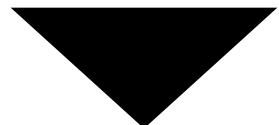




THE AMERICAN HALLUCINATION

Poverty under HyperCapitalism

Menahem Ali
translated by Matt Alexander H.



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Menahem Ali was a Palestinian-Israeli writer who fled to America at the age of 18 during the outbreak of war in 1948. He lived the rest of his life in exile, mostly as a paper-hoarding recluse in Brooklyn, New York before passing away in 2020. He never published a word in his lifetime, but left behind 15 manuscripts handwritten in a creole of Judeo-Arabic Palestinian Hebrew, including thirteen collections of free verse, a study of poverty in America and a surrealist novel.

Matt Alexander H. was born in 1986 in Northampton, Massachusetts by the Holyoke Range and Connecticut River Valley. He was raised in the Atlantic coastal town of Mattapoisett, which, in the Algonquin language, means, “place of rest”. He lives alone by the Sea of Marmara.

Other titles by Menahem Ali at Fictive Press
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Verse

Cyclical Wordplay
Exotic Settlers
Sketches of Style
Present Sound, Silent Space
district.Columbia
Full Moons and Dawn's Crepuscules
Asemic Man
Regress
Brooklyn Ridge
BiCoastal
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Prose

Arson in the Scriptorium

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“Anyone who has ever struggled with poverty knows how extremely expensive it is to be poor.”

James Baldwin, from *Nobody Knows My Name*

Introduction

American Dream or American Hallucination

In the wake of mid-twentieth century economic reforms in America, familiarized in the popular lexicon as the War on Poverty, life in the U.S. remains fragmented by economic tensions. Yet, the American way of life continues, exposing and worsening multigenerational traumas caused by racist oppressions, oligarchic exclusivism, and political plutocracy.

These quagmires of historic injustice are unresolved, and affect not only the Americans, but political and economic norms throughout the world, from the homes of the upwardly mobile in London to the alleys of refugee camps in Palestine.

The tragedies wrought by poverty in inner city neighborhoods are part of the same narrative of suffering, endured even if divided by ideological rifts, together with communities in the remote rural countrysides of America. They are equally disadvantaged, without recourse to economic reconciliation, as ensuing atrocities mount, enraging a majority that grows more and more numerous and disunited by the day.

The truth of the American Dream is that it is self-servingly selective at best and misleadingly false at worst, a capitalist figment conceived and sold by those who have always had more at the expense of those with less.

America is known to attribute itself as an immigrant nation, as most clearly exemplified in John F. Kennedy's eponymous book, *A Nation of Immigrants*. "Immigration policy should be generous; it should be fair; it should be flexible," wrote the late president. "With such a policy we can turn to the world, and to our own past, with clean hands and a clear conscience" (50).

However, America is not only a nation of immigrants, nor did immigrants open the field of independence which gave rise to the fifty states that we know as America. Settlers, as the beneficiaries of earlier colonialists, declared the terms of independence, which the nation of the United States of America stands to uphold, even if unconsciously. Their independence was not won through war alone, but by the diplomatic leaders of Indigenous Peoples, and by the free or cheap labor of slaves and immigrants respectively.

Since time immemorial, the lands now known as America have been inhabited by Indigenous Peoples, who might also refer to themselves as First Nations, Indian, Native or Aboriginal. Settlers arrive after discoverers, conquerors, pioneers and colonialists have made their mark.

America's early settlers were venture capitalists or militant exploiters who left their homes to prospect for land beyond Europe's increasingly industrialized

and taxed borders. Unlike immigrants who landed in America in the late 19th century and quickly assimilated, settlers proudly held on to the greater imperial networks that catalyzed their resettlement.

Settlers are either motivated by moral duty or material gain. The settler ideology inherits the momentum of earlier eras of discovery, conquest, pioneering, colonization and independence, all of which defined America's mythology of dreams, and nightmares.

Lastly, and through to the present, come the immigrants. National rhetoric has confused the settler with the immigrant. The fundamental difference is that the settler arrives with an imposed sense of entitlement, to possess the land as if it were their divine or natural, right or even a moral obligation to acquire it as inheritable property.

The legacy of colonialism is that it remains all-important, in terms of the tactics of economic ascendancy, to own valuable assets, such as land, and the natural resources that are derived from them, as they are exploited according to the prevailing infrastructures of industry and finance, including minerals, timber, agriculture and fossil fuels, among other investments.

"It takes money to make money," goes the 19th century American business proverb, which is also interchangeable with the adage, "You need to spend money to make money."

Settlers often assume their position of wealth, power, and prestige owing to various forms of nepotism, acquiring their assets according to the advantages of nationality, race and class, identities that they have assumed out of convenience in reference to their superiority.

Everyone else who does not identify within the inner circle of postcolonial inheritance lives on the margins of settler society and its history. In order to participate in the mainstream economic and cultural life they are forcibly assimilated in the manner of concentration camps, whether in boarding schools, factory labor, mandatory military service or other crueler and sometimes subtler forms of nationalist hazing.

While the first settlers to America did "migrate" to the shores of the New World, they are different from the historical and contemporary immigrant.

Immigrants continue to arrive to America for the same purpose as they have for hundreds of years: for refuge, and to work. The immigrant ends up working for the settler, or for those who have acquired the settler's wealth and property, whether by blood born or spilt.

While settlers own real wealth, such as the right to commodify and sell natural resources, the immigrant lives and works to maintain their place in the class hierarchy, dependent on wages, debt and the trends of capitalist consumerism that

sustains the roots of the economy, e.g. agriculture, textiles, real estate (i.e. food, clothing, shelter).

Immigrants stand together with other American minorities such as Native Americans, African-Americans, non-Christians, the disabled, and so on, who are too often faced with experiences that expose them to the ugly truth that they are either silently or overtly unwelcome to the fruits and spoils of a nation that does not live up to its founding ideals.

“They are not Americans, but they are an essential part of America,” David K. Shipler wrote in his book, *The Working Poor*. “They sustain not only the garment industry, but also the restaurants, farms, parking garages, landscapers, painting contractors, builders, and other key contributors to American well-being.”

Low-wage workers, for example, a woman named Caroline Payne who is the subject of a case study in *The Working Poor*, “...was not the victim of racial discrimination -- she was white. She was not lazy — she was caustic about colleagues and relatives who were. She was punctual ... she never received the promotion she deserved because of a dental problem.”

The financially condemned are not only immigrants, or even the racially marginalized,

i.e. visible minorities. America fails to meet the expectations of its citizenry in manifold ways. Due to the nature of American society, the poor are subject to a flexing and elastic web of psychological oppression and popular degeneracy.

The effects of consumer culture translate into poor human relationships, as they are based on the unthinking conveniences of the buy-sell mentality, following a one-way cycle beginning with the exploitative advertisement of products that end up in the waste stream.

Economic stability is not a function of the investor's market, but of healthy and meaningful human interactions. An economy based on manufactured consumption and

perpetual growth, steeped in incessant corporate advertisement and out-of-sight out-of-mind waste management, inevitably engenders a labor force demeaned to the benign and trivial.

Simply, every worker must sell themselves, as the adage goes, “Don’t sell yourself short”. The saying originally derives from the stock exchange, from the term for “short selling”, which refers to stocks sold with the expectation that they be bought back at a lower price.

The adage is a fitting analogy for the socioeconomic crisis in America, which incontrovertibly has sold the American people short in the hope that the original value of the “dream” would have increased, or in economic terms, grown.

The over twenty-six trillion dollars in national debt, as of 2020, following its general yearly increase, is proof that the American government sells its people

short. Based on the current rules of finance, the Federal Reserve does not have to play by the same rules as the common wage-earner or spending consumer.

On January 8, 1964, the nominal War on Poverty began with a presidential declaration. Three months after the assassination of John F. Kennedy his vice-president was formally inaugurated into office as president of the United States. Lyndon Baines Johnson, or LBJ, was a Democrat from Texas. He started his first State of the Union address with words that would forever change the political and legislative landscape of poverty in America.

“Last year's congressional session was the longest in peacetime history. With that foundation, let us work together to make this year's session the best in the nation's history,” began the president's opened his address.

LBJ spoke personably, with his typical southern drawl, to the American Congress, which is made up of members from the United States House of Representatives, commonly referred to as the House, and the Senate, watchfully standing by as the American people looked on from their television sets.

“Let this session of Congress be known as the session which did more for civil rights than the last hundred sessions combined...as the session which declared all-out war on human poverty and unemployment in these United States...”

Of the countless Americans listening to LBJ speak about poverty that day, 35 million earned less than \$3,000 a year (Gillette xi).

At the time of LBJ's address, the poverty rate in America was 19%. It was already a significant decrease from the years preceding; when, for example, in 1959 the poverty rate had ascended to over 22%.

The long-term progress of the War on Poverty is especially revealing in reference to the economic state of contemporary American society. The official 2012 poverty rate, measured by the United States Census Bureau, showed that 15% of Americans, then over three hundred and ten million people, lived in poverty; that meant 46.5 million people.

In 2020, the official U.S. poverty rate had increased from 1.0 percentage point from 2019 to 11.4 percent. After five consecutive annual declines, it was the first increase, swallowing the lives of 3.3 million more people. All in all, some 37.2 million people in America were suffering the grind of impoverishment; more than the populations of 195 of the least populous nations.

Americans also endured the same level of poverty for the two years preceding 2012, consecutively. Official statistics showed that America had yet to recover from the 2008 recession, when poverty had been 2.5% lower than in 2012. Most importantly, these figures demonstrate that poverty in America was then at its highest rate since LBJ conceived the War on Poverty.

“Back when LBJ declared his war on poverty, being poor looked very different than it does today,” the National Public Radio broadcasted in late 2012.

“Traveling in Mississippi with Robert Kennedy in 1967, Edelman saw children with bloated bellies and sores that wouldn't heal. There was real hunger and real malnutrition.”

The definition of poverty in America has changed after a century of federal intervention into lives of the most impoverished American families and individuals.

Poverty, while lacking international consensus on its definition, is, in a word, “the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions” or “renunciation as a member of a religious order of the right as an individual to own property” and also “scarcity”, “debility due to malnutrition” and “lack of fertility”.

Such definitions, standardized by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, are relative to wealth. The relation is either one of involuntarily lacking wealth, or voluntarily renouncing wealth.

When examined equally, wealth is defined as “a large amount of money and possessions” or “the value of all the property, possessions, and money that someone or something has” and also simply, “a large amount or number”.

The terms, “usual” or “acceptable” when ascribed to poverty, merely emphasize the superficial counterpart to the social conundrum of welfare dependency. The quixotism of the American Dream, as it is conceived in contemporary America, exemplifies the relational interdependence between poverty and wealth, as two sides of the same coin, one necessitating the other. This is distinct from the absolute poverty of bygone eras, such as in America prior to the War on Poverty.

Despite naysayers of the War on Poverty, such as Ronald Reagan, whose 1988 State of the Union address asserted that the War on Poverty was a genuine failure, American poverty has yet to see such debilitating rates as that which raged prior to the 1960s.

“My friends, some years ago, the Federal Government declared war on poverty, and poverty won,” Ronald Reagan said during his address at the end of his second term in office. “Dependency has become the one enduring heirloom, passed from one generation to the next, of too many fragmented families.”

Reagan’s notion of financial dependency on the government as the enduring legacy of the War on Poverty may not be far from the truth. All wars are expensive, and none more than American wars. Reagan spoke in reference to the over \$100 billion a year that was then spent by the federal government on welfare programs.

In late 2013, the *Weekly Standard* reported that the U.S. had spent over 3.7 trillion dollars on welfare in the preceding five years. Their research, illustrated with comprehensive graphs, dwarfed NASA spending by a margin of nearly three trillion dollars, and the numbers were then expected to continue rising.

“Contrary to what you may have heard, the best evidence indicates that the War on Poverty made a real and lasting difference,” *Washington Post* correspondent Dylan Mathews wrote in mid-2012, as Americans contemplated the fast approaching fiftieth year anniversary since the declaration of the War on Poverty. “Particularly for low-income programs, the growth in spending during the War on Poverty is quite dramatic, as one would expect.”

While the poor have been lifted from conditions of absolute poverty in America since the 1960s with programs like food stamps and Medicaid, the American government still succumbs to self-serving cycles of economic dependency, reliant on the financial abstractions of hypercapitalist investment. The U.S. has the most external debt in the world, by far.

The War on Poverty had its origins three decades earlier, in the New Deal, enacted in the mid-1930s under the auspices of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration. The series of legislations and federal programs encompassing the New Deal are remembered as a hallmark of singular importance in the social and economic history of the United States.

The mobilization of the labor force during World War II is largely responsible for the upswing in economic growth as America's industrial prowess was unparalleled globally, effectively pulling America out of the Great Depression. Nonetheless, the New Deal is still remembered as a time when liberal reform and progressive policies of economic action bettered the lives of the disadvantaged.

The New Deal, as with the War on Poverty, was not a one-way street, as countless Americans struggled and fought ardently in the public sector for proper access to its programs and their appropriate implementation.

The Great Depression has forever traumatized American society with the undying flames of economic struggle and resurgence. Roosevelt's New Deal carried that torch, followed by Johnson's Great Society; two initiatives that shed light on the trials and travails of overcoming economic hardship in contemporary America.

Around the turn of the second decade in the new millennium, as the United States faced unprecedeted recession, government shutdown, and near-default on skyrocketing national debts, these topics were more pressing than ever.

The book by Michael Grunwald, *A New New Deal*, published in 2012, addressed the federal policies of the 1930s as a guiding force into the 21st century under President Obama's administration. In a 2008 article for *Time*, Grunwald wrote, “He can call it a New New Deal or a Green New Deal, but it needs to be a deal, not just a spending spree.”

The state of economic affairs during the FDR administration and that of Obama were equally devised within a climate of widespread, hypercapitalist investment. A quick look at the Hoover Dam, Skyline Drive or Fort Knox will

reveal as much. The American governments of the 21st century have tried, however futilely, to pick up where the New Deal left off as concerns unemployment insurance and reforms to industrial policy (Grunwald 11).

The rate of unemployment in America during the heights of the Great Depression in the 1930s remains unsurpassed (Piven and Cloward 41). Many millions of people were simply forced to live without an income. FDR's federal government applied nationwide relief efforts, now generally known as welfare, in a variety of respects.

The opaque complexities of social diversity in the midst of applying national social and economic reforms has had major repercussions for marginalized, underprivileged and disadvantaged peoples in America.

The 1930s was a time when much of the privileged classes in America sought equalization, and opportunities emerged in response to the plight of all citizens as equals in the struggle toward economic embitterment, at least nominally. American Jews benefited from the New Deal as they were especially hard hit by the Great Depression.

Jews largely immigrated to American cities, maintaining traditions of literacy and trade. In the wake of global depressions beginning in the 1870s, Jews from southern and eastern Europe emigrated to America in droves up until the immigration laws tightened in the 1920s, cumulating in the movement of nearly two million people who added to the America's already significant Jewish population (Gold 1).

"The majority of Jews belongs to the working-class and to the bankrupt lower middle class," wrote Michael Gold in 1935 in New York City in the author's note to his reissued book, *Jews Without Money* (1930).

New York's Jews worked largely in the garment industry, but also in a variety of fields, from factory assembly lines to white-collar business. The Jewish-American community raised a strong voice in politics, supporting worker's reforms and civil rights movements.

Neighborhoods where Jews typically lived often banded together to form rent strikes and to protest unbearable wages relative to the cost-of-living (Wenger 104). Disadvantaged living conditions in the typical Jewish immigrant neighborhood were often shared with other marginalized ethnicities.

The Jewish immigrant family was often confined to the dilapidated infrastructure of substandard tenements in the East Side of Manhattan (now known as the Lower East Side). During the early 20th century, Jewish immigrant families would live in overcrowded homes with large families, worsening as more green relatives came from overseas.

Official response to the New Deal-era housing crisis, now known as rent control, was not legislated in New York until after the Great Depression. During

WWII, The War Emergency Tenant Protection Act was passed, which later became the Emergency Tenant Protection Act of 1974 (Walter Block).

The issue of rent control is still hotly debated by leading economists. On the other hand, the notion of a living wage dates back to the Middle Ages, and in the political rhetoric of the United States since its inception in 1776, when Adam Smith propounded the idea in his book, *The Wealth of Nations* (Shelburne 6).

Together with cohabitants of poor immigrant neighborhoods, Jewish families soon transcended the bounds of religion and ethnicity. Propelled into the social and political realm of their newfound American society, multicultural communities formed by necessity. Through the New Deal's far-reaching response, the federal government had opened a path on which Americans might become economically engaged to meet their collective needs (Wenger 203).

Jewish women were instrumental in the forward integration of government intervention. Women empowered themselves, firstly, working to stimulate the marketplace throughout the Great Depression. Demanding greater regulation in the food industry, for instance, led to the formation of multicultural Jewish women's groups. The Union Council of Working Class Women focused on New Deal reforms in particular. The federal government's assistance, vis-à-vis the New Deal, was seen as the most effective channel through which their social actions and community economic developments strengthened (Wenger 127).

One promising legacy of the New Deal is the American environmentalist movement, which arguably arose out of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). On an individual basis, CCC camps, as they are more commonly known, allowed urban workers and immigrant youth a chance to see their country, earn an income – which they often sent back to their families – and to work directly on the land. Many CCC camps worked to conserve the ecological integrity of lands still maintained as national parks, such as Mount Rainier National Park.

The book, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* tells the story of the more than 3 million men who contributed to "...planting two billion trees, slowing soil erosion on 40 million acres of farmland, and developing 800 new state parks" (Maher 3-4).

While WWII workforces may have resolved the baseline financial crisis that wreaked havoc during The Great Depression, America remains burdened by its midcentury heritage as the strongest global military power. While Americans continue to suffer from widespread poverty, the current federal government is less capable of implementing change in comparison to the economic and political savvy of the Roosevelt era.

The New Deal began by ameliorating the federal government's relationship to a burgeoning population of newcomers. Next, progressive policy reforms

offered a context in which a multicultural society could grow and rebuild collaboratively. Lastly, and most enduringly, the New Deal inspired Americans to identify with each other, not based on historical ideology, but on a common need to preserve their lands.

When the War on Poverty commenced, LBJ honored the New Deal by implementing what he referred to as The Great Society. “Through sweeping civil rights legislations, massive federal aid to education, and landmark health care provisions, Johnson’s ‘Great Society’ transcended the New Deal agenda by assisting those who had been left behind in an era of prosperity,” wrote Michael J. Gillette in the introduction to his book, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (xi).

All of the intensive measures propounded by the Great Society included eradicating poverty by extending medical insurance, minimum wage, food stamps, federal aid to education, libraries, hospitals, nursing homes, mass transit, urban renewal projects and tax cuts, which would create more jobs.

The Economic Opportunity Act was a direct result of outreach efforts initiated by the Johnson administration, resulting in the Office of Economic Opportunity, an agency solely purposed to end poverty. However, in the process of instituting economic reforms within the American social fabric, government agents and civil society confronted their hypocrisies directly while working with people living in poverty.

Michael Harrington chronicled the phenomena in his 1962 book, *The Other American*, attributed as the inspiration for Johnson’s war for economic progress, a battle that has continued to haunt American politicians approaching the second quarter of the 21st century.

“But Johnson’s war never truly mobilized the country, nor was it ever fought to victory,” wrote Shipler, who delineated the attempt by the American government to stifle a force, or one might say an inherent human characteristic, that is surely beyond the means of government or social reform. “Each person’s life is the mixed product of bad choices and bad fortune, of roads not taken and roads cut off by the accident of birth or circumstance” (6).

Even Johnson himself stood to testify before the challenges facing the War on Poverty at its inception. “Very often, a lack of jobs and money is not the cause of poverty, but the symptom,” Johnson addressed the nation during his 1964 State of the Union speech. “No single piece of legislation, however, is going to suffice.” In effect, the War on Poverty can be seen as more a consequence of American ideals, which have, throughout its history, superseded the limits of human capacity. Whether living in freedom, globalizing democracy, colonizing space, eradicating poverty is yet another American narrative of idealism best expressed by the phrase, “living the American dream”.

In the book, *American Dream Dying*, the authors outline the statistical diminishing of core definers that are associated with the American Dream, graphed with meticulous detail relative to disappointments in the quantification of economy growth, as it directly impacts the majority of Americans.

“The American Dream is not about clearing a low hurdle that the government defines as a ‘poverty level’ of income,” authors Peter D. McLelland and Peter H. Tobin explain. “It is about achieving a rising standard of living, financial security, and upward economic and social mobility” (93).

The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), however, did have a far-reaching or immediate impact, while its enduring quality is debatable. Constituent programs arose aside the OEO as well, likened to the larger reformative sphere in the War on Poverty. These include Medicare, Medicaid, Model Cities, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and Job Opportunities in the Business Sector (JOBS), which made up the core of federal programming.

Direct community engagement by the OEO was often delegated to such organizations as Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). The collaboration fomented literacy programs and tenant unions, among other actions, with a special focus on Native American reservations, where over a hundred agencies were employed (Stricker 53).

In the book, *America Lost the War on Poverty and How to Win It*, author Frank Stricker revealed the inevitable politicization of the do-gooder ideology. “In this light the OEO narrative was a shrewd effort to avoid class conflict and win broad support,” wrote Stricker, with mention to Harrington’s *Other America*, which presented the notion that America, in fact, creates poverty by virtue of its institutional framework.

“War on Poverty programs offered little assistance for adults who were poor because of low wages or joblessness,” (55) wrote Stricker. The politicization of poverty in American has often meant either unmet or conditional promises. The “hand up” attitude becomes an extension of normative American patriarchy, while the “handout” mentality is distant, impersonal.

