

Housing, energy, lifestyle and societal costs increase the overall cost of living. Distance between domicile and needs like food, clothing and employment increase the cost of life, exacerbating poverty.

Limited Access to Institutions

Institutional access is kept by gatekeepers such as social service workers who will often turn people away illegally. Other ways of blocking institutional access is by placing them far from where people live. Another way is by creating exorbitant prices on services which people cannot afford i.e. Judicial and legal services, medical services and educational access.

Inadequate or Unavailable Poverty Solutions

Functional poverty solutions reimagine the society in which we live and some of the technical solutions of the civilization which we live and benefit from. The failure to reimagine and recreate society is the failure to create a society absent of poverty.

Poor Urban Design

Poor urban design makes life more expensive for people who have lower incomes. This is primarily exacerbated through creating distance between where people live, work, shop and engage in government organizations.

Mythical Solutions

If you work hard enough you can
overcome poverty.

Hard work is not a guarantee of getting ahead. People with bachelors or masters often have difficulty getting jobs. Many people working three jobs to keep food on the table can't make enough to pay their utility bills. Not all work is monetized.

You can pull yourself up by your
bootstraps.

Americans believe; or, want to believe that being self made is possible. In most human history people have been reliant on others to survive. The technician has a mentor. The professional a teacher. The rich are surrounded by advisers. The entrepreneur requires the good will of financial institutions and a community of customers.

The government will solve
poverty.

There were limited to no poverty solutions by the government before the Great Depression and New Deal. Since that time there have been very few legislative actions from the government which have made significant advances against poverty. Government is part of the solution but cannot be the whole solution. This is especially true in the U.S.

**Give money to non-profits. They
will solve poverty.**

Non profits are a huge part of the solution to overcoming poverty. There are organizations which help feed, cloth and teach, as well as provide emergency services like housing and crisis services; however, non-profits often struggle to raise funds to feed their missions and they often are centralized in a way which can't reach everyone.

Give money to foreign governments. They will solve the poverty in their countries.

Foreign governments are often corrupt and grants may be used for non intended use; however, governments are not completely corrupt and careful oversight of giving can be effective.

College education will insulate
you from poverty.

Anyone can fall from secure employment for any reason. Some of which include incapacitating grief, injury, drug abuse, illness or mental illness, eviction, recession, depression or business failure.

People Should Give More

Americans already donate a lot of money to a lot of different organizations. There are some ways that adding money to the pie can help solve poverty but poverty doesn't exist because Americans don't care. Poverty exists because we haven't figured out how or decided how to eradicate it yet.

**Rethinking economics and
business, a basis for defeating
poverty.**

Building Blocks of Economy

Understanding the building blocks of economies can help reimagine economies, markets and employment. From Durant I learned that the fundamentals of economy are mechanisms of transport, means of exchange and method of trade.

Origins of Money

Hunter Gatherers- Agrarian- Complex Civilization-
Kingdoms - Empires - Feudalism- -Means of Exchange-
Coins- Gold and Silver- Markets- Paper Money-Paper
Contracts-Stocks and Bonds- Virtual Money- Plastic
Cards- Debit/Credit- Crypto Currencies

**Usery -Interest-Inflation-
Deflation**

Before Usury which is against Christian and Islamic tradition money exchanges were equivalent and interest was not practiced. The Medici, in part found their way around this by utilizing contracts which were not species or paper money representing gold standards. Inflation occurs through mismanagement as there is more money it becomes worth less and therefor goods and services increase in price. This is a devaluation of currency. Deflation is also mismanagement and occurs when there is not enough money in the system; in theory, this makes the currency more valuable and able to buy more products and services. Inflation and deflation can erode faith in currency.

Anchoring the Means of Exchange

Whatever the means of exchange, it is anchored to something; it could be anchored to gold, silver or some other commodity; it can be anchored to a government, power structure or institution. Most of all, means of exchange is anchored to an agreement; and the stronger the agreement the stronger the means of exchange.

Supply Side Economics/Neo
Liberal Economics / Demand
Side

This relies on the idea that creating more supply will decrease the price of goods. It also relies on the ideas of Trickle down economics that by giving tax cuts to the rich, the savings will be passed on to consumers. This is not in fact what happens. Instead the rich get richer and continue to find ways to keep more money to themselves.

Behavioral Economics

Prior to the study of behavior and economics there was the idea that humans act rationally in systems and the economic models and mathematic models relied on this to work. Behavioral economics is the study of how behavior will affect economic models and economic decision making.