“The most logical constituency for an antipoverty policy should be the poor themselves, but they are neither excluded or self-excluded from effective political participation,” wrote Herbert J. Gans in his 1995 book, *The War Against the Poor*. “At present, the poor are not even a constituency, and they may [be] too divided by racial and other differences ever to be a politically effective one.” Consequently, politicizing poverty also entails the application of exclusionary principles born of elitist economic classism; perpetuating impoverishment.

America’s poor are mostly multigenerational examples of disadvantaged and underprivileged people who have experienced social and economic marginalization for centuries, if not throughout the entire spell of American history. The same

families who received assistance from Johnson's War on Poverty programming were likely beneficiaries of the New Deal.

"Although he envisioned a reenactment of his New Deal experience, he understood that the grinding poverty of America's ghettos and rural areas would be resistant to Depression-era employment," wrote Gilette, in a chapter from the book, *Launching the War on Poverty* entitled, OEO's Struggle to Endure.

"Yet when the beneficiaries of his efforts actually denounced the system instead of joining it, Johnson angrily disavowed the excesses of community action" (375).

The fact of the matter remained, that when the American economy shifted, it moved in the direction of the wealthy, and rarely has it been distributed into the pockets of the impoverished many. While the 1965 Voting Rights Act was intended to compel the jobless and underemployed into the political system, thus to effectively contribute to socio-economic reform, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act complemented the antipoverty program by providing opportunities for youth to achieve success in school.

Essentially, in practice, an Act legislated by the federal government regulates and formalizes the issuing of funds through certain channels in the public sector. In the example of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the War on Poverty's community action stream identified specific needs required by schools attended by children living in poverty.

The Elementary and Secondary Education facilitated proper teacher-to-child ratios, curriculum development, training programs, and other essentials (Gilette 276). Another program of Johnson's Great Society, Head Start, became effective by reciprocating service with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act's legislative providence (Zigler and Valentine 506).

Children bear the brunt of an illegitimate social infrastructure, and their conditioning is, ultimately, the fate of the nation. When children do not have access to education poverty is increasingly prevalent, as generations experience the world deprived of training, opportunity, and the general know-hows of socialized learning.

America, as a nation-state, is founded on principles of free trade and global markets, while in reality, America's poor live lives of extreme marginality, detrimentally localized within embittered economic niches, immersed in cultures of poverty. The American culture of poverty is a uniquely singular paradigm of inadequate federal intervention and its legacy as an underemphasized chapter in American history, and in the nation's news cycles.

"Among all children, 27 percent lived below the poverty line in 1960; 15 percent in 1974; and 21 percent in 1986. This represents an increase of 40 percent in just twelve years." Michael B. Katz expounded in his book, *The Undeserving*

Poor. “Within central cities, the situation is worse: 29 percent of all children less than 18 years old, or 22 percent of white children and 44 percent of blacks, live below the poverty line. For children less than 6 years old the poverty rates are even higher” (127).

Amid the norms of government-led economic progress in America, by way of industrial and technological advancement, through consumerism and globalization, vulnerable and neglected families and individuals simply survive to subsist, silently, voicelessly, alone.

“For example, the Clinton administration’s attempts to bring about a liberal version of welfare reform, and before that the 1996 Family Security Act, began to put the spotlight on welfare recipients and encouraged hostile political forces, elite and popular, to help revive labels such as ‘welfare dependent’ and ‘illegitimacy’,” wrote Herbert in *The War Against the Poor* on the “underclass” label that came into usage after popular welfare reforms in the late 20th century.

“Judging by the major speech-makers, these forces included Catholic and other Christian defenders of traditional ‘family values,’ as well as secular conservatives who realized that welfare reform and even ‘workfare’ would mean an increase in welfare state activities to supply public jobs and public day care. These are expensive, and are apt to increase the power of liberal professionals, whereas a moral campaign against illegitimacy would be neither.”

American poverty is not a story, and especially not a policy or legislation, it is a lived experience of direct and persistent race, class, religious, gender and ageist oppression. The War on Poverty is an example of the underwhelming promises of political and economic leadership as the underbelly of civilization fattens and swift undercurrents of progress destabilize.

The ideals of poverty reduction in America were confined to an age where human rights had been trampled on, for example in Vietnam, when Johnson’s war on communism raged with then unprecedented deaths abroad, riots at home and peace nowhere.

Australian writer Peter Saunders, in his book, *The Poverty Wars*, aptly subtitled, *Reconnecting Research with Reality*, extrapolated on the definition of poverty: “At its core, poverty restricts people’s ability to live a decent life because it imposes restrictions on what they can buy and do, and hence be.”

“Those who are poor must devote all of their resources to meeting their basic needs, with nothing left over with which to exercise the freedom to consume and participate that are the driving forces of modern capitalism” (59).

In Saunders’ work, the key phrase, “freedom to consume” sums up the War on Poverty, within the fomenting rift between the American government and the American people, where for the first time, the American people developed antiwar consciousness bold enough to challenge government policy.

Politicizing poverty reduction further exploited the direction of mass consumerism and domestic culture by manipulating the governance of antipoverty reforms. The central component of American freedom, i.e. the freedom to consume, became part of antipoverty rhetoric in the political subtext of the War on Poverty.

The poorest, and most socially vulnerable, are misled to consume commodities against their own interests, economic, health and otherwise, in the same way that voters often support policies that oppose their ideals. The increasingly rampant economic exploitation that the American government finds excusable in the name of freedom and democracy has cost lives.

The millions of Americans who live in poverty suffer a lack of basic needs while they watch as national wealth is squandered by the abstract gambles of hypercapitalist investment. The War on Poverty revealed America's internal contradictions, how it has remained an economic world power not through social engagement in solidarity with its citizens and international partners, but through unbridled greed at the expense of its economic casualties.

Part I

The Northeast

The northeastern region of the United States extends outward from New England, which is officially the regional designation of the Northeast by the United States Census Bureau. Consisting of many geographical, social, and political definitions, for the purpose of this study the Northeast region will also cover the nation's capital, Washington D.C., as well as the official regional geography, including the dense megalopolis in and around New York City.

Nearly twenty million people reside in the New York Metropolitan area, and sixty-two million in the entire Northeastern region. “Of the five regions of the United States, the Northeast is the most intensively developed, densely populated, ethnically diverse and culturally intricate,” wrote Joseph John Hobbs in *World Regional Geography*.

“The country’s political and economic systems began in the Northeast, and historically this is where most overseas immigrants arrived” (647).

Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut comprise the states of New England in the Northeast, while New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and the District of Columbia represent the Middle Atlantic states of the region. Divided by geographic, social and historical distinctions, the United States Census Bureau identifies the Northeast as the second most urbanized region, following close behind the West, wherein the metropolitan areas of Greater Los Angeles are situated.

Washington D.C., also called the District of Columbia, is a city where, in 2012, over sixteen percent of its residents lived in poverty, accounting for 107,000 people, out of a population of 660,000 earning less than \$12,880. In 2012, the federal poverty line was set at \$24,050 for a family of four. By 2020, it only went up to \$26,200.

The War on Poverty conceived of the poverty threshold. Since then, the poverty threshold has been calculated by tripling the estimated lowest possible food costs for one year. A ten year campaign to halve poverty rates in Washington D.C., named Defeat Poverty DC, also emphasizes the prevalence of temporary impoverishment, and the working poor — those who brush ever so close against the poverty threshold.

“These low-income workers, who are struggling to make ends meet, face many of the same economic risks and challenges as those who are officially poor,” reads the informative and action-based Defeat Poverty DC website, under the subheading: What is Poverty? “Since the economic recession, many formerly middle class families have slipped into poverty.”

The initiative, which began in 2012, sought to inspire first-responders to alleviate the catastrophic economic fallout of early 21st century America. JFK originally started one of the incipient policy movements aligned to the War on Poverty, the Committee on Delinquency and Youth Crime. During the initial implementation of this programming, the federal government designated Washington D.C. as one among six “gray areas”.

Simply, impoverished urban communities, or “gray areas”, were targeted as appropriate beneficiaries of a wide range of grant-funded federal antipoverty interventions. The Committee not only became indispensable to the War on Poverty, it also revealed the inherent flaws within the administrative background of the movement.

“Stimulation, coordination, innovation, and involvement have long been the catchphrases of American approaches to social problems,” William M. Epstein wrote in *Democracy Without Decency* in a chapter titled: Precursors to the War on Poverty. Therein he explains the ineffectual culture of politicized social welfare as “...dominated by traditional American blue bloods, businesspeople and other professionals, mayors, and other elected officials, but had little representation from the service populations themselves” (45).

The poverty rate in Washington D.C. rose from 17.6% in 2008 to 19.9% in 2011. By the following year, data from the Census bureau demonstrated a poverty rate unseen in thirty years. Functional illiteracy was widespread, amounting to 37% of the population, effectively creating an environment where unemployment rates also rose above percentages not seen in thirty years.

African-American residents, as well as residents with only a high school diploma were the hardest hit, as food stamps were in near-record demand. Children living in poverty counted for double the national average in the capital. Within the deluge of tragedy that affixes so many of Washington D.C.’s residents, however, there is burgeoning activism.

After civil rights activists Tavis Smiley and Dr. Cornel West finished their 18-city “Poverty Tour” across America, they convened an erudite response with the “Remaking America: From Poverty to Prosperity” symposium. Held in Washington D.C., and featuring such distinguished leaders in poverty reduction as Suze Orman and Michael Moore, the legacy of the symposium was furthered in Smiley and West’s book, *The Rich and the Rest of Us*.

“Our goal was to put a human face on poverty so that the persistent poor, near poor, and new poor will not be ignored or rendered invisible during this unprecedented wave of economic downturn,” read the introduction to *The Rich and the Rest of Us*, chronicling their Poverty Tour, which began on August 6, 2011.

“But, through the lens of history, we see the institutionalized precedent of greed meticulously entangled in this nation’s very fabric. In fact, one could argue that America was a corporation before it was a country.” (4-7).

Tavis Smiley is the first American to simultaneously host signature talk shows on public television and public radio, while enjoying success as a bestselling memoirist. Dr. Cornel West is not only a recipient of the American Book Award, he is a democratic intellectual without equal. Dr. West has changed the course of dialogue on race and justice in America. These two highly remarkable and distinguished authors of *The Rich and the Rest of Us* spoke of the fact that in the wake of America’s 2008 recession, one percent of the population owned forty-two percent of the national wealth.

In response to the impoverishment of millions of Americans, the masses exercise their right to free assembly in protest of classist greed among wealthy political and business classes. Due to its encompassing the head of state, decision-makers in the highest governmental offices, the most powerful politicians, as well as chief military authorities frequenting the White House, the United States Capitol building, and the Pentagon, Washington D.C. is the staging ground for some of the grandest civil rights demonstrations in history.

Nearly a quarter million people demonstrated during the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, which coordinated a never-before-seen grassroots political challenge to the economic status quo. Most demonstrators were African-American, mainly factory workers, domestic servants, public employees, and farm laborers.

History professor William P. Jones published his article, *The Forgotten Radical History of the March on Washington* in Dissent: A Quarterly of Politics and Culture to commemorate the fifty year anniversary of the historic march. Professor Jones presented how, “...by linking those egalitarian objectives to a broader agenda of ending poverty and reforming the economy, the protest also forged a political agenda that would inspire liberals and leftists ranging from President Lyndon Johnson to the Black Power movement.”

The article demystifies the popular notion that the march was conceived solely as a reaction to the Jim Crow South. The goal of “economic justice” is closer to the truth. “Only in the late 1960s, according to [Juan] Williams, did the movement expand its agenda to include ‘issues whose moral rightness was not as readily apparent: job and housing discrimination, Johnson’s war on poverty, and affirmative action,’” wrote Jones, who released his recent book, *The March on Washington* in 2013.

The history of public demonstration as a prime mover toward progressive change against the top-down decision-making hierarchies of U.S. politics is

longstanding and clear. Across the Northeast region, civil disobedience and actions in the streets have fomented diverse grassroots responses to poverty in America.

Such forays are often led by people in poverty themselves with the intention of aiding their communities. Their autonomous organization is arguably more effective than expensive and politicized government agendas. One secular movement prompted by DIY community engagement into the lives of the American poor is Food Not Bombs.

Addressing homelessness, peace and food production, Food Not Bombs expressly achieves temporary autonomous zones of social justice in the humble and simple act of offering free food. “The first group was formed in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1980 by anti-nuclear activists,” reads the Food Not Bombs website, administrated under the auspices of co-founder Keith McHenry. “There are hundreds of autonomous chapters sharing free vegetarian food with hungry people and protesting war and poverty.”

As poverty reduction, and eradication, is intimately linked to accessing nutrient-rich food in sustainable quantities, so economic justice is dependent on a population’s rights to cultivate and harvest local natural resources. While government programs cycle through the poor’s level of dependency on welfare relative to the economic downturn or upswing, the focus on provisioning principles have shown to merely plateau the poverty rate in America since the 1960s, with slight, intermittent fluctuations.

“Let us be clear: An economic uptick or recovery will not solve what we witnessed while traveling across this country,” Smiley and West write in the introduction to *The Rich and the Rest of Us* (6). As long as the federal government withholds the resource wealth from the majority of the population, as is clear by the fact that one percent of the population owns nearly half of America’s economic capital, there is no poverty reduction.

In the example of a developing country, where natural resources are exported before their highly-valued products are ever seen by locals who have exploited them – and to the detriment of their land and communities no less – the poor of America exploit their labor to the benefit of an extreme minority.

In Food Not Bombs co-founder Keith McHenry’s book, *Hungry for Peace: How you can help end poverty and war with Food Not Bombs*, the grassroots activist states, “More than collecting, cooking and sharing free food with the hungry and at protests, Food Not Bombs volunteers are practicing working together using consensus and implementing their visions independent of government or corporate control” (12).

There is no economic justice without the poor gaining equal right to the natural resources that they work and live near, as on par with the investor who manages the sale and purchase of those same resources.

Adam Yarmolinsky, who served in the White House under Kennedy, Johnson and Carter, was an academic, educator and author, whose unique views led him to early opposition of the Vietnam War as an assistant to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. In concert with progressive, late twentieth-century American thought, exemplified by Food Not Bombs, Yarmolinsky was a special intellect during the War on Poverty, as he defended unique antiwar and antipoverty stances.

In the epilogue to the oral history documented in *Launching the War on Poverty*, Yarmolinsky offers insightful, hard-earned perspectives on governmental antipoverty measures, with examples on their application in Boston throughout the inception of their movement.

“There are impersonal forces in our society that are making it harder and harder for people with low-income backgrounds with poor education and poor work orientations to find decent work – unlike the previous eras, when successive generations of immigrants were able to pull themselves out of that condition,” Yarmolinsky wrote.

Donald M. Baker, who was counsel to the Senate Select Subcommittee on Poverty when the Economic Opportunity Act was passed, corroborated Yarmolinsky’s statements, in saying; “You find it in south Boston. There is a kind of circle, and it’s harder and harder for them to break out of it” (403).

In addition, Samuel V. Merrick, assistant to the secretary of Labor for Legislation from 1962 to 1968 when the War on Poverty Task Force was formed, held Boston in similar regard, evidenced through his experienced commentary. “I had the excellent experience of going up to Boston and being the manpower coordinator for the city, which meant that in discussions between the mayor and the poverty program the connection was me,” Merrick affirmed.

“Nobody else in the city of Boston had any exposure to them at all. I realized then for the first time the terrible gap between what was happening at the local level and reports on which the secretary of Labor thought he was getting the truth” (404).

Boston was also deemed a “gray area” in the mind of Kennedy’s Committee on Delinquency and Youth Crime, albeit with the same aloofness in their institutions of governance.

Poverty reduction is a multi-tiered struggle, demanding engaging leadership from a strong and broadly represented public sector. Professionals in the fields of law, medicine and housing, among others, maintain the kind of formal and informal relationships with impoverished communities that are required to reduce poverty in the longterm.

“In his own clinic, he confronts the effects of his patients’ poverty and Boston’s decaying slums,” wrote *Working Poor* author David Shipler, on the work of pediatrician Dr. Barry

Zuckerman of Boston Medical Center. “You might think that a landlord who gets yelled at by a pediatrician would feel moved to act. Not so, in the clinic’s experience. But when the call comes from a lawyer, that’s another story” (225).

Dr. Zuckerman’s experience as a child doctor led him to confront the living conditions endured by the poor in Boston, whose daily lives are defined by domestic struggles. In Boston, and throughout the United States, housing is central to poverty reduction. Practitioners of medicine and law must work together collaboratively to reduce poverty, however, such activism is often led by individual concern, foundation grants or private donations, and the issue is suppressed by healthcare and home insurance companies.

Living conditions are burdensome to the lives of the poor who are generally subjected to unregulated and substandard domestic infrastructures. The social and economic environments that surround these circumstances only exacerbate the problems of impoverished communities.

“Poor ventilation and dangerous streets combine to trap children inside apartments with unhealthy air,” Shipler wrote, forwarding the research of Boston University School of Medicine pediatrician Dr. Megan Sandel. “Most doctors don’t explore problems that they can’t address, but that overly narrow focus has been discarded at the Boston Medical Center. There, knowing that lawyers and social workers are available, pediatricians and emergency room staff ask larger questions” (226- 7).

In academically vibrant societies like Boston, where much of American thought and innovation in social justice has grown, medical professionals are trained to bear witness to the bigger picture involved in human health and wellbeing.

Poverty is, in effect, a health issue, which requires direct mitigation through multidisciplinary medical policies implemented throughout the public sector. “Boston is a city with substantial wealth alongside the poverty, and Massachusetts is a relatively enlightened state. In a less affluent part of the country, a malnourished child lies in deeper trouble, well beyond the coordinated expertise of a practice team,” reads *The Working Poor* on the role of the Boston Medical Center’s Grow Clinic, an outpatient subspecialty clinic which has treated undernourished children medically, nutritionally, developmentally and socially since 1984.

“And even in Boston, if a parent does not or cannot cooperate fully with the Grow Clinic, she might as well be in rural Mississippi” (Shipler 204-5). Even living in proximity to some of the most advanced and well-funded socioeconomic

resources for the poor in the Northeast of America can be inadequate, as the poor must take matters into their own hands.

Boston is home to the hard-earned, original legislative freedoms of busking in America, where entertainers perform for donations in public. Busking is a method of self-employment often practiced by the poor who might derive an income primarily, or complementarily, showcasing and developing their creative skills.

In May of 1972, the Boston Street Singers Cooperative won legislative victory in the struggle to legalize and permit street performance. Their activism soon spread to Cambridge, also in 1972, where new laws were enacted legitimizing busking in the United States. The collective then transformed into the Street Artist's Guild, which has influenced city legislation nationwide and internationally, however, legal battles continue into the 21st century in many cities.

Diversifying economic activity is paramount when considering strategies to lastingly reduce poverty rates, although the politics behind empowering poor communities reveals the inefficacies of America's legal and economic infrastructure to adequately respond to poverty. Similarly, critics of social media are outspoken about the technological moment's tendencies toward the monopolization of economic activity.

"I was called on September 11, 2007 by BBC's World Have Your Say news program to comment live on this new law being enacted that would actually ban giving donations to buskers," said Stephen Baird founder and executive director of Community Arts Advocates Inc., in his article, The History and Cultural Impact of Street Performing. "All the laws in the world can not ban poverty...Will the city police arrest tourists, children, religious leaders who give to the poor?"

While not all who busk are poor, the visionary activism demonstrated by buskers in Boston has allowed for a more free economic environment, where self-employment opportunities on the streets allow for diversified income-earning for inner-city residents in the United States.

The heart of the Northeastern megalopolis, however, remains the metropolitan area of New York City, where staggering poverty rates have been on the rise in recent years. The fact that in 2010, poverty in the Big Apple measured at 20.1%, rising in 2011 to 20.9% and, 21.2% in 2012 before it dropped to 16 percent in 2019, though estimates show it has increased since.

New York's poverty flies in the face of America's economic "recovery" narrative since the Great Recession. Census Bureau numbers show that in the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century almost two million more Americans living in New York went into poverty, while many millions more preceded them immediately following the recession. City officials lauded their

efforts in comparison to the rest of the U.S. at the time, as New York came in sixth among twenty other cities with the highest poverty rates in America.

“Manhattan retained the dubious distinction of having the biggest income gap of any big county in the country,” wrote reporter Sam Roberts of The New York Times in September of 2013. “The mean income of the lowest fifth was \$9,635, compared with \$389,007 for the top fifth and \$799,969 for the top 5 percent — more than an eightyfold difference between bottom and top.”

Historically, New York City has been at the center of lively and liberal debates on the subject of poverty. Regardless of their culturally progressive, cosmopolitan context, much of the political debate has since shifted away from human interest in the poor themselves, to economic commentary on the costs of the War on Poverty.

In New York City, where rising poverty remains a concern, the many antipoverty programs instituted by government, nominally generalized as welfare, have been disproportionately effective relative to other, less affluent regions in America. Frank Stricker, author of *Why America Lost the War on Poverty and How to Win It*, responded an invective on the poor by George Gilder, in his book, *Wealth and Poverty*, written in 1981, wherein he claimed poor families received, on average, eighteen thousand dollars in cash and benefits from the American government in 1979.

Gilder went so far as to accuse America’s poor of abusing the generosity of the political and economic overclass. “But except in areas like New York City, most welfare recipients stayed poor,” Stricker wrote, referencing Bolivar County Mississippi, where yearly welfare peaked below twenty-four hundred dollars. “And while people on welfare sometimes did better than low-wage workers, that was because wages were so low, not because welfare was so high” (162).

In the political mood of late 1970s to early 1980s in New York, antipoverty rhetoric fomented what some were calling the welfare state, characterized by monetary handouts; a myth first realized by neoliberal commentary – a legacy of the Reagan era.

Contemporary welfare in America, as not many are aware, was incited by radical and persistent public disobedience actions. In short terms, welfare was a struggle for human rights, fought between civil society and the American government.

“By August 1968 fifty groups of protestors were shaking up New York City’s welfare offices. They marched, sat in, and sometimes slept in. They won millions of dollars in supplemental monthly grants for furniture and clothes,” Stricker explained. “But welfare authorities held on, and later in 1968 both Massachusetts and New York

state authorities implemented a flat \$100-a-year special grant; this was a sharp cut, and it deflated welfare rights activism” (118-119).

Since the War on Poverty began, people have had to contravene normative regulation, and law, in order to hold government programming fast to its principles. Movements for economic justice were mostly led by racial minorities whose lives were daily politicized and born into a struggle for the most basic rights in a nation that invoked the ideal of freedom.

“Poverty agencies had no control over investment capital – over resources to rebuild communities and supply good jobs...it fit Lyndon Johnson’s idea of the war on poverty that, far from being unconditional, was not supposed to upset the middle class or corporate leaders,” wrote Stricker, who deconstructed Johnson’s presidential antipoverty campaign.

“Also not helping the public image of the War on Poverty, the Harlem agency subsidized LeRoi Jones’s Black Arts Theatre...This may have been good political art, but it did not sit well with white voters who increasingly perceived the War on Poverty as a ‘black’ program linked to violence and riots” (73-74).

The War on Poverty stirred controversy and scandal not only from the lower rungs of the economic order, but also from the very top, where greed has been shown to be a key feature of the more economically affluent and politically active of American society. During the opening years of the War on Poverty, not only was money stolen directly from funding coffers meant to enrich the poor, it was stolen from poor youth.

Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, founded in 1962, merged with Associated Community Teams after president Johnson’s War on Poverty administered \$110 million in assistance funds to the program, eventually titling the initiative HARYOU-ACT. Unlike other War on Poverty programs, HARYOU-ACT was fully organized by the city of New York’s poverty board, to the unspeakable detriment of potential beneficiaries.

“Four years later, after the city of New York has had the opportunity to learn from their HARYOU experience, we find that there has been at least \$1 million stolen in New York in the summer program last year, and God knows how much money stolen during the course of the regular year,” said poverty task force recruit William P. Kelly Jr., who served for two years in the Peace Corps, and at the time of his antipoverty work, had over ten years experience in army, air force and NASA.

“It’s the city of New York’s program. I would think that after having been there since they bought it from the Indians, in whatever year they bought it, they would have developed some sophistication in terms of handling their internal affairs, but they don’t appear to have” (236).

New York City continues to break headline news as the epicenter of political hypocrisy and economic corruption in America, setting a global example of plutocratic excess.

On Saturday, September 17, 2011, the Occupy Wall Street movement crowded the halls of inner city New York, shaming the Federal Treasury for bailing out the debt of billionaire bankers, much of whose income-generation derives from the deprivation of the indebted masses, as from the indebted nation as a whole.

As contemporary America struggled to recover from the Great Recession, the legacy of U.S. president Barak Obama began to form on the bitter tongues of the vast majority who daily confronted the realities of the rising poverty threshold. As evidenced by the overarching failures of Occupy Wall Street, while with incipient success in New York City (sparking a global network of solidarity), politically legitimized theft confronted the exercise of free assembly in America.

“Although many of his Republican critics would like us to believe differently, President Obama didn’t create the Great Recession, nor did he create poverty,” wrote Tavis Smiley and Cornel West, introducing their poverty manifesto, *The Rich and the Rest of Us*.

“The Occupy Wall Street movement is the most recent example of the tsunami of moral outrage and resistance that has now washed over 82 countries and five continents. With nearly one in two Americans now living in or near poverty, everyday people of all colors have grown weary of the unmitigated greed of the mega-wealthy minority who have steered the economy, not into a ditch, but over a cliff” (5-9).

Nonetheless, public action since the beginning of the War on Poverty has met similar challenges as the Occupy Wall Street movement, which was bogged down after costly and prolonged court cases contended on the First Amendment of the United States Constitution over the right to freedom of assembly. Similarly, emerging civil disobedience was deftly interned during the War on Poverty.

“The 1964 Lower East Side rent strike seems to have been the dramatic peak of the housing protests...nothing of lasting or even transitory value occurred,” William M. Epstein stated in his book, *Democracy without Decency*, chronicling civil uprisings that led to the series of government interventions termed the War on Poverty.

“Moreover, the rent strike failed after four months, apparently as a result of conflicts among a variety of supportive organizations (largely outside the area). Nothing discourages participation in community organizations more than the early failures of important campaigns and projects” (31).

The target demographics of many of the War on Poverty’s programs reflect the American government’s agenda. That the poverty rate managed to remain relatively stable post-1959, together with the anti-establishment movements that

emerged from many of America's most impoverished neighborhoods, all of this gave cause to the militancy of government intervention.

Typically, the poor, especially the inner-city poor, were composed of populations on the margins of the white, settler and hetero-normative cultural stereotype of the American Dream.

If anything, the War on Poverty succeeded in misdirecting the political agenda, disillusioning the representative leadership of poor communities. The independent claim to economic justice superseded federally regulated economic intervention in the minds of the underprivileged minority groups of 1960s America.

"The grand drama of liberating the oppressed seemed to satisfy the staff's theatrical demonization of public officials more than it did residents' need for service," Epstein clarified, noting the overt impotence of the War on Poverty's attempts to directly facilitate the poor into a more economically viable, albeit American, lifestyle. "But the residents of the Lower East Side remained poor and probably a bit disillusioned, if not actually alienated by endless participation in meetings, conflicts, consultations, and protests" (36).

Engagement, as with intervention, are military and social justice terms. In the annals of the War on Poverty, engagement and intervention have double meanings. The more the federal government engaged and intervened in community action, the more justice, as applied, deviated from community-based solutions. Likewise, as more impoverished communities and individuals engaged with government interventionists, the more the social norms of their imposition stultified the poor with the quixotic hallucination of the American dream.

Part II

The South

LBJ's poverty reduction advocacy began exactly as Tavis Smiley and Cornel West tackled the issue nearly fifty years later, by touring through poor communities across America. The War on Poverty began in the South; which the U.S. government officially terms the Southeastern region of the United States. Traveling through the region as it reeled from recent reforms ending segregation, Johnson first met face-to-face with the rural poor of America.

"On April 24, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson took a trip that he declared should have been unnecessary...he traveled by motorcade up an Appalachian mountainside," Gillette wrote, introducing his oral history book on the War on Poverty. "Johnson hoped that this poignant scene from the Appalachian hollows would focus the nation's attention on the plight of the poor in America and dramatize the need for his War on Poverty" (xi).

The Appalachian Mountains, stretching from Georgia to the south and north of the American border into the Canadian province of New Brunswick, have long been regarded with a certain mystique in the American consciousness. The people who live in Appalachia are characterized stereotypically in the popular, social mythos, as backwoods hillbillies, not to be trusted with their religious and political radicalism.

For many an American traveler, especially for the non-Southerner, the Appalachian range provokes fear and suspicion. The War on Poverty was relatively successful in the rural expanses of the American economic landscape, as opposed to the inner cities, although the importance of the latter was stressed.

Rural society produced much of America's traditional economic backbone; ground zero for natural resource exploitation, including agriculture. The rural residents of America were often early white emigrants from Europe (including Tom Fletcher, who LBJ met in Inez, Kentucky at the beginning of his poverty tour). Their image offered the U.S. government an ideal advert for the American Dream in poor communities, to be realized through empathic federal intervention.

Rural America stood in contrast to the urban ghettos of the inner city, where many racial and religious minorities suffered poor living conditions while struggling for civil rights amid the egregious wealth divides of the urban economy. The South represents a fusion of both urban and rural ways of life under an economic umbrella rooted in land-based histories of civil opposition, typically pronounced among the least socially advantaged.

"Aid to a black farmers' cooperative in southwest Alabama, for instance, challenged the closed economic order of the South," Gillette clarified. "Alabama

hadn't decided that black folks were as good as white folks yet...And it was a black-versus-white, white-versus-black, Democrat-versus-communist...oh, it was bloody" (309).

The Black-and-white economics of the South bled into the smallest details. The roles and means of production were fraught with racist traditionalism. When the War on Poverty was first applied to the rural South, vegetable growing and livestock handling was said to have been too complicated for 'colored people' (Gillette 309). Politicians mostly followed suit, delicately balancing their antipoverty programming within the preexisting socio-economic fabric.

By the time the War on Poverty began, the extended networks of regional poverty throughout the racially segregated communities of the American South had met with the "underclass" subculture of northern poverty. Domestic emigrants arrived to the North from the South in record numbers, as compared to every other migrant movement in American history.

As is true in practically every migrant narrative, they left in search of greater opportunity. Isabelle Wilkerson, the first African-American woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize refers to this unparalleled South-North economic transition as the Great Migration, masterfully elucidated in her book, *The Warmth of Other Suns*.

Wilkerson's well-honored non-fiction reads like the finest prose of spellbinding storyteller's fiction, earnestly reported. She wrote, "From the early years of the twentieth century to well past its middle age, nearly every black family in the American South, which meant nearly every black family in America, had a decision to make" (8).

As the majority of Black Americans are descendants of enslaved Africans, the influence of their communities in virtually all aspects of life in America is a testament to their struggle for political integration and economic justice. Recognized in its tragic honesty, their history is that of collectively rising from the abysses of extreme poverty, conditioned by the legacy of slavery, perpetuated by a broken policing and prison complex, especially as it lingers the multigenerational social fabric of the American South.

That fabric, though tightly woven through a combination of traumatic oppressions and internal repressions, bursts at the seams throughout Isabelle Wilkerson's book, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, in which she expertly touches on the nostalgic remembrance Black culture in the American South, which so painstakingly retained many of indigenous African cultural norms, as well as the vibrant authenticity of heartened community and time-honored tradition.

As the American South laid the foundations for communal, cultural continuity among Black people in America, so the North instilled an impossible, assimilatory identification with the American Dream into the hearts and minds of their youth. Due to extreme underemployment, and the effects of emigration, those

who led the Great Migration soon grieved over the socioeconomic tragedy of their impoverished forebears as it had been handed down to them.

At once, they were forgetting their history, along with one of the most important chapters in the making of contemporary America. Despite the circumstances of Black communities in the American South, they were, by relative comparison, generally more economically advanced than their northern counterparts.

“Southern black migrants to northern cities have enjoyed higher employment rates, better wages, and less dependency on welfare than northern-born blacks. In the 1960s, northern-born blacks, in fact, accounted for the increased welfare rates,” Michael B. Katz described in his book, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare*.

“Southern-born blacks did not import an underclass culture to northern cities. The harsh experiences they encountered there – of which the most serious was the lack of employment – broke down their culture” (203).

The relevance of the term ‘underserving’ is telling with respect to national dialogue and public awareness around antipoverty rhetoric, especially about the lack of common empathy, or even marginal understanding of the lives of America’s poor.

Herbert J. Gans’ incisively critical tract, *The War Against the Poor* identifies ‘underclass’ as, “...a behavioral term invented by journalists and social scientists to describe poor people who are accused, rightly or wrongly, of failing to behave in the ‘mainstream’ ways of the numerically or culturally dominant American middle class...Indeed, the very flexibility of the behavioral definition is what lends itself to the term becoming a label that can be used to stigmatize poor people, whatever their actual behavior” (2).

The geographical distribution of work opportunities still has an influence on the economic order. This truth became explicit following the effects of Hurricane Katrina on impoverished communities in the Southern region, where the estimated number of the displaced ranged from 400,000 to 1.5 million people; a migration rivaled only by the Great Migration.

Most displaced residents of New Orleans were forced to relocate either to other areas of the South, for example, Houston, Texas, which received the bulk of migrants, or to another region entirely. In the long-term, economic response to the unequal regionalization of prosperity has been met with the special organization of labor forces.

Unionization, the most popular form of organized labor, is composed of both nationwide and localized efforts, which have almost single-handedly defined the right to equal opportunity among the working class. Nevertheless, the fight to maintain organized labor is an ongoing battle as the overarching corporate, and

today, multinational, systematization of wealth impinges on workers' capacities for self-organization.

The standardized national economy equalizes the effectiveness of labor unions

as a whole despite regional trends. "In Alabama and the rest of the South, which are practically devoid of organized labor, the incentives raise earnings among residents of some of the country's poorest regions, but by diverting jobs, they also undermine unions elsewhere," wrote Shipley in *The Working Poor*.

"The proportion of America's workers in labor unions has gradually declined, from 14.9 to 13.2 percent nationwide between 1995 and 2002; in Alabama it's 9.5 percent and hovers between 3 and 8 percent in other Southern states" (292).

The agricultural legacy of the American South remains steadfast. The region is host to the work of seasonal semi-skilled and unskilled land workers, sometimes called 'field hands', immigrating from around the globe. In the South, migrant workers also participate in unionization, yet face unique challenges when doing so.

"Migrants are difficult to organize; they don't stay long, they can't risk a strike or dismissal, and most are vulnerable to deportation," Shipley explained, in reference to a North Carolinian division of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, a union based in Ohio. "Eastern North Carolina is to labor unions what the Wild West was to string quartets..." (110-111).

Despite the widely ineffectual nexus of labor unions' organization with migrant workers in the American South, one persistent reality of temporary foreign workers is the inevitability of migrant children born to non-citizens in America.

One of the most difficult challenges facing the children of migrant workers is demonstrating sustained achievement in America's education system. "The United States has a keen interest in educating these youngsters, for most of them will remain in the country and grow up to become working citizens... Yet only a few small programs, funded mostly by the U.S. Department of Education, seek to address the problem..." Shipley stressed.

"Teenagers have been able to graduate from high school through these efforts, which exist in Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oregon, and elsewhere. But the numbers of students enrolled is too small to release the vast majority from the educational deficits that confine them to a predetermined path" (113).

As the programs mounted by the War on Poverty started to influence life in the South, many southerners, including those deeply embedded in the rural economy who were not in the racial minority, had begun to adopt the migrant mentality. Not only did Black communities see an influx of migration to the North,

but many white communities emigrated as well, many of whom trace their roots to the hills of Appalachia.

While the War on Poverty was brewing in Washington, economic tensions increased along the Mason-Dixon line. Originating during the colonial era, the geographical designation became the enduring landmark in the United States' remembrance of the bloody epoch of the Civil War; a conflict that took place a century prior to the War on Poverty.

Before the Civil War, and into the ensuing era, manufacturing had long been the traditional economy of the north, as resource exploitation was traditional to the South. In the course of history, as the American economy generally shifted away from economic investment in domestic resource exploitation, so the American South withdrew from its relationship to founding institutions in the Northeast, politically as well as economically.

While in many ways incomparable to their fellow Black Americans, Southern whites also endured harsh circumstances when assimilating to the socioeconomic values of the North. "As mining jobs were cut in half in the 1950s, thousands moved north, carrying poverty with them," explained Frank Stricker in *Why America Lost the War on Poverty and How to Win It*, exemplifying the cruelties faced by people in the South, indiscriminate of race. "...Appalachian whites, like southern blacks, faced unemployment, poverty, high crime and disease rates..." (17).

Despite presuppositions by federal interventionists, the white Appalachian was harder to transplant into the affluence measured against the wealth of northern cities. As a result, it was the police who bore the closest witness to the bitter attitudes among their communities, who brought self-destructive habits with them. During the mid-twentieth century, miners had led economically richer lives than farmers, for example, however, following the New Deal, and later WWII, miners in the American South worked in increasingly squalid living conditions.

While Appalachians in the north kept their rustic personalities, their relatives who stayed behind in the remote hills of the southeastern region of the United States fomented a media buzz that eased the presidential declaration to wage the War on Poverty. The elaborate front of newsworthy attention had been set into motion by the civil rights movement, as representatives of the federal government began to compromise the image of their traditionally patriarchal, figurehead-style governance towards one that, on the surface, promised equal partnership.

Antipoverty media relations were clarified in *The Other America* by Michael Harrington, however that iconoclastic book was also followed by Harry Caudill's revealing portrayal of Appalachian life in *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, published in 1963. Magazine journalists from The New York Times reported on such themes as poverty and welfare, culminating in a call to new programs during

the time when president Kennedy instituted emergency funds for unemployed miners and their families (Stricker 48).

The solution-oriented press coverage that the Civil Rights movement inspired, and that exposed extreme poverty in the American South when the War on Poverty began are now exceptions to the rule of hypercapitalist commerciality built on the exclusivist rhetoric of investment economics and partisan politicking.

If the War on Poverty stimulated federal interventionist programs, a groundswell of proactive media coverage and further social impetus to the Civil Rights movement, there was also renewed interest in studying poverty. Public intellectuals and eager students were starting to assess the causes of poverty with deeper analyses, attempting to understand the economics of individual and family life despite popular social perceptions that regarded the so-called underclass myopically. Leading economists and multidisciplinary scholars in America were examining poverty and wealth structurally and systematically.

“There was nothing wrong with paying attention to the social correlates of the worst kinds of poverty, such as being unemployed in Appalachia. Certainly African Americans, people with low education, farmers, and female-headed families had above-average poverty rates. But scholars and nonscholars alike often confused cause and effect,” Stricker clarified.

“It was natural and useful that students of poverty catalog the handicapping correlates of poverty, and there is no doubt that race and gender bias made millions of Americans poor. But too much focus on the social correlates of poverty turned attention away from class structures that contributed to economic inequality, unemployment and poverty. More attention to deep economic causes, along with an expansive view of economic need, made for a unifying story” (59-60).

The causes and effects of poverty proved to be a vicious circle. Explicitly identified, causes of poverty were inherent in job markets and family structures, whereas employers and single-parent or dysfunctional families rarely accounted for living wage standards relative to the economy in general. While studies focusing on the effects of poverty increased following the War on Poverty, measures to address and identify impoverished communities, the defining differences between cause and effect were blurred.

The nature of poverty itself, its essential definition, has remained untouched, a problem that lingers today. There has never been a War on Wealth in America because declaring it is practically political suicide, despite the gains of Bernie Sanders and his supporters. The Family Assistance Plan, which Nixon presented to the American public on August 8, 1969, as well as Aid to Families with Dependent Children, exemplified such sidestepping, away from a focus on the egregious amassing of wealth among America’s economic elites.

“The Family Assistance Plan (FAP) implied that the economy normally generated poverty, through unemployment and low wages, even among couple-headed and working families,” Stricker wrote. “Families rarely received more than \$2,000 in annual AFDC payments; in Mississippi it was \$660 a year. The federal poverty line for a family of four in 1969 was \$3,743” (120-121).

The inadequacy of federal assistance was often at the head of the debate concerning the way forward in the War on Poverty. Antipoverty critics, including neoliberals rhetoricians, critiqued the War on Poverty for exacerbating and perpetuating poverty. As evidenced by the scholarship of antipoverty advocates, federal politicians were careful not to appear as if they were facilitating the historical reconciliation of impoverished communities on economic terms.

The War on Poverty proved only to reflect the underlying social inequalities and economic injustices within the federal government at the time. Politically, the War on Poverty met a terminal impediment following the Nixon administration. For many Americans today, Nixon’s administration is emblematic of greed within the executive branch of government. Nixon was a criminal whose legacy speaks to the failed expectations of economic justice from American leadership, and thus the oxymoronic impossibility of a conjectural War on Wealth.

“For people who resented the civil rights and other radical movements of the 60s, he promised to slow desegregation and trim the War on Poverty,” Stricker wrote. “Nixon closed dozens of Job Corps Centers; moved Head Start from the Office of Economic Opportunity to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; and eliminated the Community Action Program...the Republican Party had not yet become as hostile to social programs for the poor as it would be later” (121-122).

The War on Poverty reveals the truths of economic politics as they ensued in the wake of midcentury consumerism, ultimately leading to the contemporary reality of poverty in America. The myth of infinite upward mobility has stagnated. The last fifty years only confirms the irony of federal antipoverty measures, and the failure of their nominal progressivism.

The American South is an apt subject for a caricature of the economic rift between the government and the people, a distinction masked by the fragile veil of democracy, which, elsewhere around the world, is not as opaque in its mass persuasion. Nowhere has that division been more obvious than in government-led antipoverty programs.

“It is clear from the evidence, such as it is, that the War on Poverty was largely unsuccessful. Its personal service approach to need – Head Start, Job Corps, employment training, neighborhood health centers – and its local citizen organizing strategies, carried out through the Community Action Program and Model Cities, fell flat on their faces,” wrote Epstein, exploring principles of

governance by critiquing how the American government has defined the poor and poverty in general.

“The War on Poverty’s failure to recruit an effective constituency for broad and deep change reflected an enduring national consensus that has been expressed in minimalist social welfare policies throughout the nation’s history. The underlying ideal of the good citizen, and the actual values pursued during the period, were characteristically Puritanical and stingy” (19).

The American South, in comparison to the North, as with every other region in the U.S., has been popularly mythologized and stereotyped as home to a culture of personable warmth and opulent hospitality, where nationalistic affinities are flaunted in the extreme.

The emergence of the War on Poverty followed heavy-handed policies imposed by regional officials controlling a population that had been oppressed and silenced for generations. “The idea that white taxes supported black immorality and laziness was good politics,” explained Stricker, through a case study on the ‘welfare empire’, as he termed it. “President John Kennedy recognized that welfare could cause political trouble, and his administration worked on reforms to keep families together and rehabilitate workers” (27).

As the antipoverty responses of the early 1960s led to the War on Poverty, rival tensions between corrupt politicians and grassroots activists were already marred, and, in the contemporary context, have yet to fully reform into effective policy. The coinciding duality of overclass greed and underclass powerlessness transformed into the relatively progressive aims of Obama-era America, even while poverty rates accelerated nationwide.