Local and Regional Currency

Local and regional currency attempt to solve the problem of money circulation. In a federal money system where the money continually gets funneled out of communities, local currency is a means to help maintain currency within a community; this helps keep the local economy functional. This also helps people get things done in local communities: Like improving property and quality of life through micro work projects.

Social Capital and Networking

Social capital is a means by which people in a community can achieve success based on who they are and the connections they have with other people in the community. Social capital can be used as a currency if there were a method for measuring and creating social currency.

Anchoring local currency to
social currency and capital.

One of the biggest problems with currency is making sure that its value remains relatively constant. The US dollar used to be backed by gold, now it floats meaning its value is based on the relationship it has with other national currencies. By properly anchoring currency to something it can maintain a constant value. An example of this would be to link local currency to social capital. This could be tied to the land, gdp of a locality or the productivity of the people.

**Social currency and
volunteerism.**

In the absence of local currency or federal currency locally, volunteerism can be utilized to create currency when volunteering happens, if there is a network or community that recognizes this form of currency; this is easiest when one person has a good or service to offer which is no longer tied to the federal currency system. An example would be volunteering for one person and using the social currency to buy a meal from another person.

Plenty of work to be done but no
means of exchange available.

This was brought up to me by Sean Welch. He mentioned that there is plenty of work to be done, there is simply no money with which to do it. These are the perfect instances in which a local currency backed by social network of communities can function to get work done; To improve the lives of everyone and the value of properties and land in run down locations.

Legal and Illegal Trade

In the absence of currency people create their own. In the absence of legal trade people create trades of their own. Illegal trade is necessary because legal means of survival have been limited or blocked. Social currency can help overcome this and eliminate the need for illegal trade.

**0 Profit, Social Entrepreneurial,
Class B, Social Business, Non-
profit/Profit**

Capitalism doesn't often approach all human needs. In a perfect capitalistic society the markets would meet the needs of the people but inevitably, not all needs can be monetized or profitable: So the non profit. Non profits fill serious gaps when it comes to human need and social problems but work on similar foundations of profit corps and don't often meet popular needs because that's not where they can find funding. Social entrepreneurs help meet social needs or social problems through business solutions. Social businesses help solve poverty. And 0 profit models allow businesses to exist where they might not otherwise in a lean economy.

All these solutions can help where mainstream capitalism fails.

**Mainstream Life: the Antithesis
To Poverty - Sometimes**

Mainstream culture and mechanisms shouldn't be dismissed out of hand. Cultures develop over long periods of time and create mechanisms which can help solve economic hardships. I list some of these mainstream mechanisms below. However cultural mechanisms aren't the only way to solve poverty and often times limit or stigmatize outlines of traditional culture, ostracizing and often blocking individuals from succeeding in mainstream economies because they are different.

**Education, Marriage, Children, Religion,
Automobile, Jobs, Telephone, Internet,
Utilities, Food , Clothing - Disney Land**

Government and Social Services: Part of the Poverty Solution

There are many government solutions to overcome poverty. However, especially in the United States, socialism has long been frowned on, so Government should not and cannot be looked to for all the solutions. However, government should not be dismissed out of hand. Government is always part of the poverty solution and understanding its role can help individuals survive. Government has services to help with housing, energy, food, working solutions and family assistance.

Examining The Individual

Universal Human Needs
Maslow's Hierarchy: Physical Safety,
Esteem, Love, Self Actualization and
Enlightenment.

Meeting these needs can be the aim of any services organization and I have included: food, clothing, shelter, medical care, mobility, communication and emotional support.

Beyond this, flourishing in society requires access to economic stability, education and emotional support.

Human Function

Motivations lead to behaviors. Language is factual or fictional however, individuals cannot always express themselves accurately so it is hit or miss whether someone is being dishonest or honest regardless of fact or fiction. Judgements can only be made about a person in conjunction with that persons input, otherwise the judgement may be invalid or incomplete. Judgement in this case is regarding services integration.

An individual's inability to flourish in society should not always be construed as that person's inability, but should also be looked at from the perspective that society at large, is unable to adapt to the needs of its people. This is a philosophy of inclusion.

Concurrence and Co- Morbidity: ... and Poverty

Concurrent. Co-morbid. I like to think about poverty as a function of Co-morbidity rather than as concurrent with mental and physical health concerns. Poverty can either be the cause of mental and physical health problems; or, poverty can be the effect of mental and physical health problems. Many of these problems are caused by functions of society such as economics, industry and war. Others are genetic in nature often becoming the cause of poverty.