“Concerns about rising costs and welfare dependency, as well as sensational attacks on welfare clients in New York and Louisiana, led to federal action,” Stricker wrote, in reference to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children and Unemployed Parent program, two remedial federal responses, applied in unison, to address welfare clients’ right to unconditional relief while emphasizing independence.

“Depressed mining, textile, railroad and fishing communities could apply for grants and loans to improve public facilities and attract new businesses...it showed that Kennedy was more reform-minded than Eisenhower, who twice vetoed depressed area bills” (38).

Focus on depressed areas, in other words, regionalized poverty reduction, which had been a progressive socio-economic policy agenda that remained largely incomplete throughout the War on Poverty, until today. The American South was arguably denied proper attention in terms of economic justice, relative to the rest of America, regionally speaking.

Welfare dependence in the American South has far exceeded every other region in the United States with regard to indigence. “The poverty rate for African American southern families was 74.6% in 1949; for African-American northern families it was 31.7% … The number of families on welfare (Aid to Dependent Children [ADC], which later became Aid to Families with Dependent Children [AFDC]) inched up from 644,000 to 787,000, and one economist claimed that transfer payments lifted 30% of the poor out of poverty in 1961,” Stricker evidenced.

“But monthly payments to welfare families still averaged only \$108 a month in 1960, roughly \$1,300 a year. That was extreme poverty. Especially in states like Mississippi, where annual payments were only several hundred dollars, welfare did not cure poverty” (12).

In contrast to common perceptions, Mississippi was home to one of the most active and successful War on Poverty programs. Participatory projects between impoverished communities and federal programming led to a wave of humble and genuine donations of time and money from some of the poorest of American citizens. The prime motivator, in this case, was the betterment of children.

“In the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), civil rights activism, community involvement, Head Start, and the War on Poverty came together in a remarkable movement,” Stricker wrote. “With federal money and donations from some of the nation’s poorest people, the CDGM opened eighty-three Head Start centers in forty communities in 1965. It was a remarkable achievement” (70).

In the state of Mississippi, where senators John Stennis and James Eastland were publicly known racists, the CDGM opened linkages between government agencies and poor communities, which was the crux, and truly the overall goal of initiatory War on Poverty measures.

The War on Poverty proved successful in this regard, as a way to overcome the socially unjust boundaries of traditional America that had for so long neglected the humanity of marginalized, underrepresented and disadvantaged minorities.

“Had Mississippi’s poor depended on local and state authorities, there would have been no CDGM and no Head Start in the state,” wrote Stricker, who followed the War on Poverty through to its invariable weaknesses integrating into the overall social fabric, which had tightly stitched the lips, bowed the heads and tied the wrists and ankles of Black communities in Mississippi during the 1960s.

“While it flourished, the CDGM was an instrument for childhood education as well as new careers and prideful activism for thousands of very poor adults. In its first year, there were three times as many black children in Head Start as in the first grade of all of Mississippi’s schools; the CDGM was bringing education to many who would not otherwise have had it” (70-71).

Tragically, the burgeoning success of the War on Poverty for the most vulnerable and traumatized of the poor – the children – had seen its end at the decision of powerful racists, who, at the time, deemed civil rights and upstanding Black leaders a threat to their prejudiced morals and political high ground.

As the Vietnam War raged during the Johnson administration, so the War on Poverty was increasingly politicized by the belligerently anti-communist and flagrantly militaristic values of the wartime American state. LBJ needed all of the support he could find from senators, even if they had a track record for being bigoted racists.

“The culture of American politics, with its subordination to racist politicians, was a much bigger problem than the culture of poverty,” Stricker wrote. “In the 60s, infant mortality was rising for blacks in Mississippi. Some federal programs caused more poverty... White leaders told blacks to leave the state. The state gave little aid to the poor, and many blacks could not come up with the cash that was necessary in those days to buy food stamps” (71-72).

More than to understand the causes and effects of poverty, the daily experiences and living conditions of the poor, or to support community resilience in the face of impoverishment, the failures of the War on Poverty exposed the limitations of America’s humanist ideals.

As in the case of Mississippi’s children in the 1960s, the words of Tavis Smiley and Cornel West resound: ‘War is the enemy of the poor’. Not only is it true that war is the enemy of the poor in nations wherein bombs explode, bullets fire, and bodies tear, war is the enemy of the poor in the nation wherefrom war is fought.

In 2012, the cumulative costs of war in Afghanistan and Iraq neared six trillion dollars, accumulating since 2001, notably the most expensive military expenditure in U.S. history. Leading up to America’s imminent withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the ensuing occupations of Iraq, spending will surpass eight trillion dollars.

These numbers represent blatant and overwhelming economic injustice, as not only are the poorest nations on Earth attacked by the wealthiest nations, but also the poorest people within the wealthiest nations continue to absorb the excessive costs of mismanaged power in the wake of so many direct, or proxied American military invasions around the world.

When the democratic act of compromise is not upheld, and those in seats of power debase their humanity, the foundations of the nation begin to decay. The living conditions of the poor in America disprove the legitimacy of armed force in the name of morality.

Whether an uneducated Black child in 1960s Mississippi, or Black émigrés who fled the American South in search of the American Dream in the North, the

unprotected temporary foreign worker in South Carolina, a coal miner's widow without workman's compensation in West Virginia, or the homeless evacuee of Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, the Southern region of America is home to the incomparable suffering of diverse, impoverished communities.

Part III

The Midwest

For the purposes of this study, the official U.S. Census Bureau's Midwest region will extend south from Kansas, covering certain aspects of social economics in Oklahoma and Texas. As United States geography stretches further west, the Great Plains open, expanding outwards along the ascending horizon of flatlands, plateaus and finally, the Rocky Mountain spine that divides the Midwest from the West.

The Midwest also includes the Great Lakes region, encompassing the cities of Chicago, Cleveland and Detroit. As an economic region, the Midwest is defined by domestic and international workforces, with multigenerational farming communities, family businesses and a hefty serving of traditional country values. Similarly as in the American South, the urban and rural divides of the Midwest are embellished to the extreme on both ends of the spectrum.

Natural disasters, such as the infamous Tornado Alley, as well as drought and pestilence often plague many impoverished communities of the Midwest, whose livelihoods are dependent on local land-based resources.

The Midwest, as the Northeastern state of Pennsylvania among other areas in the U.S., is home to religious minorities who live in poverty as an act of moral piety. While technically poor, they choose puritanism over excess.

While such religious minorities do not visibly chase the mainstream American Dream, they are an expression of its ideological counterpart towards free, universal religious tolerance as a basic right guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

Humility and charity are typically religious values that have many derivations among the dominant religious societies of America. The act of charity is generally privatized in America, as among nonprofits, except for charitable acts led by federal foreign aid and domestic welfare, among other institutions. The overt privatization of charity work in America has produced lively debates regarding poverty reduction.

One important example is the ‘poverty tax’, also termed, the ‘millionaires tax’, which imposes special taxes on the wealthy in light of the greater economic circumstances faced by everyone else in the nation. The “poverty tax” might be a fitting policy for the “War on Wealth”, though its political implications are unimaginably nightmarish.

“Nonetheless, under the right conditions, someday a ‘poverty tax’ on the incomes and wealth of the very rich should be politically feasible,” wrote Herbert J. Gans in *The*

War Against the Poor. “Religious organizations that oppose poverty might help too, but support for programs against undeservingness also has to come from liberal thinkers, writers, educators, and others ready to counteract the conservative ideological movement and its supporters” (130).

In America, the dominant religious perspective of the majority overwhelms public debate and discourse on anti-antipoverty measures, exemplified by, among other issues, the perpetual psychological abuse of pregnant women without recourse to abortion in traditionally conservative Christian regions, as is true in the Midwest (and the South) generally.

“Similarly, discouraging and even preventing the poor from obtaining abortions has helped to increase the future number of poor youngsters,” Gans explained, whose remarks expose the rhetorical inconsistencies of religiosity in the wealthy, upper class.

“Schemes to eliminate welfare will make sure to increase that number even further, to worsen their poverty, and help see to it that more of them are forced into street crime when they are adolescents” (100).

America’s economic agenda could be described as a form of secular religion. All under its godlike dominion are expected to be faithful to its standards of living, and invariably to many, so is the rest of the world.

Vows of poverty and worldly renunciation are standard practice in America among minority religionists like the Amish or Hutterites, whose customs include the renunciation of private property and holding all possessions within the common good.

“The Hutterites do not live at the poverty level, although the colony income on a per-family basis is well below \$3,000. Austerity as a way of life results in enormous savings by prevailing American and Canadian standards,” wrote John A. Hostetler in his classic study, *Hutterite Society*. “The widespread belief among outsiders that Hutterite colonies ignore local merchants, buy only from wholesale sources, and are responsible for introducing economic hardship into rural regions is unfounded” (195).

In more than 480 colonies spread throughout the rural Midwest, and western Canada, 40,000 Hutterites live in poverty. Yet, their economic status is a conscious choice, founded in communal and historic ties. Many youth from Hutterite communities search desperately for ways to escape the confining circumstances into which they were born. From a purely economic view, their plight might be contextualized similarly to that of poor pregnant women in America in the Bible

Belt, or poor Black communities in the American South before they emigrated north.

Since the implementation of the New Deal, which can be understood as the predecessor to America's War on Poverty, the Midwest has ever been the target for rural land development, especially as the fluctuating national economy impacts domestic agriculture.

Due to the fact that the costs of food are directly applied to the measure of poverty, agricultural development has maintained a pivotal role in the War on Poverty since its inception. Despite the overall importance of America's rural economy, the War on Poverty demonstrated the unequal balance that was, and continues between urban and rural development.

"The rural areas are looked on as backwaters. The people who live there are looked on as unenterprising and hardly worth saving, because if they had any gumption, they'd get up and leave. Our culture is thoroughly urban-centered," said James Sundquist, member of the War on Poverty Task Force, as chronicled by Michael L. Gillette in his oral history book, *Launching the War on Poverty*. "If there is any attention to rural areas, it tends to be the kind of treatment that is given the Indians in cowboy-and-Indian shows, as a sort of relic from the past" (120).

Farmworkers in American history have encompassed the gamut of slaves, sharecroppers, pickers and industrialists. They suffered the brunt of economic upheaval with a cruel intimacy, especially in the wake of reforms that came after WWII. Just prior to the federal declaration of the War on Poverty, the American economy had shifted from manufacturing and production to consumption and exploitation. The impacts on farmworkers remain detrimental.

"Farmworkers experience among the most disadvantaged conditions in America. Their average annual earnings are far below official poverty levels, an estimated \$6,000 to \$8,000 for a family of five," W.K. Barger and Ernesto M. Raza wrote in *The Farm Labor Movement in the Midwest*, citing data collected during the 1970s. "Farmworkers perform labor that is physically strenuous and often deforming. Working in the fields is a labor that few other Americans can understand" (1762-1763).

The Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) negotiated between farm owners and farmworkers, both of whom were oppressed by the overarching American exceptionalism that stigmatized land labor, and the rural Midwest, as an outmoded socioeconomic order.

"By 1988, FLOC had become a major force in farm labor affairs and a major resource for midwestern farmworkers. On an individual level, FLOC was able to help workers experiencing personal problems," explained Barger and Reza.

"In another case, when one worker had to leave an Ohio farm before the harvest was complete, FLOC explained the circumstances to the grower, so the

worker would not lose either his incentive pay or his seniority for employment the next year" (1828).

While employing international migrants, mainly Latinx farmhands, the Midwest is also home to the domestic émigré's sociocultural nexus of Southerners and Northerners.

"The [Illinois Daily] Journal had long believed that southern Illinois's poor reputation for farm land and commerce lay not in the region's lack of natural advantages, but rather in the failure of its people to take advantage of them... Some Southern settlers in the Midwest agreed in denigrating the economic and social condition of the South," wrote Nicole Etcheson in *The Emerging Midwest*, noting the politicization of regional work cultures in America.

"Nonetheless, the New Englanders were a formidable cultural presence, asserting themselves much more forcefully, out of proportion to their numbers, than any other regional group in the Midwest except for the Southerners" (12-13).

As Midwestern settlers integrated the regional values of America, their societies emphasized the cultural norms of the South in comparison to more Northern affinities. All in all, the settling of the Midwest revealed the conflicted nature of economic progress in America, which would lay embedded in the social milieu of the Midwestern working class.

The Midwest is, to a great extent, the result of social mixtures between Southerners and Northerners as pioneers and farmers settled on arable lands toward the semi-arid Great Plains. Whereas the Southern economy is emblematic of the urban-rural divide, complicated by distinctions of class and race, the Midwest might be identified as an intercultural synthesis of Southern and Northern cultures, especially in the light of the westward expansionism of both Northerners and Southerners throughout the course of American history.

Relative to the War on Poverty, the Midwest represented a unique urban front that could glean lessons from the rural-intensive New Deal of the past, which through Farm Security and the Civilian Conservation Corps, offered an economic window to revitalize rural America. However, the War on Poverty, with its urban-centric focus, reflected the overall trend toward urbanization that followed after WWII, and which continues, controversially overhauling measures to reduce rural poverty, ultimately leaving its wounds sore and vulnerable.

"It left the impression with an awful lot of relatively cynical, high-level bureaucrats that the War on Poverty was just simply a pacification program to prevent city riots more than a sincere effort, like the Resettlement and Farm Security had been," said John Baker, member Poverty Task Force in 1964 and assistant secretary of Agriculture for rural development and conservation, as recorded in Gillette's oral history (406).

The Resettlement Administration, established in 1935 as part of Roosevelt's New Deal transformed into the Farm Security Administration during the Great Depression, before it became the Farmers Home Administration, though not without controversy.

Photography had always been integral to the documentation of the rural Midwest in the context of poverty reduction measures. The Farm Security Administration is today best known for its visual documentation work, which between the years of 1935-1944 photographed farmers and sharecroppers alike, as well as their communities and lands. The photographs endure as icons of the Great Depression in the guise of the government's apparent show of humanism.

"Over time, especially when he was able to travel as a freelancer, the geographic range of his photos reached other corners of Iowa and later other states around the nation," wrote Leslie A. Loveless, who helped forward the work of American myth-makers in *A Bountiful Harvest: The Midwestern Farm Photographs of Pete Wettach, 1925-1965*.

"In 1949, [Pete] Wettach decided to leave government work for good and strike out as a full-time freelance photographer. The FSA [Farm Security Administration] had by then become the Farmers Home Administration, and its mission had evolved through the Depression and World War II as the economic conditions improved for farmers during the war and postwar years" (12).

While farmers may have seen a rise in economic advantages after the postwar boom during the years immediately following the second half of the twentieth century, most workers on farms have been an exception to that rule. The marginalization of most farm labor revealed an unseemly trend in the overall economic order which, for farmers, and federal overseers alike, became a source of civil tension.

"They could not fail to work, because they had no money; they could not fail to pay, because his father would lose his property. It was typical of the arrangements through which Mexicans cross illegally into the United States," Shipley described, noting the experience of indentured servitude that follows migrant workers who arrive to America illegally, most of whom are destined to remain in poverty.

"They hid from border agents in Texas during daylight and walked in darkness, but only for three nights and for short distances...about \$40 for each day of labor. That was still as much in a day as Claudio earned in a week doing farm work in Mexico, so he displayed no hint of grievance" (99-100).

Texas is one of the principal channels through which Latin American migrant workers enter the American labor market, typically as manual laborers in agriculture, textiles, or other related industries. First introduced in the Senate on August 1, 2011, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act,

better known as the DREAM Act, saw unprecedented success in 2012 when Obama began to approve the now over 400,000 undocumented migrants eligible for the programming, out of well over half a million in all.

DREAM Act beneficiaries were mostly youth from across Latin America. They were granted federal rights to permanent residence and other forms of protection from deportation. The DREAM Act legislations represent one especially important and rare civil rights victory in 21st century America under the hyper-inflated immigration security measures implemented by the Obama administration.

Naturally, the federal program has had its restrictions, as youth continue to struggle to maintain equal rights. “Arizona and Nebraska are the only states that prohibit deferred-action recipients from getting driver's licenses,” Daniel Gonzalez wrote in August 2013, for the Arizona Republic, in an article subsequently featured in USA Today.

“But the Senate immigration bill remains stalled in the GOP-controlled House, where Republicans are expected to lay out their own plan for tackling immigration reform in September.” In April of 2021, Dream Act policies reentered legislation through the Senate.

In America, economic advantage is tied to regional circumstance. Such metaphors as “uptick” or “upscale” and “downturn” or a “turn for the worse” denote situational contexts in relation to one’s economic “place”. For this reason, the geographic terms Global North and Global South identify what are also termed “developed nations” versus “developing nations”.

Likewise, the term “migrant”, as in “migrant worker” has similar characteristics, terminologically, to “developing nations” in that it values the quality of flux, change, or transition as economically unstable, ultimately, less financially dependable investment-wise.

In contrast, settling is a characteristic of the economically affluent, who through acquisition and ownership not only climb the economic ladder, but also self-fulfill the prophesy of the American Dream. To settle, in daily parlance, means, to pay. The narrative of settlers versus migrants unravels in the Midwest, as migratory workers maintain the agricultural work required for the settler lifestyle, not only materially but also in terms of socioeconomic position.

“The crackdown also generates some migration – a trip from Ohio, Tennessee, or South Carolina, where the rules are strict, to North Carolina, for example, where lawsuits against the state used to guarantee that anyone without a number was allowed to fill in the blanks with zeros,” Shipler explained, following the migratory logic of workers whose livelihoods depend not merely on wages, but on the regular, and unfairly forced, contravention of the legal order.

“After September 11 and the rising fear of immigrants, North Carolina imposed new requirements: proof of state residency and either a valid Social Security number or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number, available with some difficulty from the IRS” (117).

The legality of immigration does not only influence the individual workers themselves, but also the greater economic order. Statistics deviate relative to impoverished migrants who arrive as foreign workers in waves, and whose presence in the illegal job market penetrates and shifts the poverty rate, with far-reaching consequences.

“If large numbers of foreign unskilled workers migrate to America, the wages of unskilled workers already here will decline,” wrote Peter D. McLelland and Peter H. Tobin in *American Dream Dying*, wherein the authors charted the distribution of wealth according to a highly detailed analysis of the variables influencing unemployment and poverty rates.

“In the long run, their impact on the American wage structure will depend crucially upon the willingness and the ability of new arrivals to raise their education level and skills as well as those of their children” (80).

These examples evidence how inhospitable the Midwest region is to migrant workers, as is true in Nebraska and Ohio, emphasizing the cultural myopia of rural America, whose steadfast settler mythos aggravates the prevailing economic reality for an increasingly numerous sector of the populous.

The Midwest is home to three significant staging grounds for multicultural integration as related to economic reform: Detroit, Cleveland and Chicago. Migrations within migrations have occurred between various regions of the United States, and growing urbanization is an essential part of that saga. The Midwest faces challenges unseen in the history of rural land development.

GMOs (Genetically Modified Food) and seed patenting are two monumental shifts in the rural economy that have single-handedly altered the agricultural landscape of America. The shift is unprecedented, and has been ongoing since the dawn of industrial agriculture, as the privatization of seeds and the genetic modification of foods (which are also partial to private business interests) change grower’s habits, as well as consumption, manufacturing, marketing and purchase from the field to the grocer.

“To combat the problem of pollen drift, in which pollen from GMOs fertilizes plants on adjacent farms, Brown talks to neighboring farmers and plants what neighboring farmers are not planting,” wrote Hilary Davidson for the St. Louis Beacon, concerning St. Louis’s urban garlic farmer Mark Brown, who unknowingly breached Monsanto’s strict legislation on the sale and ownership of their GMO crops.

“Brown has figured out another way to give farmers an alternative. He’s offering free organic seeds to other farmers, in exchange for the same amount of organic seed following the growing season.” Mark Brown inadvertently joined an expanding community of farmers, who spoke out against the unjust policies of GMO corporatization in the wake of patented seeds and copyrighted biota.

Their organized movement is part of a public hearing sponsored by GMO Free Midwest, held in November 2013, an action that maintains solidarity groups nationwide. The labeling of GMO food successfully enacted laws in New England (Connecticut, Maine and Vermont), while referendums in the West (California and Washington) were initially defeated.

Midwest farmers and consumers remain vulnerable to corporate interests, as GMO foods derogue rural and urban communities, as with the breadth of their regional economies for the benefit of multinational investors and corporate profits.

The corporatization of agriculture, as held under multinational investment margins of such companies as Monsanto, the most infamous example, among others, impoverishes farmers, binding them to insuperable cycles of bankrupting debt and legal battles. In turn, the myopia of the Midwest’s farmers with respect to the migrant economy, although inexcusable, is also a product of the narrow economy that has been forcibly imposed on traditional agriculturalists. Consequently, both large-scale and small-scale farmers adopt sustainable farming practices, often independent from government support.

“Use of practices that are compatible with ongoing farming operations (such as grass waterways, riparian buffers, and filter or contour strips) was positively related to farm size, despite the fact that relatively few farms that use those practices received any government conservation program payments...studies of farmers using a package of production practices to improve sustainability in the Midwest and Great Plains found that the farmers tended to have lower levels of capital investment and smaller acreages,” the Committee on Twenty-First Century Systems Agriculture presented, in collaboration with affiliate organizations, in the book, *Towards Sustainable Agricultural Systems in the 21st Century*.

“However, the association between farm scale and use of farming practices for improving sustainability depended on the nature of the practice; larger farms were somewhat more likely to use reduced agrichemical input strategies, while smaller and more diverse farms were more likely to adopt integrated, holistic practices” (329).

Technological intervention into America’s farming communities has always been economically driven, however the ultra-globalized food market has since displaced the momentum of the New Deal, which focused on domestic welfare.

The altered landscape of the American Midwest since the arrival of European settlers has been a direct result of Eurocentric, colonialist farming

practices intended to subdue, tame, domesticate, and possess mass swaths of land. As economic rifts are riven by the overexploitation of natural resources, the human conduit, namely farmers, are stretched thin, subject to self-serving capitalism, multinational outsourcing, and corporatized hierarchies.

“The accumulation and dissemination of farmers’ knowledge and the direction of its innovation displays some continuity with the values of the farmers’ culture. Of course, local cultures may vary widely, even within a relatively homogenous agroecological and economic environment. Neighboring farming communities may invent, adapt, and deploy technology differently,” Gregory McIsaac wrote, introducing the book he edited with William R. Edwards, *Sustainable Agriculture in the American Midwest: Lessons from the Past, Prospects for the Future* (5).

“In many places in the American Midwest, the landscape has been so thoroughly altered by agriculture that it is very difficult to imagine what nature would be doing if no one was farming there. Much of the Illinois and midwestern landscape has been converted from marshy wetlands to cropland” (5).

The rural development, or lack thereof, as it exists in Midwest agricultural communities is directly related to the developments of urbanization. The rural economy has been kept alive through an unhealthy relationship to exploitative industrial agriculture, as well as dependence on the impoverished working class.

“For many, however, employment and population losses, aging populations, and the loss of local institutions and services have been the order of the day. And, contrary to previous periods, these trends have been accompanied by a growing realization that there is little governments can do to reverse long-term economic trends or their underlying forces,” explained Andrew J. Sofranko and Mohamed M. Samy in the book, *The American Midwest: Managing Change in Rural Transition*, edited by Norman Walzer.

“Rural localities still compete with one another in attracting ‘mega-farms’ and agricultural processing plants. And Midwest farmers are showing interest in value-added investments and opportunities in the hope of improving their income while creating off-farm employment, which has become the mainstay of farm family well-being” (42).

While the rural and urban poor face many similar challenges and oppositions from government and corporate interests, solidarity between the two public sectors is rare, however active in such examples as managing GMO crops. Traditionally, the rural and urban poor have been divided by the same principles that unite the ruling class.

“Crudely but clearly stated, those who control the means of physical coercion, and those who control the means of producing wealth, have power over those who do not,” asserted Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward in their 1978

classic study, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*, notably well-reviewed by Michael Harrington, whose book *The Other America* catalyzed much of public opinion in response to the War on Poverty.

"And it is true whether the control of production consists of control by priests of the mysteries of the calendar on which agriculture depends, or control by financiers of the large-scale capital on which industrial production depends. Since coercive force can be used to gain control of the means of producing wealth, and since control of wealth can be used to gain coercive force, these two sources of power tend over time to be drawn together within one ruling class" (1).

Coercion, sadly, is too often part of government-led economic intervention, internationally as well as domestically, typically with regard to protecting private wealth and political power at the expense of the poor and those on the edge of poverty. Civil disobedience in defense of poverty reduction measures is especially concerted and meaningful when urban and rural economies are united under the same banner, demonstrating, as seen when city workers and land laborers march together.

Richard Cloward, author of *Poor People's Movements*, worked as a director of research for the War on Poverty program, "Mobilization for Youth", which targeted inner city poor youth. Their projects suffered from a series of impracticalities while applying their policies in the field.

"The poor have never represented a large or consistently self-defined class in America, and pushing a political agenda on their behalf frequently precipitates a broad hostile reaction rather than Piven and Cloward's (1971) assurance of negotiation," William M. Epstein wrote insightfully, and critically, in *Democracy without Decency*.

"It says much about the contemporary role of the social sciences that Cloward and Ohlin's Delinquency and Opportunity enjoyed such pervasive influence over the design of the War on Poverty without a critical reading of its tenets and oppositions. At best, opportunity theory was an immature supposition, at worst a jumble of hopeful maxims thrown together in imitation of geometry's logic – a series of propositions derived from intuition and an analysis of the text, the hermeneutic style applied to the existing literature of social problems" (37-38).

The War on Poverty, as with federal programming in general, is often bogged down by over-authoritative, classist research methodologies. The War on Poverty continues to be fought mainly within the narrow, government-centric intelligence models of the federal government that stigmatizes when it should liberate, conditions when it should assist.

As labor history is related to the sweep of urbanization, urban economics has a reputation for marginalizing rural economic development, not only by displacing

the workforce through top-down investment, but also with the unique 20th century rise of the idle middle class, what might be aptly termed the consumer class.

Idleness, consumption, remoteness stimulated America's post-WWII suburban economy, which became the leading symbol of modern civilization and economic development, marginalizing urban workers, while further marginalizing the rural sector.

"In the late 40s and the 50s, whites moved to the suburbs and to the South and the West, but two-thirds of black migrants moved from the South to the Midwest and Northeast, often to cities that were leaking industrial jobs... The big three automakers built twenty-five plants in the metropolitan area of Detroit, but in search of pliant labor and cheap land, they built every single one in the suburbs," described author Frank Stricker in *Why America Lost the War on Poverty and How to Win It*.

"Detroit's manufacturing production force fell by half... In East St. Louis, Fargo, Chicago, and Oklahoma City, 30,000 meatpacking jobs disappeared in 1956-59. Chicago lost a third of its blue-collar factory jobs (1944- 63)... When jobs were suburbanized it was hard for blacks to follow. Federal housing agencies did not support shelter for blacks in the suburbs" (26).

The resulting social effects of suburbanizing the American economy was that the momentum left poor Black communities behind, leaving them in such defunct Midwestern cities as Detroit, Cleveland and Ohio, where they became targets for conservative debates on welfare. Late in the third quarter of the 20th century, reformists who supported antipoverty measures in these Black communities came under fire for impinging on domestic federal spending.

Job creation endures as fundamental to the debate on poverty reduction, as classist and racist lenses are smudged clean by decades of work on socio-political consensus, to build a more tolerant national self-image, especially in the wake of Obama's presidency.

"In some places, the decline halted in the 60s, but in the 70s things got worse almost everywhere. Chicago lost 212,000 jobs (1969-77)... By the late 70s and certainly by the mid-1980s – and except for the 1981-82 depression – moralistic ideas did more than economic facts like unemployment to shape public discourse above poverty and insecurity," Stricker wrote.

"There was plenty of information and theory for a compelling economic story to compete against the focus on drugs, crime, and welfare; it was a story of people looking for work, and often taking it, even at meager wages. It was also a story of the job seeker turned away" (150- 151).

The 1970s is regarded as one of the toughest decades for economically underprivileged Chicagoans, with a poverty rate that began at a 22% to 29%. Wealthy Black businessmen responded by collaborating with national franchises to

open \$20 million in jobs by 1974. In the second decade of the 21st century, Chicago stood among the top three cities with the highest extreme poverty rates (living under less than half the poverty threshold) in America, at 10.4% in 2011. In 2020, one in ten residents of Chicago still lived in extreme poverty.

In 1970s America it was easier for the public, especially those families living more affluently than they had a generation ago in the growing suburbs to imagine the War on Poverty as the exasperated, compassionate efforts of governmental leadership to assist crime-ridden, disaffected neighborhoods who were being administered welfare.

Controversy, and ill-informed public opinion looked at the destitution and marginality of inner city neighborhoods, and as the habitat of an underclass somehow preternaturally disposed to indigence and dependency, either physically on drugs, or financially on welfare “checks”. Rumors circulated, which had been accumulating since the War on Poverty, and were exacerbated by late 20th century American economic competition as the middle class swelled.

Conversely, in the words of antipoverty academic Frank Stricker, “corporate ruthlessness and government inaction” were more the order of the day when it came to the causes of poverty. Beyond class and racial distinctions, the Midwest exposed the situation of America’s poor as the result of transitory economic growth, controlled by the myth of suburbanization as the epitome of upward mobility toward greater wealth and opportunity. Meanwhile, as federal campaigns sought intervention by theorizing and practicing an impressive slew of participatory means to engage with the poor, government action simply pandered to the consumerism of the status quo.

Finally, the American government and the majority of Americans remain untrusting and ignorant of the type of economy that could emerge by creating dignified, empowering jobs for the poorest in society. The mobility of poor communities is a constantly novel tactic in the interest of sociopolitical progress. As with the idealism of the War on Wealth, the heroism of American politics is disenfranchising to community leaders working to sway economic activity so as to cultivate greater political and financial capacity for more people.

As seen in the example of GMO agriculture, so the human communities of the Midwest, as with the rest of America, exemplify the potential of alternative socioeconomic growth models. If only society was less stifled by the political and economic myopia of racial class division and the excesses of capitalist greed, local communities could counter their historic debasement and legally enforce the logistics required for their economic advancement.

Part IV

The West

From the red deserts of the pueblo-studded Southwest, to the high plains of Montana in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, the dense highways of Los Angeles, the blistering tundras of Alaska, old-growth redwood forests lining the Pacific Northwest, and the volcanic mountains of Hawaii across the Pacific Ocean, the American West is home to stunning natural landscapes.

Within its ecological diversity, America's last frontier harbors beleaguered populations living in unrivaled destitution and poverty. The epic bounty of natural resources in the West has led to the region's enduring economic competitive edge over every other region.

"From 2003 to 2013, it enjoyed the most rapid population growth in the nation: 21%," wrote Joel Kotkin, of *Forbes*, wherein he analyzed the traditional geography of the West relative to the overall economic growth of the nation.

"Over the past decade the area has enjoyed nearly 8% job growth, the strongest in the country, with the highest rate of STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics] growth in the nation over the past decade."

Local communities in the region, however, remain divided by a wide income gap. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2011 American Community Survey, nearly 4 million people in Los Angeles were living under half of the poverty line, also termed "extreme poverty", where a family of three lives on about \$9,500 or less for twelve months. In 2019, statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau showed that 1.4 million people were living in poverty.

While the sum total of people living in extreme poverty in Los Angeles is less than in New York City, by more than half, L.A. ranked six in the top ten American cities with the highest "extreme poverty" rate, standing at 9.2% for the entire population. In light of the regional economics of the West, while one city ranking sixth may not be especially exceptional, the fact that three other cities from California joined the top ten list is significant. Phoenix, Arizona, also within the Western region, ranked second.

Based on U.S. Census Bureau data alone, extreme poverty is an epidemic in the American West. However, statistics only go so far in accurately portraying, or doing justice to the experience of those living on the frontlines of the War on Poverty. All too familiar are the statistical and numerical equations of poverty.

While essential, the multifarious approaches to data collection and analysis engineered by the federal government, as well as various organizations, have a precarious relationship to the actual depth of community engagement.

“If there is not an infinite variety of income definitions of poverty, there certainly is a bewildering number. All this complicates life not only for the bureaucrats and program administrators, but, more importantly, for the poor...there is no consistent, predictable standard. As a consequence, the poor may or may not be able to take advantage of programs ostensibly established for their benefit,” reads the book, *Reflections of America*, edited by Norman Cousins, wherein author Graciela Olivarez weighs the practical value of statistical information.

“While it is fashionable to denigrate statistics and statisticians as somehow removed from humanity and the quality of life, effective social programs, at least, depend for good reasons on statistics and those who collect and interpret them” (154).

The politics of the War on Poverty influenced the slightest details of its administration. The Office of Economic Opportunity, a central channel through which the War on Poverty programming was implemented endured challenges regarding effective regional representation amid boardroom policy-making. The Economic Opportunity Act, which led to the Office of Economic Opportunity (which is essentially as an agency for its programming), is commonly referred to as the Poverty Bill, and also the antipoverty law.

In practice, divisive bureaucracy hampered many reforms from their inception. One of the general setbacks of the federal administration of poverty reduction measures was the lack of genuine outreach and capacity building to empower poor communities to become self-directed.

“In San Francisco, however, the target areas won a majority of the seats on the Economic Opportunity Council, the city- wide CAA [Community Action Agency], as well as a majority on the area boards. But the victory has carried a price,” wrote Lillian B. Rubin in her essay, *Maximum Feasible Participation*, which appeared in *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science*, edited by Richard D. Lambert in 1969.

“The boards have been rent by seemingly endless quarrels, born, in part, from a basic lack of understanding of the difference between policy-making and administrative functions and from a fear that to give up any part of decision-making is to let slip the reins of control. Thus, critics insist that until poor people gain the requisite skills and experience, experts must run the programs” (24).

The obsolescence of “expert” and “authority” perspectives, especially in the context of power imbalances, is part of a number of progressive methodologies in the social sciences which were not theoretically or pragmatically adopted by hierarchical rungs of mid-twentieth century American governance.

Despite the patriarchal tone of the War on Poverty as it emerged from the opulent halls of the White House, militant, action-based civil rights groups often furthered the antipoverty cause with more immediacy through effective community

participation. When people are allowed to help themselves there is less of the residual social negativity attached to overly politicized and popularly stigmatized federal aid to ‘the poor’ as an officiated, and therefore marginalized, demographic identity.

“In communities all over America militant groups have organized independently to alleviate their distress. Small victories are won – a tenants’ council in San Francisco’s Hunters Point forces the Housing Authority to paint the buildings...a coalition of organizations defeats a San Francisco urban renewal plan that threatens homes and community without offering satisfactory alternatives,” Rubin confirmed with consistent and straightforward analysis in concert with government-sponsored research.

“And each victory generates confidence in self – a necessary precondition to action – and confidence in the efficacy of organization to correct the gnawing grievances that plague their lives” (29).

Nationwide, community-based initiatives have always formed in response to the alleviation of poverty. The Black Panthers, for instance, who practiced an autonomous vision of local law and order, sought to liberate American ghettos from the underwhelming support they received from the federal government, not to mention the paralysis of destructive tendencies they confronted against their contemporaneous public at large.

In the years immediately preceding the War on Poverty’s official declaration under the Johnson administration of the mid-1960s, the 1950s was marked by the consistent derailment of intellectual and social diversity amid its dominant political and economic order. Due to the crushing impacts of the House of Un-American Activities (HUAC), which emerged together with McCarthyism, liberal views and communities were often squandered.

Any socialist or communistic tendencies, especially in light of poverty relief would be equally dismissed. Author Sidney Lens expressed as much in *Poverty: America’s Enduring Paradox*, subtitled, “A History of the Richest Nation’s Unwon War”, noting that the act of McCarthyism, HUAC, and other anti-communist agendas to all of the leaders of alternative organizations to hand over their membership lists, “cast a pall on dissent and reformism” (299).

The HUAC had fomented a certain degree of paranoia not only among politicians, but also in the psychological fear that set in throughout the masses.

“The poor, the, both visible and invisible, had few allies and little refuge from which to seek succor. Their numbers were not negligible: as late as 1953 a quarter of all families or ‘spending units’ in the country survived on less than \$2,000 a year,” wrote Lens.

“Yet America forged for itself the self-indulgent thesis that it had done just about all that could be done to banish poverty...If there were poor people around,

it could not be charged to their lack of education or other factors but to ‘low intelligence or low ambitions.’ If the vote for him [Barry Goldwater] was any barometer, tens of millions of people – 27,174,898 — agreed” (299-300).

In the three years after the formal declaration of the War on Poverty, living conditions in the American West had tragically plateaued. Poverty was, as it is still now, endemic to the region. The impoverished urban communities of San Francisco and Los Angeles became so desperate that riots among underprivileged residents stressed the rock-bottom state of affairs in the region, as comparative to other regional economies in the United States at the time.

“The Chicago Sun-Times dispatched a young reporter, Morton Kondracke, in May 1967 to detail what had happened to the riot-torn cities of the previous two years. In Los Angeles and San Francisco he found ‘there is a debate whether conditions...are any better at all. In Cleveland, there is virtual unanimity that conditions are disastrously worse,’ Lens wrote.

“In 1967 the Department of Labor’s Manpower Report stated that the life in the slums had become worse in the intervening three years” (317).

As a result of the precarious beginnings to the War on Poverty, there was a serious lack of trust in such programs as Head Start, Job Corps, Medicaid, and less federally institutionalized, however equally prioritized, programming in public housing.

In fact, riots have been foundational to War on Poverty history. The Northeastern region saw riots before and after official measures were taken by Washington to enact Economic Opportunity, the first formal legislation of the War on Poverty, passed in the summer of 1964. The 1963 March on Washington for Freedom and Jobs was then followed by urban riots encircling the nation’s capitol.

“The bill passed during the summer of 1964, as urban riots swept across Harlem, Bedford Stuyvesant, Rochester, Jersey City, Paterson, Elizabeth, Chicago, and Philadelphia. Perhaps the timing was merely coincidental. However, the structure of the War on Poverty suggests otherwise,” explained Jill Quadagno in *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty*.

“While the War on Poverty began as a top-down effort, civil rights activists rapidly seized the opportunity that the local initiatives had created, pushing the Great Society mandate one step further. The War on Poverty would do more than eliminate impediments. It would extend equal opportunity to African Americans and complete the task of fully democratizing society” (30-31).

Among the economically marginalized, the right to jobs was being equated with freedom, and as political talk and legislative actions on poverty reduction mounted in Washington so did its hypocrisies. Black communities in particular became enraged, as many saw the new government interventions as another

example of their equal rights being undermined their lack of representation aggravated.

Likewise, social and economic marginality further stigmatized the poor through the lenses of race and class. While the racial focus for the eyes of Washington remained on the South, where popular history most readily afforded a political example of progressive equal rights measures, the opaque shadow of racial silence cast over the West had been torn apart in the Watts riots.

"In the summer of 1965, just six days after Congress had passed the Voting Rights Act, Watts, a poor, black neighborhood in Los Angeles, erupted with a fury so intense it seemed nothing could stop the waste and destruction," wrote professor Quadagno.

"As a stunned nation watched five nights of televised disorder, the message that the progress toward black equality could not assuage black anger over more deeply ingrained racial inequalities became embedded in the national conscience. At the heart of the message was a demand for the right to work" (66-67).

The early 1960s was a time when Black Power was gaining ground in America, especially among public intellectuals concerned with civil rights. Thus, the implementation of War on Poverty measures had to adjust to burgeoning social issues as the race wars merged with class conflicts. The Community Action Program (CAP), exposed underlying discrepancies within the sensitive, racialized socio-political contexts of Los Angeles, California.

The mid-1960s saw the initiation of the Community Action Program's application into vulnerable communities in Los Angeles, when each family living in poverty in L.A. received a mere \$25 while Chicago families received \$211 under the same programmatic jurisdiction. Generally speaking, geographical regions in the United States are divided culturally, particularly when comparing the postcolonial privilege of the Northeastern United States to other regions.

Such regional divisions impact the national economy negatively, further worsening the deep trench of ineffectual antipoverty policies, as seen in the blatant, political exploitation of underprivileged communities in the American West.

"Los Angeles thus became the only one of our five cities in which power was so dispersed that a group of private agencies not only claimed preeminence over the local government in receiving federal antipoverty funds but actually obtained tacit support from the state government in the conflict which followed," wrote J. David Greenstone and Paul E.

Peterson in *Race and Authority in Urban Politics*, where they astutely revealed the character of political manipulation in L.A. in terms of the rhetoric of the War on Poverty in which the poor were often referred to in the plural, as recipients of "community" funds

“Significantly, the whole controversy continued until August 1965 after the Watts riot had focused national attention on Los Angeles... With so many autonomous participants, the cumbersome process of reaching a decision had delayed submission of acceptable proposals to OEO, costing Los Angeles much of its federal CAP money for the 1965-1966 fiscal year” (31-32).

Policy-makers in the Black community also sought the reformist principles of autonomy with the intention to represent their unemployed, or underemployed, populous. In consequence, the political maneuvering that was required to represent lesser-voiced perspectives had controversial implications.

“Polarized conflict also characterized the politics of participation in Los Angeles. Various black professionals in the social welfare field led the first protests, which won important, but temporary support from Progressive Conservatives in the private welfare community,” Greenstone and Peterson described in *Race and Authority in Urban Politics*.

“Together they publicly sought to establish a structure for the administration of a CAP distinct from any governmental agency” (275).

The politics of participation revealed power imbalances, where poor communities were generally forced to assimilate into the economic orders imposed on their communities. In a society where dominant economic institutions stigmatized and disempowered the poor, it was only natural that the civil outbursts of riot and protest would become the more impactful means of campaigning to drum up public interest.

In short, protestors would demand that participation be defined by target communities, and not by the government that had historically marginalized and impoverished them over centuries of forced enslavement, failed assimilation and racist humiliation.

“The pervasive fragmentation of southern California’s civic life, fundamental to every interpretation of Los Angeles politics, prevented minority groups from amassing sufficient political resources to achieve significant levels of participation,” wrote Greenstone and Peterson.

“Although it was limited, participation in Los Angeles was greater than in either Chicago or Philadelphia... In contrast to the older cities of the East and Midwest, which grew compactly along waterways and later along railroad and trolley tracks, Los Angeles’ great population spurt took place when the automobile gave immigrants a greater flexibility in choosing their place of residence” (29-30).

The double-edged sword of mobility in Los Angeles, and southern California at large, translated into a dispersal of organized solidarity. Alienation and isolation has been a common experience for modern Americans in southern California. Yet, while the War on Poverty can be said to have been non-participatory, or even anti-participatory, due to selfish political incursions into various outreach proceedings,

voting registration and community organization amid the scattered human landscape of Los Angeles was notably won, even if only humbly.

Not only were anti-participatory measures between bureaucrats and community representatives debilitating, they sometimes led to inter-community strife. The two most populous impoverished communities of southern California have had a confrontational history. Mexican-Americans and African-Americans number as the largest minority groups in the region.

Over half of the United States' Mexican-American population lives in the West, according to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau statistics. While the West has the lowest number of African-Americans in the United States, California itself ranks fifth among the states with the highest African-American populations. It is important to note as well that Mexican-American and African-American are not mutually exclusive identities, as a 2000 U.S. Census report showed that over 2 percent of African-Americans also identify as Latinx.

During the height of War on Poverty policy-making, inter-racial stigmas were increasingly fraught, as minorities were divided between each other, not only from the majority.