Poverty is also a comorbidity of greater social problems to include, drug use and abuse, illiteracy, interpersonal violence, crime and malnutrition. It is important to understand these as co-morbid because these situations are often additive in nature and not simply cause and effect. By thinking of these in terms of additive we attempt to solve each problem at the same time; by thinking in terms of cause and effect we attempt to solve for the cause; but we are just as often wrong about what the cause is; and in many cases for one person the cause may be different than for another person.

Organizations Working to Overcome Poverty

Empath

Empath is a program that specifically works with women to help overcome poverty. This organization pairs social workers and case workers with women to work simultaneously on several goals to include, Family Stability, Well-Being, Education and Training, Financial Management, Empowerment and Career Management.

The other key component Empath explains well is crisis decision making and how crisis decisions will transition to goal attainment with a mentoring program. The program I'm sharing here is called
Mobility Mentoring.

Delancey Street Foundation

Delancey Street is, "the country's leading residential self-help organization for substance abusers, ex-convicts, homeless and others who have hit rock bottom.

The key component of the Delancey Street program:
it is run without staff but instead, it is overseen by
residents in the program. They trained people to be
truck drivers, contractors and construction workers.

The Delancey Street Program runs Cafe, Catering, Coach (limousine services), Digital Printing, Handcrafts, Landscape, Moving & Trucking, Paratransit, Restaurant, Screening Room (Films), Specialty Advertising, Xmas Trees and Decorations businesses.

Gramen Bank and Subsidiaries

If you're going to study poverty in developing countries it becomes imperative to study Yunis' work in Bangladesh including: Micro-Lending, Social Business and the many subsidiary businesses which were developed because of Yunis' ideas including: cell phone service in rural Bangladesh, yogurt which could be sold to villages providing nutrients to children. Some of these businesses are micro businesses while others are large scale businesses catering to the poor.

Self-Help (South Carolina) Heakes.

Self-Help was started by a guy named Eakes who saw sub prime mortgages as the one way to help narrow the gap between wealth disparity of African American and White families. He ended up starting a credit union and loaned mortgages to people who had strong work histories for amounts around the 70,000 dollar range.

Biolite

Biolite is a camp stove company which has focused on creating clean burning technology which creates a subsidiary amount of electricity for charging lights, cell phones or other low power devices in the 1-2 amp range. Bio lite uses some of its proceeds to get cleaner burning stoves to families, where respiratory problems are persistent as open fires are used to cook in homes which are not properly ventilated.

Better Books

Better books is an organization which takes donations of books for resale. If a book is not resalable the book is properly recycled. Better books uses a 1:1 model: for every book it sells it gives one free book to those in need.

Homes On Wheels Alliance

Housing and homelessness are big problems in America as there is a limited social safety net. While many Americans may live on social security, the low wage earners may make as little as 700 a month and require a myriad of assistance programs for housing, heat and food. While this is possible many older individuals who are in otherwise good health want to live their lives adventuring and so there is a big movement to live in vehicles- mainly vans.

Living in vehicles is a big sub cultural trend in the United States and while some people are force into living in vehicles because of eviction or rental costs being too high, others choose it. Homes on wheels alliance helps people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, to get the information and skills required to live in a vehicle. They also have an emergency fund, and a program to help people get off the streets and into vehicles.

Mainstream Anti-Poverty Resources

One of the reasons I don't include non-profits which are well established in communities, is because they often do not actually solve poverty in an interesting or new way. The nonprofit sector employ a few knowledge workers and many entry level workers. There is no real problem with this however, economically speaking, it isn't sustainable. What you have is an employee paying taxes to the government creating funding for non-profits providing low wage, jobs. While this is an important part of the economy and social safety net, in order to have a strong economy, some forms of production and industry must take place.

Sustainable Lives

Human needs.

**Food, Clothing Shelter, Medical
Care, Mobility, Communication,
Emotional Support**

Sustainable Autonomy in Society

Economic Stability/Credits/
Grants, Learning/Education,
Social/Emotional Support

How it can get done.

The unit of sustainable lives is the common housing unit in any given location. This housing unit should be a duplex but can also be apartment buildings, hotels or other types of mixed use housing.

The first floor of the building, or an
apportion of the building will be used for
community gathering and business
development.

The second floor of the building will be rented either in whole or in part, to individuals. Rent revenue will pay for the building and help fund some of the first floor activities.

The rest of the idea can be found
at <http://sustainablelvs.org>