"The greater level of influence by community representatives over the program, the greater the level of conflict within the community, particularly in neighborhoods of ethnic or racial heterogeneity. As representatives of the poor gained more control over the allocation of poverty program resources, they found more at stake to divide them," Greenstone and Peterson wrote.

"Competition for power within the community forced the competing leaderships to justify their appeal for community support by representing broad community interests... The Los Angeles CAP [Community Action Program] had no NPCs [Neighborhood Poverty Councils], and therefore the only intraneighborhood conflicts observable were among staff members themselves. Among these officials, the most significant conflicts were between blacks and Mexican Americans" (183).

As a result of intra-neighborhood conflict, critics of the War on Poverty may have been quick to delegitimize community-led actions in light of civil unrest. Even if its measures to reduce poverty were problematic, the War on Poverty did stimulate intercultural and interracial community dialogue, as the democratic and grassroots activism of community leaders compelled poor neighborhoods to unify and represent themselves.

For interventionists, poverty could be better assessed when its target demographics were consolidated into representable, and democratically-engaged community targets. The value of political participation had deeply undercut community-led measures toward poverty reduction. War on Poverty measures

empowered politicians to exploit impoverished communities when and where participation led to certain electoral persuasions.

The press offered evidence for the representative biases within the ranks of the powerful in their relations with silenced and vulnerable socioeconomic minorities. In the example of the city of Los Angeles, the press fostered the continued silencing of marginalized voices solely by virtue of disinterest.

“Without any patronage-oriented media, the [Los Angeles] Times had no organizational interest in encouraging militant activity in poor areas. In sum, Progressive Conservative newspapers, like Progressive Conservative Republicans, supported participation when and only when it suited their electoral or organizational interests,” Greenstone and Peterson wrote, comparing the regional social milieus in which newspapers were directly manipulated by politicized participation in the War on Poverty.

“When ideologies are indifferent or irrelevant to the issue at hand, the electoral/organizational model, as we have seen, can anticipate rather accurately the position of political actors. The reverse is also true. Where electoral interests are uncertain, ideologies appear to motivate behavior” (150).

The decade prior to the declaration of the War on Poverty saw Americans across the board driven by mutual impetuses towards social change. Population shifts were spurred on North and West, as rural farmlands and racially-segregated regions were being evacuated by multigenerational outmigrations and the economic shifts that ensued.

As chronicled in the book, *War on Poverty*, former senator Hubert H. Humphrey wrote authoritatively on the comprehensive series of socioeconomic reforms that became categorized under the slew of historic antipoverty measures. In response to the quickening changes in regional demographics, the American government would have to strengthen newfound ties with communities that were never more vulnerable than by their self-propelled internal displacements.

“Arizona, Alaska, California, and Delaware grew at a rate of 20 to 40 per cent. At the same time, Arkansas, West Virginia, and Mississippi lost population at the rate of 20 per cent or more,” Humphrey wrote.

“By 1980, more than three quarters of our people, a sum greater than our present population, will be living on 10 percent of our land area in giant cities primarily around the sea coasts and the Great Lakes area. The heartland of America is being drained” (50).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1960, four years prior to the publication of Humphrey’s *War on Poverty* book, nearly 70% of Americans were urbanized. By 2020, 80% of the American population had urbanized.

In keeping with its reputation, the American West is the backbone of America's natural resource economy. Central to natural resource development in the West are migrant workers who fulfill the underpaid roles required by the struggling rural economy, especially in non-energy sectors such as agriculture.

"In the effort to raise the level of rural living we must not overlook the 2 million men, women, and children who work for wages on the farms of the United States...Automation has not come to the business of picking fruit and vegetables. Usually this backbreaking work is done by hand, and this work does not pay well," Humphrey wrote, disgusted by the deplorable conditions faced by such an unspeakably numerous population.

"Migratory farm laborers can be found throughout the southern part of the country, particularly in Florida, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and California, where most fruits and vegetables are grown" (77).

At the time of his writing, the American West was home to more fruit and vegetable harvesting than any other region. Today, dependence on foreign labor, and more specifically, hand harvesting remains a pertinent, and unresolved issue when reflecting on the legacy of the War on Poverty in the workforce.

"The hand harvesting of fruit and vegetable crops in the United States is a labor-intensive operation that accounts for about 50 percent of total production costs," so confirmed researchers Yoav Sarig, James F. Thompson and Galen K. Brown, who first presented their findings at the annual international meeting of the American Society of Agricultural Engineering in 1999.

"However, at least 20 to 25 percent of the U.S. vegetable acreage and 40 to 45 percent of the U.S. fruit acreage is totally dependent on hand harvesting. The crops represent about 30 percent of the U.S. fruit, nut, and vegetable acreage and have an annual farm-gate value of over \$13 billion."

The larger picture of poverty in America is essentially dependent on the economic reality of every resident in America, as opposed to every citizen. Nationalism, and conservatism in American in general in and of itself could be said to be antithetical to poverty reduction in America, where so many poor communities are migrant workers. Often many succeeding generations of American residents, and even those who become citizens, are impacted by policy with regard to citizenry, and temporary foreign work.

"Some political scientists have even suggested that we may be nearing the point at which we must contemplate revision of our Constitution to take into consideration the reality of metropolitan areas whose population exceeds the combined populations of several entire states," Humphrey wrote.

"Los Angeles has found that blighted areas cost the city 87 per cent more per capita in police services, 67 per cent more in Fire Department services, and 125 per

cent more in health services than more prosperous communities, while yielding only 38 per cent as high a rate of tax revenues" (54).

Immigration, or more accurately, the condition in which immigrants live, is inextricably tied to economics, especially so in America, where the Mexican-American border maintains one of the largest currency gaps on any land border anywhere in the world.

One of the revelations of the War on Poverty has been true for the historical and contemporary majority of American political leadership, which is that it has been marred by intellectual poverty. The War on Poverty did facilitate examples of American leadership, such as former senator Hubert H. Humphrey, who represented the state of Minnesota before and after serving as vice-president to Lyndon B. Johnson from 1965 to 1969.

Humphrey bore crucial witness to the formative period of the War on Poverty, as espoused in his book. His loss in the presidential race to Richard Nixon was arguably detrimental to the progress of War on Poverty reforms.

Humphrey analogized the distended political mire of L.A. within the larger sphere of analyses on poverty reduction in America. As with all wars, whether armed struggles, or otherwise, it could be said to have been a "lack of imagination" (to use the example of controversial former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara), which led to the failures of the War on Poverty.

"It is said that it would take a major catastrophe to get the diverse and quarreling jurisdictions which make up the greater metropolitan area of, for instance, Los Angeles to work and plan together. Well, then let it be noted that a major cutback in defense procurement would be the nearest thing to a great economic catastrophe," Humphrey detailed, noting the extraordinary margin of economic dependency on defense spending in the Western economy, and thus qualifying America's addiction to warfare.

"Perhaps the planning and reconstruction of a great American city designed for people rather than automobiles would take years...Are we going to be content to plan piecemeal
– to clear away a few blocks of downtown blight in order to put up some tall buildings and call it urban renewal?" (61-62).

Regardless of popular critiques on the poor themselves, such democratic political leaders as Hubert Humphrey spoke to the inherent poverty of America's social system as the enduring legacy of the War on Poverty era. In effect, poverty, or lack of imaginative or creative wealth concerning urban development and job creation led to the imminent downfall that today has amounted to the economic atrocities of America's "recovery" income gaps in which severely incensed populations band together in the name of basic human dignity.

More and more, the devastating social effects of poverty have become integrated into the American economy, not only through exorbitant spending, which has mounted since the era of the War on Poverty, but also in terms of impacting the land itself. American culture, and no less its economic culture, is fundamentally a dualism of extremes – poverty and wealth.

Whereas poverty rates have plateaued since the midcentury, due in part to the success of the War on Poverty, wealth has risen excessively. The War on Poverty's successes are, however, largely a function of the American public's social consciousness rising to fulfill the constitutionally enshrined, universal equal right to a fair and just life.

America's new plutocratic hierarchy, as facilitated by the economic myth of exceptional and perpetual growth, has spread income gaps to unseen disproportions. America's poor have remained fixed to a quality of life measured by "having less".

Consumerism is not only about material consumption, but also the consumption of ideology, culture, mythology, tradition and political rhetoric. One could argue that poverty is politically essential to America's version of hypercapitalist, plutocratic economic growth, as there must be a significant population who are always in need, not merely as a form of cheap labor, but as a reliable consumer, as even the middle-class and wealthiest consume as if it were an American virtue.

National media, corporate technology, big agriculture and housing finance, are among the consumer engines that feed the American way of life, even if they are tantamount to the economic equivalent of empty calories. Meanwhile, as the poor and middle-class are exploited in the private corporate sector of consumer technology, the government absorbs taxpayers' income to wage war on poverty.

If the true successes of the War on Poverty are to be measured, it could be that it has kept the poor and certain sections of the working middle-class exactly where they are, so that the wealthy continue to grow wealthier. The War on Poverty is not only fought as a class struggle, as waged between different groups of people. It has worse repercussions.

As there remains an economically dependent population, desperate to survive in the eyes of the nation, so there are millions who are ensnared in an economic order that destroys as it deceives and devastates as it demeans. The American West is one example, where, as the world has looked at the America example of civil rights activism in Northeastern cities, it shames the same nation for its ecological ignorance and environmental abuses in the West.

The hypercapitalist economic order is blameworthy, as antipoverty programs nominally intended to assist vulnerable populations toward upward mobility, merely become exploitative. The American West is a place of singular importance

as the nation faces permanent ecological challenges. With climate change, deforestation, ocean acidification, oil spills, and other environmental atrocities plaguing the region, one of the longest lasting battles on the environmental front has ever been the preservation of old-growth forests.

From the mountainsides of Colorado, throughout northern California and along the Pacific Northwest, all the way to lands bordering the Arctic, the invaluable biodiversity in America's old growth forests is not only vital for Americans, but also for the entire world.

"For millions of Californians, Oregonians, Washingtonians, and Alaskans, these old-growth forests are a source of income, inspiration, pride, and, quite recently, conflict. For millions more who simply visit or read about these now embattled forests, they are a touchstone of the wilderness and the stopping place of two centuries of westward expansion that transformed everything in its path," Kenton Miller and Laura Tangleay wrote in *Trees of Life: Saving Tropical Forests and Their Biological Wealth*.

"And to the rest of the world, the fate of these breathtakingly beautiful and ecologically vital forests is a litmus test of Americans' commitment to keeping the world's great forests alive...Who owns them is no mystery; it's the federal government" (170-171).

For people in the American West, especially those under the poverty line, the timber industry is intimately intertwined with economic wellbeing. However, a dangerous combination of product exports and the unchanging face of labor has led workers in the forestry sector to unforeseen levels of destitution. When after one community in northwestern California, specifically in Trinity County, ran the numbers on their timber industry and its relation to the local economy, the results showed a trend increasingly common among local economies in America today, especially in the natural resources sector.

"Data showed that between 1991 and 1996, only 7 percent of the value of timber sales and 6 percent of the value of reforestation/restoration contracts had gone to local contractors. In other words, almost all the activities taking place in the forest were benefitting companies and individuals based outside the county," Michelle Miller-Adams explained in *Owning Up: Poverty, Assets, and the American Dream*.

"But the historical analysis concerning the relationship between timber harvests and poverty drew the greatest attention from the community. Residents had long believed that their community's economic health was tied tightly to the fortunes of the timber industry; it surprised many to learn that, since the mid-1980s, poverty in the county had grown even in years when the timber harvest was high" (68).

Part of the larger economic trend of globalization is the integration of local resources (whether by volunteerism, coercion or force) into the free markets of international trade. Therein, investment networks, for example between the energy sector, and manufacturing, inevitably intersect over the course of capital finance. In this scheme, debt is essential. However, while in the abstract world of finance, debt may be essential, its practical repercussions in the worlds of manual labor are hardly desirable.

The more a country sells its real wealth, i.e. natural resources, to the international market, the more it enters the one-way street of debt finance. Unlike the intangible financial truths of the investment banker, non-renewable resources cannot be paid back. America is uniquely partial to this economic arrangement, both imposing its order internationally, as on its local citizenry.

“Much of the pressure to log our last ancient forests has come from outside our borders. Foreign timber companies, mainly Japanese, are outbidding U.S. companies for logs taken from state and private lands. According to Timothy Egan, one of every four logs cut from the West Coast, including Alaska, is shipped overseas,” Miller and Tangleay wrote, noting the research of American environmental writer Timothy Egan.

“Spurred by such tough competition, U.S. companies have pressured the government to allow them to cut more timber from national forests – the only lands from which the export of raw logs has so far been banned. To conservationists’ dismay, the Forest Service has obliged industry” (173).

One of the imperatives of economic progress, besides reducing poverty, is to ensure a degree of economic security for future generations. At the beginning of the 21st century, multinational corporate consumerism continues to deplete non-renewable natural resources, while the biodiversity of the planet is fast diminished. The lasting truth in the environment versus the economy debate is that it is essentially America’s children, future generations, who will bear the brunt of the impending economic disasters wrought by the inevitabilities of climate change.

If resources are consumed as they are today in the future, current poverty levels will be slight in comparison. Nevertheless, child poverty in America is at a rate unparalleled. From 1996 to 2011, when the number of people living in extreme poverty doubled to 1.5 million households, the statistic, presented by the National Poverty Center, also included 2.8 million children.

“The problems are reflected across America, says the nationwide charity Feeding America, which operates 200 food banks and feeds 37 million people each year, including 14 million children,” wrote Walter Duncan for the BBC News in an article titled, ‘The children going hungry in America’.

The National Poverty Center designates extreme poverty as \$2, or less, per person, per day. Further, in March of 2013, Duncan’s BBC News report that child

poverty had risen by 35% from 2007 to 2013, which cumulated to a sum total of nearly seventeen million children currently living in “food insecure” households in America.

Since the economic beginnings of the West in the American consciousness, the region has always been held as the crown of the American Dream in its most salient characteristics, i.e. independence, entrepreneurialism and wealth. Equally, however, the West has challenged economic migrants with the pragmatism of settlement.

“Starting over in the West cost money. Pioneers had to pay to transport themselves, their families, and their equipment. They needed capital to erect a house, outbuildings, and fences; to stock the farm; and to support the family for two years often required until the farm could feed them. Another two years might then have to pass before the farm yielded a surplus that could be sold,” Catherine Reef wrote in her succinctly titled book, *Poverty in America*.

“It was possible for a poor man to go west if he traveled alone and signed on as a hand with a family making the journey, and if after reaching his destination he were willing to labor for a railroad or a mining or a timber company. A poor woman could support herself in the West as a teacher, domestic servant, or prostitute. The majority of western migrants, however, were from the prosperous middle class; successful farmers, merchants, lawyers, and the like” (79).

Truly a microcosm of American life, the West remains synonymous with the idealistic economic virtues of development. In practice, however, America may still be in the same situation as those early migrants who arrived to the West with nothing more than a need to depend on the land, and a hope that it would produce a surplus; that it might be sold.

Finally, the extent of extreme poverty in the American West is characterized by the disillusionment of the American Dream. The reality, for many, is a daily struggle to perform the duties of a hard-earned living in a region with narrowly defined economic niches. The experience of the impoverished in the West, before, during and after the War on Poverty has been isolation over independence, dependency over community, and, lastly, cost over value.

Politics in the metropolitan sphere divided impoverished communities, whose destitution only rivaled multigenerational land laborers with livelihoods undercut by the ruthlessly globalized natural resource economy. As throughout America, the West represented the socio-economic tendencies of a largely urbanized populous. While living under extreme duress, residents of the American West desperately cling to a system that exploits and wastes not only natural resources, but also the human populations dependent on them. The ongoing terror of ecological destitution is a form of poverty far more disastrous than income disparity.

Part V

Indian Country

The lands known colloquially as ‘Indian Country’ encompass the territories of the American Indian reservation system in the United States, which is part of the ongoing legacy of British and American colonization. The 326 reservations located in the U.S. are the result of historic and outstanding land title claims that Native American communities compromised with American settlers and European imperialists.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs holds 55.7 million surface acres and 57 million acres of subsurface minerals in trust, on behalf of Native American land claims, even despite the fact that approximately 250 federally recognized tribes do not have a reservation. More often than not, these geographical boundaries reflect settler entitlement over Native American communities, who at the time when reservations were imposed, had engaged in histories of conflict and diplomacy with American colonizers, as well as the British crown.

Such terms as “off the reservation” and “into Indian country” continue to be used in the American military lexicon in reference to armed conflicts, where soldiers are deployed off base in enemy territory. This language recalls the epochs of armed struggle between Native Americans and American settlers, as well as immigrants.

“The term used when you leave a military base in a foreign country is to go ‘off the reservation, into Indian Country.’ So what is that messaging that is passed on? You know, it is basically the continuation of the wars against indigenous people,” said internationally renowned Anishinaabe author and activist Winona LaDuke on Democracy Now!

“But then there is the reality of — that things in Indian Country are not getting better. You can’t keep putting money in the federal budget for the military and robbing everything else, so that people on my reservation and other reservations don’t have housing, don’t have education money, don’t have health service, you know, don’t have basic, basic rights. And the only way in the native community, really, to get economically ahead, in many cases, is to become a military contractor.”

Winona LaDuke lives and works on White Earth reservation in northern Minnesota, where she serves as executive director to a non-profit organization called, Honor the Earth, dedicated to financial and social justice to indigenous communities.

For the 1.4 million majority of Native Americans living off-reservation, and especially for those living within their bounds, still suffering the repercussions of the reservation system, the experience of poverty endures as the legacy of armed, settler colonialism in America.

In 2010, the average poverty rate on reservations stood at 28.4 percent, while 22 percent of Native Americans experienced poverty both on and off the reservation. In comparison to the concurrent national rate at 9.2%, a more inexcusable margin appears relative to child poverty, where thirty-six percent of families with children on the reservation lived in absolute poverty, while the national rate paled at 9.2%.

Reservations in the Western region of the United States often experience such destitution, where 60% or more of the population lives in poverty. In terms of the lowest per-capita incomes in the United States as a whole, five of the lowest are on reservations. Pine Ridge, a reservation located in Allen, South Dakota, which has a history of resisting government oppression, maintains the lowest per capita income in the country relative to all Americans.

With extreme poverty rates on average about six times higher than the national rate, Native American reservations are hotbeds of social degradation as a function of joblessness, and other forms of economic marginality. While the War on Poverty attempted to increase the number of jobs that might employ poor communities, the traumatic effects of living in poverty, and especially extreme poverty, hinders sustainable economic development.

For countless Native Americans, inadequate medical, educational, housing and other necessary social services complicate measures to reduce poverty, whether community-based or federally imposed. Native Americans, especially those on reservation under federal oversight, experience similar symptoms as do other non-Native marginalized, poor communities in the U.S.

As with welfare recipients, economic development among Native American communities often faces conservative, political criticism. Throughout society, this has created open contempt, worsening a climate of racist prejudice based on false perception. Native Americans living and working in Indian Country have been attempting various measures to reduce and prevent poverty in their communities for many generations, since the beginning of America's "discovery", "conquest", "settlement" and "progress" in the Western Hemisphere.

The history of relations with Native Americans in the United States has devolved since the colonial era. What began in the context of international diplomacy between English and Native monarchs fell to the stereotypes of violence, racism and disenfranchisement that ensued more sharply following King Phillip's War.

Many Indigenous communities' perspectives around the world today might consider the their very worst period of their relations with Eurocentric settler nations to have come after the midpoint of the 20th century. The era in which America declared a war on poverty saw multiple federally sanctioned invasions into Native American communities, weakening communities, famously in Pine

Ridge. Another example is the Baby Scoop, known as the Sixties Scoop in Canada or Stolen Generations in Australia, which legitimized the historic global trafficking of Indigenous children via adoption agencies.

“These practices, say legal experts, have led to a deeply dark underbelly in the U.S. adoption industry that is little different than human trafficking, and in direct violation of the 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution,” Indian Country correspondent Suzette Brewer wrote late in the summer of 2013.

“Anyone can do the math and realize that this is an enormous industry in the trafficking of Indian children,’ says [Don] Mason. ‘And they’re preying on poor, uneducated Native women who are in poverty and have no idea what’s going on and don’t know any better, which is precisely why ICWA [Indian Child Welfare Act] was enacted in the first place.’”

In her article, Brewer quotes Don Mason, a seasoned family law practitioner and member of the Delaware Tribe of Oklahoma. The legacy of government impunity still burdens the collective moral compass of many children today in search of reconciliation. Yet, the issue remains largely silenced by the moralization of the status quo.

Late 20th century America was demoralized by FBI violence in the Native community of Pine Ridge reservation. Lakota activist Leonard Peltier remains imprisoned, despite such individuals as Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama and groups like Amnesty International and the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human rights petitioning his pardon.

American Indian Movement (AIM) leader Leonard Peltier, was incarcerated for the deaths of two FBI officers during a shootout in 1975 between American federal government representatives and Native American community members. The violence on Pine Ridge was the culmination of three years of belligerent and aggressive political coercion following AIM actions to occupy the town of Wounded Knee in 1973.

“Three teenaged Native witnesses testified against Mr. Peltier, they all later admitted that the FBI forced them to testify. Still, not one witness identified Mr. Peltier as the shooter,” reads FreeLeonard.org, a website in dedication to his amnesty.

“Mr. Peltier has served over 29 years in prison and is long overdue for parole. He has received several human rights awards for his good deeds from behind bars which include annual gift drives for the children of Pine Ridge, fund raisers for battered women’s shelters, and donations of his paintings to Native American recovery programs.”

The era of the War on Poverty led to initiatives among Native Americans, spurred on by the Civil Rights movement. As seen previously in such militant

community-led movements as the Black Panthers, the most effectively marginalized economic minorities in the United States — such as Black communities, Mexican-American, and Native Americans — are tied to an aggressive history of state violence through armed force, which continues to this day to the detriment of socio-economic advancement for minorities. Under the Obama administration there was an unprecedented spike in shootings on the Mexican-American border, as perpetrated by American officials targeting vulnerable minorities.

“Fatal shootings by Border Patrol agents were once a rarity. Only a handful were recorded before 2009... In one case, agents killed a thirty-year-old father of four while he was collecting firewood along the banks of the Rio Grande,” reported investigative journalist and documentary filmmaker John Carlos Frey, in an exclusive piece for Washington Monthly.

“As the debate over immigration reform heats up on Capitol Hill, increased border security will likely be the condition of any path to citizenship for the millions of undocumented workers now living in the United States.”

Native American reservations emerged out of a nationalist armed struggle in relation to increasing international border violence, demonstrating the history of domination perpetrated by America’s military-industrial complex over nearly every aspect of Native American life.

Although proud as the Original People of the land, Native American communities are historically disadvantaged in their attempts to integrate into the socioeconomic of American life. The circumstances of their poverty derail the American Dream of equal opportunity, and the promise of class mobility, as their communities have remained economically underprivileged for countless generations. In their attempts to maintain even basic levels of socioeconomic dignity, Native American communities are institutionally oppressed by the sieges of settler culture.

The initiation of the Civil Rights movement is as pertinent today as it ever was when the War on Poverty began. Poverty remains tied to the fastidious rungs of America’s social order as it has been defined since its inception, especially in reference to the history of the War on Poverty and the community-based legacy of its activism till today.

“While relocation opportunities should be increasingly available, the reservation areas must also be strenuously developed. The answer to improving the economic conditions of the Indian reservations is similar to the requirements necessary to alleviate poverty in the distressed areas of the hill country of Kentucky and Tennessee, and the coal areas of West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Illinois,” wrote Hubert Humphrey in *War on Poverty*.

“Adequate education is necessary to utilize natural resources located on the reservation area...A great barrier began to swing aside on the day when the Civil Rights bill passed – a barrier that for generations had been damming back tremendous intellectual resources, incalculable energy and vitality lost to the American nation” (104-105).

What Humphrey failed to predict was the great rift that would inflict disproportionate poverty rates in Native American communities into the following decades. Unlike the economically disadvantaged remote, rural areas of America, Native American reservations are uniquely situated, both socially and politically as well as economically.

The sovereignty narratives of Native American peoples is largely unappreciated, in the American public as in the history of federal agencies, which uphold the destitute socioeconomics of the reservation system. While not expressed across the board, there is a resounding call for national sovereignty among Native American leaders.

Many Native Americans do not consider themselves American, and deeply criticize the overgeneralized use of such terms as “Indian” and “Native”, deriving from Eurocentric conquest and colonization narratives. Nominal identity is crucial to self-representation, which is one of the keys of sovereignty. In practice, tribal or national designation, such as Navajo, Lakota, or Anishinaabe are often the most ideal forms of usage. Many of these identifiers are from the mother tongue of the community and often translate simply as “human” or “the people”.

Native Americans first seek independence from the settler-colonial assimilations that have rent their youth poor and wanting as their lands dry and succumb to poison and pollution. Such government-speak, as “relocation” and “development” remains partial to a host of ineffective antipoverty measures.

Civil Rights and the War on Poverty can be seen as co-existent social phenomena, emerging together in response to the economic and political injustices prevalent in underprivileged communities in the United States.

“In 1962, the average white man’s family income was \$5,642; the Negro’s \$3,023; the Indian’s \$1,500; poorest of all are the Americans of Mexican extraction, who, according to 1960 census figures, did not fit into a single classification in which their average family income even approximated the \$3,000 cut-off point,” wrote Humphrey, which led to an interesting analysis in light of recent Center for Immigration Studies research, which showed that poverty rates among Mexican-born immigrants in the U.S. stood at 25.8% in 1999, notably lower than the 28.4% on-reservation poverty rate, however higher than the 22% poverty rate among all Native Americans.

“Contrary to the widely held belief that Indians receive some sort of consistent dole from the Federal government, they are as dependent on the general

economy to provide opportunity and job as the rest of the population. Often unable to gain acceptance in the general community, they tend to stay on the reservations which cannot provide more than minimal employment at low levels" (95-96).

That the poverty rate among the most populous of immigrant populations, namely Mexican-Americans, stands almost equally with that of poverty rates for Native Americans demonstrates two important points. Firstly, the War on Poverty proved totally impotent to advance the economic position of both demographics. Secondly, Native American communities are essentially treated as foreign to the settler status quo, enduring the same hostile stigmas of welfare dependency and cultural ignorance.

"Because their poverty rates are so high, Mexican immigrants have substantially increased the overall size of the poor population in the United States," the Center for Immigration Studies' Poverty and Income study reported.

"While Mexican immigrants and their U.S.-born children under age 18 account for 4.2 percent of the nation's total population, they account for 3.3 million or 10.2 percent of the nation's total poor population."

These numbers, when placed in relation to Native American poverty, accumulate interesting results. Essentially, there are only about 2.1 million Native American people in the U.S., meaning that poor Mexican-Americans outnumber the total Native American population (both on and off-reservation) by over 1.2 million people.

When taking into account the poverty rate on reservations alone, by the second decade of the 21st century nearly 200,000 Native Americans lived in poverty – 0.6% of the total number of people in poverty in America. The relatively low statistical weight of Native American poverty measures demonstrably within the skewed politicized values of the War on Poverty, where dominant settler ideology has always plagued federal society with its heavy-handed patriarchy.

The explicative governmental lean towards Americanization further marginalizes the Indigenous peoples of the United States, whose cultural and social values are inherently alternative to the "Immigrant Nation" model, as well as its accompanying mythos of the American Dream.

While language training has been the central to War on Poverty developmental policy in Mexican-American communities, Native Americans have posed unparalleled challenges for federal interventionists with respect to their integration into the normative economic hierarchy and multicultural fabric of American society.

"The problem of raising the standard of living of the Indian is unique in that existing discrimination is compounded by the Indian's traditional attachment to his land. He is bound to his reservation by religious ties, strong family associations and the hereditary inculcation that land is an essential of life – not to be bought and

sold, but to be passed on from father to son,” Humphrey explained, not without a touch of sociocultural myopia.

“Unable to compete in the marketplace, the Indian was not equipped by experience to improve his educational and economic well-being and as a result drifted back to the reservation. The federal attempt resulted in a mere transfer of the problem” (103).

Humphrey, an American politician, presented the biases of the privileged, and predominantly white, upper-class officialdom of the United States. There are two core prejudices which define this relative narrow-mindedness in relation to economic development and Indigenous peoples, which, when Humphrey wrote, had not yet enjoyed the sophistications of 21st century thought concerning the sociological complexity of these communities and their sovereignty politics.

At once, the former statesman resorted to the “Noble Savage” principle, an age-old, Eurocentric, colonial model, which sought to represent Native Americans with good intentions, as by religious hope and environmental allies. Humphrey directly, shamelessly, propounded the “Indian Problem” with the inflated authority and dated ignorance that continues to echo from the highest platforms of the American government.

Native American voices are too often silenced by the overcrowded majority rules order of America’s cultural version of democracy, which demeans and disregards marginal victims of the economic atrocities that plague America’s Indigenous communities. The War on Poverty’s failure to alleviate the economic plight of Native Americans exposes the history of genocide within the foundational social, political and economic structures of America.

Constitutional ideals and the principles of civil rights have been egregiously deformed and outright neglected by unaddressed genocidal tendencies within America’s dogmatic enterprise of poverty reduction. Johnson’s War on Poverty, from its outset, had been designed as none other than an extension of domestic security and national defense policy.

After aggravating riots in the urban ghettos of Black America, to viciously relocating the First Peoples from their traditional homelands, the War on Poverty intervened in the livelihoods and families of communities who, for generations, were distrustful of the American government. In the name of poverty reduction, its legislations merely masked the underhanded politics of America’s domestic economics. In its short-sighted impudence, the War on Poverty was arguably a public relations campaign.

Through such nationalized figments as the American Dream, American Exceptionalism, American Democracy and American Freedom, the voting and taxpaying American public has, and continues to consume a mass propaganda

machine of government-enshrined compassion in the name of antipoverty; one so conniving and belligerent as to rival Stalinist communism.

Top-down patriarchy is deeply ingrained in War on Poverty, as it's programming undermines the basic human capacity for self-betterment by quantifying the disadvantages of impoverished people not only within narrow statistical equations of wage labor stacked against financial investment, but also by the passive or overt impassion of the greater context in which hypercapitalist economics reign.

As such, the War on Poverty was fought through deliberate campaigns firstly assessing impoverished communities based on their ability to adjust to politicized governmental agendas, as with the overall scheme of America's prevailing economic hierarchy. Economic reciprocity, or equity, is a reality all too obscured by the exclusionary wealthy class who inherited the fruits of the American Dream through force, privilege and entitlement.

"Over a thousand communities have been organized, including urban, rural, Indian-reservation, and migrant labor areas...For many of these communities, the goal of a truly comprehensive poverty program is not even in sight, even if understood," wrote Sanford Kravitz and Ferne K. Kolodner, in their American Academy of Political and Social Science essay titled, *Community Action: Where Has It Been? Where Will It Go?*

"For a few communities with skill and competence, the process is well under way...But the range of these programs is limited, and whether they are capable of providing basic long-range solutions to the problems of poverty is a gnawing question" (35).

The anachronistic "Indian Problem" reemerged during the War on Poverty. Coined during the Indian Wars of the 19th century, its genocidal racism festered in U.S. federal programming a hundred years later, stultifying efforts to stimulate job creation and eradicate child poverty.

"At the same time that youth work-relief programs were being launched, a Labor Department proposal for a large-scale adult work-program was rejected. Instead, permissive language in the Work Experience and Training Section of the Economic Opportunity Act allowed work-projects to emerge in eastern Kentucky, West Virginia, and some Indian reservations," wrote Garth L. Mangum in his contribution to *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science* volume, *Evaluating the War on Poverty*.

"The primary thrust of the program was training to rehabilitate welfare recipients, but nothing was done to increase the availability of jobs or to provide child-care facilities for working mothers, which were the major obstacles" (53).

As Mangum outlined, the war in Vietnam had escalated simultaneously with the declaration and initial implementation of War on Poverty programs. Wartime expenditures notoriously undercut public services and drained the domestic economy as the industries tied to America's foreign wars redirected and outsourced manpower and skills overseas.

"Increased economic activity following the 1964 tax cut and the 1965 Vietnam escalation brought unemployment to the lowest persistent level ever attained, in the absence of wage and price controls, since the inauguration of official unemployment statistics in the 1930's," wrote Mangum, whose essay *The Why, How, and Whence of Manpower Programs* appeared in the 1969 issue of the *Annals*.

"Certainly, war expenditures absorbed funds which might well have been added to manpower and antipoverty budgets" (53-54).

Since a disproportionately greater number of Native Americans serve in the U.S. military compared to the general population, the economic impacts of military spending further exacerbate the socioeconomic position for those living on, and off, reservation. As with many youth in impoverished communities around the U.S., the military serves as an exception to the rule of economic immobility, offering opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. However, military service comes with a price, not only for the nation as a whole, but for the community of those in service.

When a community suffers extreme, widespread economic destitution their vulnerability to perpetual cycles of impoverishment increases, as those with skilled, working experience are recruited elsewhere or take flight.

"Today, Native peoples have the highest rates of enlistment of any ethnic group in the United States...Many youth, both reservation-based and urban, see no options outside the military to secure an economically viable future," wrote Winona LaDuke and Sean Aaron Cruz in *The Militarization of Indian Country*, published in March of 2013.

"How did we move from being the target of the US military to being the US military itself? That question has to do with the larger forces of American society – economic deprivation, domination and racism – all of which have figured into the high levels of Native induction into the military" (9).

LaDuke, one of the preeminent Native American scholars in contemporary America, describes a situation in which there are deepening psychologically embedded stigmas within Native American society. Militarization is a measure of economic control. As understood through war intelligence, sometimes erroneously termed "diplomacy", sanctions, or economic strictures are often imposed prior to engaging in armed conflict.

Internationally, this has been true with Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, and the list goes on. Consequently, analyzing the War on Poverty in this context, its measures can be seen as a way for the federal government to politicize economic assistance, especially targeting impoverished Native American communities through forms of manufactured consent and coercive governance.

In essence, the political manipulations of the War on Poverty, can be seen as an imposition of domestic economic sanctions in the guise of liberal legislation. Its programs were, in practice, a deliberate and systematic depreciation of marginalized perspectives, particularly those who have historically threatened the prevailing sociopolitical regime.

Since the War on Poverty era, American governments have continued to violate constitutional ideals, colluding with hypercapitalist corporations throughout every sector of the national economy, in the process incentivizing the growth of exclusionary private capital and outsourced investment.

“An open society abjures coercion, not influence, a subtle distinction. That individuals are forced bodily or through dire threat to make an unwanted choice is different from the situation in which a person chooses because of a preference dictated by culture,” William M. Epstein wrote in the introduction to his book, *Democracy without Decency*, questioning the fundamental principles of American freedom and democracy.

“Socialization is not coercion but the shared process through a people integrates its members and achieves consensus. Presumably, if socialization failed, people would change. Yet, when they maintain tradition in the face of enormous abuse – Gypsies, Jews, Native Americans, Hutterites, Amish, and so on – they are making a profound and conscious choice” (11).

Epstein conveyed a clear message in protest of the elitism that often overwhelms the debate on economic subversion in the United States. Concerning the socioeconomic status of Native Americans, and, specifically, their overall place in the War on Poverty in many instances Native communities profoundly and consciously chose to value their cultural history and interpersonal solidarity over the economic hierarchies imposed by the United States government, as well as by society at large.

Whether consciously, or unconsciously, Native Americans are subject to institutional forms of violence and racism, not excluding economic deprivation in the face of righteous communal decisions to abstain from assimilatory participation in the American Dream. This is also the result of a social, economic, political, religious (and/or spiritual) exclusivity from the dominant government economy under which Native American communities struggle to survive.

“I remember once – when was it, ’66 – Stu Udall [secretary of the Interior] and the Bureau of Indian Affairs [BIA] were catching such hell from the Congress

for what was happening on the Indian reservations, what BIA was not doing,” said Donald M. Baker, counsel to the Senate Select Subcommittee on Poverty when the Economic Opportunity Act was passed, as written in Michael L. Gillette’s oral history record, *Launching the War on Poverty*.

“Well, you know, we’ve got two professionals and a secretary! And they were running

our Indian program. We just never have had enough people to be able to provide technical assistance in monitoring and keep[ing] an eye on even the controversial sort of thing that any sane man would watch very closely” (197).

Baker, a seasoned statesman and civil servant with three degrees from the University of Michigan, indirectly referred to the War on Poverty’s work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, or the “Indian program” (sounding very close to the “Indian Problem”), as insane. In this sense, it is no wonder why Native Americans have long sought sovereign independence, having struggled to preserve their respective national integrities, their histories, languages, cultures and territories, as distinct from America’s enforced legislative, social, economic and political boundaries.

“It was thought that Indians, once the only occupants of the continent, then pushed back and annihilated by the white invaders, would not be heard from again...Then, during the New Deal, with a friend of the Indians, John Collier, in charge of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, there was an attempt to restore tribal life,” the historian and social activist Howard Zinn wrote in his revised and updated 1998 edition of *The Twentieth Century: A People’s History*.

“But in the decades that followed, no fundamental change took place...An Indian anthropologist said: ‘An Indian reservation is the most complete colonial system in the world that I know about’...But then the population began to grow again, as if a plant left to die refused to do so, began to flourish. By 1960 there were 800,000 Indians, half on reservations, half in towns all over the country” (281-282).

Indian Country has had a population increase at a rate of over 250% over the preexisting population since the turn of the century. The rise of civil rights activism in Native communities stimulated youth leadership. During the War on Poverty, Native Americans were voicing their community concerns with newfound strength while responses from the federal government were insignificant at best, and oppositional at worst.

In advancing the Native society forward, resistance would take precedence as a means by which activists could redistribute power within their communities, as well as decentralize the oppressive politico-economic hierarchies stifling their autonomy. Incontrovertibly, progress and development would be redefined.

“In his widely read 1969 book, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, Vine Deloria, Jr., noted that President Lyndon Johnson talked about America’s ‘commitments,’ and President Nixon talked about Russia’s failure to respect treaties. He said: ‘Indian people laugh themselves sick when they hear these statements.’” Zinn wrote, contextualizing the work of one of America’s foremost Native intellectuals.

“The United States government has signed more than four hundred treaties with Indians and violated every single one... When state courts closed river areas to Indian fishermen, in 1964, Indians had ‘fish-ins’ on the Nisqually River, in defiance of the court orders, and went to jail, hoping to publicize their protest... Protests, raids, arrests, continued into the early seventies” (283-284).

The uniqueness of Native American resistance is that it reveals outstanding agreements that the United States government had made with people within its postcolonial territories since the beginning of American independence. In essence, Native Americans remained subjects of both the British crown and the American Constitution.

When LBJ declared the beginning of the War on Poverty, America had still not upheld social obligations it had incurred with Native American communities, concerning due process with respect to America’s own judiciary. Such truths are known all too well by Native historians, academics, intellectuals and activists, who continue to publicize an American narrative of oppression that undermines the successes of the War on Poverty as merely another political game of empty promises.

Within Native American treaties, crucial articles relate to the economic functionality of local communities. The state of Washington’s Nisqually River offers a perfect example. As the War on Poverty began in the nation’s capital, quickened by the rural plight of white Appalachia, the federal government directly restricted one Native community’s means to economic vitality. The Nisqually River “fish-ins” represented the swollen underbelly of the War on Poverty, as a political campaign driven by bigoted decision-making from its inception.

“During the 1960s the War on Poverty brought many new patronage jobs to the reservation, and the tribal chairman’s position became even more critical in reservation politics. The tribal chairman could assign most of the important jobs in the tribe’s poverty programs, and had at his disposal the selection of many of the committee posts which determined the policies of the programs” Vine Deloria Jr. explained in his 2010 book, *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence*.

“So the fight for tribal chairman became nearly an armed conflict between opposing groups of Sioux. Most of the tribal politicians tried to support the people of the back-country communities, the traditional Sioux, but almost always had to

bow to the voting power of Pine Ridge village and promise extensive patronage jobs to important village people” (70).

Thus, the late, iconic author Vine Deloria Jr. noted as the ‘champion of Indian rights’ by The New York Times, chronicles the impact of the War on Poverty on Native communities. Essentially an extension of the historic governmental abuses which have and continue to oppress Native American people since the beginning of the treaty era, America’s antipoverty legislature merely perpetuated and exacerbated internal divisions within Native communities.

Tribal politics, as inflated by federal incursion during the War on Poverty, merely succeeded in further marginalizing outsider groups within Native society itself. Consequently, rurality and traditionalism were branded as antithetical to poverty reduction in the larger context of Native-U.S. relations and within Indian Country as a whole.

“In 1969, November 9, there took place a dramatic event which focused attention on Indian grievances as nothing else had. It burst through the invisibility of previous local Indian protests and declared to the entire world that the Indians still lived and would fight for their rights. On that day, before dawn, seventy-eight Indians landed on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay and occupied the island,” wrote Howard Zinn.

“More Indians landed, and by the end of November nearly six hundred of them, representing more than fifty tribes, were living on Alcatraz. They called themselves ‘Indians of All Tribes’ and issued a proclamation....A year later they were still there, and they sent out a message to ‘our brothers and sisters of all races and tongues upon Mother Earth’” (266-267).

During that momentous year in the history of Native American civil rights, the entirety of America’s social, political and economic infrastructure began to quake as the conscience of the nation unraveled. Native American activists exhibited the unsung histories of America for the government and most Americans, who either unknowingly or consciously benefited from killing, stealing, and impoverishing Native communities by exploiting their lands and cultures.

The story is that of America’s ongoing genocidal occupation of Indian Country. While the Occupy Wall Street protests lasted a mere three months, in terms of the continuous occupation of Zuccotti Park in New York City, its acts of civil disobedience in the interest of economic justice were clearly defined, even if their results were not.

Similarly, the Native American occupation of Alcatraz Island directly referred to the economic impoverishment of the reservation system as their central impetus for change, as stated in their proclamation which referenced lack of adequate transportation, water, sanitation, harvesting rights, employment,

healthcare, fertile land, education, territory (as relative to overpopulation), and lastly, freedom and independence.

The Occupy Wall Street movement came as a result of government impunity with respect to the economic injustice of American poverty rates in the face of political and corporate greed. Occupation has ever been the means by which the founding social orders of settler colonialism came into its privileged entitlements as America's core ideology, manifesting not only the destiny of the few who gained a foothold in the national economy, but also the toxic exceptionalism of those who have benefited from plutocratic excess and oligarchic domination.

To re-occupy, using the oppressor's means of control in opposition to the prevailing rule, has shown to be among the effective techniques of grassroots empowerment which comes from the bottom up, in direct contrast to the top-down manner of political populism.

"The revolutionary's role is to liberate, and be liberated, with the people – not to win them over," wrote the radical thinker and educator Paulo Freire, in his masterfully conceived modern classic, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

"One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes culture invasion, good intentions notwithstanding" (95).

Conclusively, the War on Poverty failed, because, like most U.S. government-sponsored community development initiatives in Indian Country, it was partial to the lasting, and incessant, effects of cultural invasion. The imposition of the federal government, through its inexcusable negligence regarding treaty rights, merely perpetuated its genocidal history, which continues to disaffect Indigenous youth on American soil today.

"In April, a grassroots movement led by Lakota grandmothers toured the country to build support for a formal complaint of genocide against the United States government and its constituent states," affirmed North Dakota journalist Jeff Armstrong, whose article, 'Lakota to file UN Genocide Charges Against US, South Dakota' which appeared in CounterPunch at the end of May of 2013.

"Attracting support from Occupy Wall Street and other non-Native allies in the New York march, the Lakota Truth Tour delegation was physically blocked by UN security officers from presenting Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's office a notice of charges against the U.S. under the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide."

As the 21st century proves an era of epochal shifts wherein social justice movements renew their old flames of protest and reignite new ones through multigenerational alliances, Native Americans are speaking out against the

unaddressed ravaging of extreme poverty, and its deeper causes, in the name of human rights for all.

Part VI

Obama

Barak Hussein Obama II, 44th President of the United States of America, became a symbol of progressive global leadership following his election in 2008. From Kenya to Indonesia, where Obama has personal and familial roots, much of the world celebrated when the first Black, African-American man held presidential office in the richest nation on Earth.

Not only an act of unparalleled significance in the United States, in light of the legacy of racist stigmas which continue to violate much of American life today, but also for the world, Obama has come to represent a success story for equal rights, civil progress and social justice for the internationalist, liberal community. The world-renowned respect that Obama initially held was further affirmed in Oslo, Norway in 2009, when he became the fourth U.S. president to accept the Nobel Peace Prize (the third while in office), however, not without controversy.

In an Inequality and Poverty report released in 2012 by the Economic Policy Institute, research showed that among the 38 countries that have ratified the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Americans outranked every other nation in lowest income-earning medians, relative poverty rates, child poverty rates, and the child poverty gap.

With regard to child poverty, for example, in 2009, the year that Obama was lauded for his exemplary service to world peace, one in five children in the United States lived in poverty, where they experienced greater relative impoverishment than in any other OECD country. Lastly, the study confirmed that the U.S. ranked the lowest among twenty-two OECD nations in terms of the extent to which taxes and transfer programs reduced the poverty rate.

Transfer programs are another term for government-sponsored poverty reduction, exemplified by the War on Poverty itself. Consequently, the research, which was also corroborated by the Social Science Quarterly, American Sociological Review and Mother Jones, showed that the U.S. maintained the very least effective antipoverty agenda in comparison to practically every other economically stable country in the world.

“Poverty is the worst form of violence,” said Mohandas K. Gandhi. He is said to have delivered the oft-quoted adage in a speech. In reference to its wisdom, Obama’s presidency represents a complex of economic analyses.

One of the most important key initiatives of the War on Poverty has been the legacy of the Social Security Act of 1965. Enacted on July 19, 1965, by LBJ, the

Act started Medicare and Medicaid. The road to free, universal public healthcare is vital to antipoverty work in America.

Around the world, accessible healthcare is recognized by many national governments as a basic human right, a crucial point for critics of federal U.S. government social service initiatives. The provision of healthcare remains crucial for antipoverty activists in America, as the largest and wealthiest economy on Earth continues to deny universal free healthcare to its citizenry.

While Medicare initially sought to alleviate the healthcare needs of senior citizens, Americans aged 65 and older (regardless of income or medical history), and Medicaid acted as a medical relief agency for low-income Americas, the possibility of universal health care in America, as seen in Canada, the UK, or Taiwan, is held back by conservatives in Congress, particularly those Republicans who have weaponized the filibuster.

The United States National Health Care Act, also known as the Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act received 88 cosponsors in the House of Representatives in 2009. The ideal of a universal single-payer health care system in the United States, however, saw its closest incarnation in March 23, 2010, when Obama signed the Patient and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), more often termed the Affordable Care Act, or commonly, Obamacare.

Indisputably, Obama's distinct healthcare reform, coupled with the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act, enacted exactly one week later, was essentially an amendment to Obamacare in response to social alarm regarding student aid. At the time, American youth and their families experienced an unwarrantable spike in student debt, which is linked to the unrelenting epidemic of graduate underemployment.

Two years later, in September of 2012, Pew Research published a report that demonstrated how, in 2010, as the 20.3 million students enrolled in higher education for that year, student debt incurred record economic damage to households in America. Obamacare was amended to meet student aid demands as one out of five students owned exorbitant student debt; 19% of the entire nation, a marked 4% increase since the Great Recession which began in December 2007.

Obama observed and experienced extreme poverty during his upbringing when revisiting the memories of his Kenyan father, and Indonesian stepfather, both of whom faced harsh economic realities. Obama's biological father, Barack Obama, Sr., a political dissident in Kenya, was eventually blacklisted by his own country. He had worked as a cook and local herbalist in the national capital of Nairobi. Likewise, the example of Obama's stepfather taught him equally hard-won values of survival amid the hardships of daily life in a marginalized society.

"Increasingly, she would remind me of his story, how he had grown up poor, in a poor country, in a poor continent; he his life had been hard, as hard as anything

that Lolo might have known,” Obama passionately portrayed his mother’s remembrance of his Indonesian stepfather, Lolo Soetoro, in his book, *Dreams of My Father*.

“He hadn’t cut corners, though, or played all the angles. He was diligent and honest, no matter what it cost him. He had led his life according to principles that demanded a kind of toughness, principles that promised a higher form of power. I would follow his example, my mother decided. I had no choice. It was in my genes” (50).

In Hawaii, Obama’s biological father met Ann Dunham. While growing up in Indonesia, Obama bore witness to a degree of poverty that would come to define his commitment to economic justice; an experience that would cross over into his community work among the disadvantaged neighborhoods of Chicago.

“The scene took me back to my childhood, back to the markets of Indonesia; the hawkers, the leather workers, the old women chewing betelnut and swatting flies off their fruit with whisk brooms,” wrote Obama in his memoir, *Dreams of My Father*.

“The people who sold their goods there might have been poor, poorer even than the folks out in Altgeld [Gardens Public Housing project in Chicago]. They hauled fifty pounds of firewood on the backs every day, they ate little, died young. And yet for all that poverty, there remained in their lives a discernible order, a tapestry of trading routes and middlemen, bribes to pay and customs to observe, the habits of a generation played out every day beneath the bargaining and the noise and the swirling dust” (182-183).

By the midterm after his first presidential election, America’s economic realities reflected the worst challenges of the Obama years. Heart-rending statistics evidenced bitter skepticism among America’s poor, as desperate acts of civil disobedience ensued amid a climate of governmental liberalization. The legacy of the War on Poverty was rearing its unsightly head.

The relentless tragedy of multigenerational racism in American society had been perpetuated throughout both terms of Obama’s presidency. His iconic leadership in the name of civil rights did not automatically develop into progress on the ground. The daily experience of racial minorities living in America went unchanged. Their leaders demanded autonomous political empowerment, not the patriarchal, interventionism that defined the War on Poverty.

Symbolic leaders and religious hypocrites pardoned the excruciating persistence of American racism. In Obama’s America, racism and hate crimes became so volatile and widespread that to be a racial minority was inherently criminalized. In the healthcare sector, racial profiling became tantamount to having a terminal illness, as visible minorities and the economically vulnerable were subject to gross inequalities.

“Racism can also be found in the delivery of emergency medical services. Studies at hospitals in two major cities found that black patients with bone fractures were significantly less likely to be given pain medication than their white counterparts,” reads the exhaustive study, *Racial Justice in the Age of Obama*, by author and Yale Law School graduate Roy L. Brooks.

“Reformists also know what Arthur Ashe, the legendary and well-assimilated black tennis star who died of AIDS at age forty-eight, meant when he told an interview six months before his death that ‘living with AIDS is not the greatest burden I’ve had in my life. Being black is. No question about it’ (40).

In the broader social contexts of America’s racist socioeconomics, the testimonies of Arthur Ashe are also reflected in the changes that swept through New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. With regard to comprehensive, equal access to emergency relief in an era where climate change exacerbates the intensity and frequency of natural disasters, there has been an unsettled, traumatic legacy of racism as a result of prejudiced first-response under the hypercapitalist government of George W. Bush.

In terms of the relativity of racial prejudice and multigenerational poverty in America, many lessons may be divulged reflecting on the effects of Hurricane Katrina. Leading up to the presidency of Obama, and over the stretch of his incumbency, the natural disaster’s effects continued to influence and aggravate race relations in America.

The symbolism of political leadership is marred by delusion, irrationalism and ignorance. In other words, the iconic success of electing the first Black president is tied to the mythology of the American Dream, as it is removed from the lived experiences of poor Americans.

Obama’s presidency did not help many of Black America’s disadvantaged, underprivileged communities. Due to an overwhelming focus on the president’s racial identity, there were repercussions concerning the concurrent spread of racism in the public sphere.

Data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau showed how, during Obama’s presidency, Black communities faced the greatest overall disparity in poverty rates and income rates in America since the mid-1970s.

“The continuing disparity in these categories makes it unlikely that blacks will become ‘canon makers of the social order’ anytime soon. If the statistics are overwhelming, then simply look at Hurricane Katrina. There was no dearth of blacks who lacked the financial or social capital to get out of the way of that monster hurricane in August 2005,” Brooks wrote, reflecting the entrenched malignity within American society which ritualizes racist values as part of

thoughtless historical tradition, rationalizing the prevalence of inequality with the economics of the dominant, white settler paradigm.

“But without outside help, I doubt that a vast majority of blacks or, for that matter, any other group of Americans can play Superman. No group in the history of our republic has ever been asked to overcome even lesser burdens without outside help, private or public. Indeed, it is precisely under these circumstances that the government earns its keep” (33-34).

Brooks exposed the overtly racist economic paradigm of America’s government, despite the emergence of a progressive leader in its executive branch. Disaster capitalism, a concept coined by author Naomi Klein, translates into the exploitation of everything from natural disaster to financial crisis so as to maintain the economic status quo. In his book, *Racial Justice in the Age of Obama*, Brooks highlighted the role of government as an engine of self-serving assistance to communities that are in dire need of aid.

Instead, U.S. government-led antipoverty programs have a reputation for targeting certain supposedly subversive groups in order to redirect their sociopolitical momentums in the hope that they will eventually support the ruling regime. America, as a nation, and at the level of federal government, is a political business.

The hypercapitalist business environment of American politics exploits poor communities in order to perpetuate its dominant model of social control, all in the name of domestic security. It is a form of economic hostility in the guise of defense.

In the American military, racial marginalization has a long history of bigotry in the context of federal assistance programs to veterans, beginning just prior to the War on Poverty. The GI Bill, technically the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, started as a positive integration incentive for veterans to pursue an educated and other opportunities for socioeconomic advancement, such as low-mortgage financing in suburbia and unemployment compensation.

Nearly nine million veterans benefited from the GI Bill during its twelve-year duration from 1944-1956. However, together with the Veteran’s Administration, also a governmental benefactor for veterans which enjoyed a special status in the executive cabinet, racial minorities, particularly Blacks, were sidelined.

“Black veterans did not receive the same benefits as their white cohort. The bill was deliberately implemented in a racially discriminatory manner. For example, the government-insured loans were not extended to blacks who fought in the war, despite the federal guarantee. Also, the Veterans Administration (VA) often exercised its discretion to reject the medical claims of black GIs,” Brooks

explained, delineating the process of America's institutional racism, which continues to marginalize minorities who serve in the military.

"Before partisanship sets in, our nation needs to have a period of prepolitical reflection on the normative issues. This must include an appreciation of the moral enormity of slavery and Jim Crow, especially in the shadow they continue to cast over our society. I think African Americans are at least due that" (122-123).

Risking amputation, mental illness, and death, however, and receiving little in return, veterans, and specifically Black veterans, are uniquely burdened by social afflictions, for which the terms of reconciliation go unheard in the halls of the U.S. government. Whether returning home from military service overseas, or in the midst of combat duty, such afflictions open an incurable wound, and are bared by the disturbing blatancy of their neglect.

The year of 2012 held marked significance, not only concerning the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, but also in the entire history of American veteran healthcare.

"The most extensive study yet by the U.S. government on suicide among military veterans shows more veterans are killing themselves than previously thought, with 22 deaths a day — or one every 65 minutes, on average," Phil Stewart reported for Reuters on February 1, 2013.

"The news came two weeks after the U.S. military acknowledged that suicides hit a record in 2012, outpacing combat deaths, with 349 active-duty suicides - almost one a day. That was despite sharper focus at the leadership level at the Pentagon and VA on the suicide problem, and came during an overall rise in suicides in the United States. The number of suicides in the United States rose 11 percent from 2007 to 2010, the VA said."

During the Obama years, the American men and women who enlisted in the armed forces experienced overwhelming, fatalistic shame, an impoverished dignity, and a demoralized lack of self-respect. Regardless, no one will ever truly know the intent and purpose of a suicide, however, many analysts examining distressing statistics, have deeply examined the mental health of U.S. veterans, with revealing results.

In a Democracy Now! exclusive entitled, 'The Untold Story of War: U.S. Veterans Face Staggering Epidemic of Unemployment, Trauma & Suicide', seasoned writer and photographer Ann Jones disclosed poignant observations among veterans, exhibiting a perspective on the current tragedy as incomparable to any other time during her many decades of experience with the military in occupied war zones.

"Although President Obama stressed the importance of supporting returning troops in his

speech, veterans continue to face extremely high levels of unemployment, of traumatic brain injury, PTSD, rates of suicide, homelessness... On any given night, nearly 63,000 veterans are homeless. Many suffer chronic debilitating mental health problems," Democracy Now! anchor Amy Goodman presented for the Veterans Day special, before introducing Ann Jones.

"You know, for so long, 18 years, Americans were not allowed to see the dead being brought home, thanks to an order of Dick Cheney when he was under secretary of state in the first Bush Sr. administration. And that—that rule was reversed in 2009... the VA is already—was already so overburdened with veterans from our past wars... veterans who need immediate help are turned away from the VA, and suicide is frequently the result."

In the year that Obama first held office, his administration issued the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, also known as the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Originally enacted by George W. Bush on June 30, 2008, the law extended educational benefits for military veterans who have served since 9/11.

Incontrovertibly, 9/11 had a global impact on everything from immigration to economics and beyond. With regards to the domestic economy in the United States, marginalized groups were further excluded as the nation's economy focused on expanding its military efforts abroad. The irreparable repercussions of post-9/11 globalization economics deepened income gaps and undercut spending for basic social services following the impassable debt that former president George W. Bush led the U.S. economy into after the invasion of Iraq. The hypercapitalist, multinational corporatization of the U.S. economy overhauled America's political, economic and social orders.

"Since the early 1980s, we had progressively divested from our own real economy in America. In so doing, we had redirected our financial and political energies overseas, promoting globalization," Michael Likosky, Senior Fellow at New York University's Institute for Public Knowledge, wrote plainly in his expertly researched text, *Obama's Bank: Financing a Durable New Deal*.

"Spending on destruction and consumption overtook productive investment not only in America but abroad. With the subprime mortgage crisis and the engineering of a growing middle-class opportunity, our government and financial institutions debased the American Dream by remaking it into a Ponzi scheme" (1-2).

During Obama's speech as Democratic presidential candidate in 2008 in Janesville, Wisconsin, at a General Motors plant, the soon-to-be president straightforwardly addressed the economic relapse of post-9/11 foreign war, and its deleterious effects within the domestic economy.

"It's time to stop spending billions of dollars a week trying to put Iraq back together and start spending the money on putting America back together instead," Obama said, speaking directly to the context of labor history in Wisconsin, and Janesville in particular.

"I won't stand here and tell you that we can – or should – stop free trade. We can't stop every job from going overseas. But I also won't stand here and accept an America where we do nothing to help American workers who have lost jobs and opportunities because of these trade agreements."

Michael Likosky, who held a visiting professorship at Wisconsin-Madison Law School as well as serving as an expert to both the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, has written very thoroughly on Obama's Janesville speech, extrapolating on themes of expanding globalization, free trade and domestic underemployment.

"Thus, the Obama Bank itself is the central institution for reenvisioning our domestic and foreign commercial policy in order to address the root causes of our financial crisis and to chart a durable twenty-first century New Deal for America," Likosky determined, with exacting insight.

"Through the bank, Obama would address the broken political system's inability to devise policies that advance the public interest, moving decisions over infrastructure policy away from the earmark system and instead toward being made on the merits of the projects themselves. In other words, the bank would choose projects 'not by politics'... Speaking at a factory which would not survive to see his inauguration, Obama presciently explained that the bank would create two million new jobs, which could not be outsourced" (11-12).

As has been repeatedly emphasized, the politicization of federal assistance programs related to poverty reduction marred the War on Poverty since its inception. Its legislative intent ended up cultivating commercial interests and private partnerships that only worsened poverty. When a nation's federal government is systematically overrun by hypercapitalist globalization and its concomitant political leverages — exploiting neoliberal free market investment in commercial privatization — democracy and its promise of economic justice is obscured.

Without recourse to effective political involvement, i.e. voter suppression in the South, economically disadvantaged social groups are demeaned by closed loops of wealth distribution that stifle the foundations of democratic governance. During the government shutdown of 2013, which ran from October 1st to the 16th, political instability met socioeconomic reform and, finally, the government succumbed to intractable partisanship.

During the Clinton presidency, two government shutdowns occurred in two months, lasting a total of 27 days, at the time the longest government shutdown in

history. The reasons for it were quite similar to the shutdown under Obama. Namely, healthcare, i.e. Medicare reform, among other issues related to education and the environment led to a failure of consensus.

Essentially budget crises, the 2013 government shutdown was then the third longest and had its base in controversy over how to fund Obamacare. In effect, Obamacare depended on mandatory government spending, as opposed to discretionary expenditures that could have potentially opened more doors throughout the program's implementation.

One major controversy that came following Obama's shutdown was the U.S. debt limit, or debt-ceiling suspension (then scheduled till February 7, 2014). In the American example, healthcare reform has always been challenged by the dominant, capitalist system in which private health insurance pays a certain class of doctors and the healthcare workers more. Yet, public healthcare is too often marred by inadequate applied services, as seen currently in the problem of unreliable access to government programs' websites, which serves as the primary channels through which those eligible sign up.

"Problems with the federal health insurance website have prevented tens of thousands of low-income people from signing up for Medicaid even though they are eligible, federal and state officials say, undermining one of the chief goals of the 2010 health care law," Robert Pear reported in his article, 'Problems With Federal Health Portal Also Stymie Medicaid Enrollment' published by The New York Times on November 11, 2013.

Technical and administrative hindrances reflect the wider political reality, wherein reform is impeded by a largely distressed social services infrastructure. However, hundreds of thousand of people subscribed to Obamacare despite the prevalence of controversy, simply because they needed healthcare, and until then had lived without it.

"Often criticized for byzantine rules and skimpy payments, Medicaid has signed up 444,000 people in 10 states in the six weeks since open enrollment began, according to Avalere Health, a market analysis firm. Twenty-five states are expanding their Medicaid programs... Middle-class people with no access to job-based coverage are offered subsidized private plans, while low-income people are steered to an expanded version of Medicaid in states accepting it," wrote Associated Press reporter Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, who published his article, 'Medicaid is health overhaul's early success story' for the Sacramento Bee on November 12, 2013.

"Medicaid pays doctors less than Medicare, and much less than private insurance, fostering an impression that the coverage is no better than being uninsured, and maybe even worse. But a recent scientific study debunked that, finding that having Medicaid virtually eliminates the risk of catastrophic medical

expenses due to a serious accident or the sudden onset of a life-threatening illness. It also found improved mental health, though not much difference in physical conditions such as high blood pressure.”

The relative success of Obamacare demonstrated an unprecedented advancement in healthcare reform in the United States, while remaining well behind universal healthcare systems in comparison to other examples around the world. The relative poverty of the U.S. is a function of its social services, as preempted by the unencumbered prioritization of politicized investment in corporate globalization.

Obamacare was a visionary step forward in domestic, people-centered governance, as federal and state policy progressively met the needs of low-income earners. It can not be reiterated enough how important healthcare is in the economic fate of the poor, including the working poor, as tied to the economic fate of the country.

If the government shutdown that ensued during Obama’s presidency said anything about the healthcare reform process, it is that the hegemonic, short-term thinking of global, hypercapitalist investment devalues multigenerational economic mobility in America, instead prioritizing mainstream political rhetoric and its self-serving, extractive economics; which the failures of the War on Poverty exemplified.

“The greatest shortcoming of the Obama health Affordability Care Act was its failure to fundamentally check rising health care costs, even after the ACA becomes fully effective in 2014. A national health care system – i.e. Medicare for all – would save the U.S. 7% of GDP, or more than \$1 trillion a year. That’s \$10 trillion over a decade!” wrote economics professor and market analyst Jack Rasmus, in his book *Obama’s Economy: Recovery for the Few*.

“Medicare Part A and B costs more than doubled over the past decade, from \$244 billion in 2001 to \$522 billion, or by 114% ... Assuming just half of that 114% was due to excessive health care price-hikes by health care providers – doctors, hospitals, drug companies, etc. – then at minimum uncontrolled health care cost inflation added \$120 billion to overall Medicare costs and in turn to the U.S. budget deficit” (108-109).

Medicare Part A and B are programs that cover fees instituted by hospitals and doctors. Also, these overall numbers excluded Medicaid, which is purported to have added another \$80 billion to the U.S. budget deficit (109).

The lessons of Medicare reform under Obama reinforced the underlying American social services network as an institution mitigated by dogmatic, exclusivist politics in the face of overwhelming poverty. The American Dream triggers overburdensome, one-way spending, which drives the American economy

to near default. When that happened in 2013, America's Fitch AAA credit rating came under graver scrutiny.

"Fitch reiterated that the delay in increasing the borrowing capacity of the United States raises questions about the ability of the United States to honor its obligations," Reuters reported on October 16, 2013, the day before the U.S. Treasury forecasted reaching the debt limit.

After the government shutdown and Obama's negotiation of the debt limit suspension it appeared to be in the interest of the American government to spend liberally. Political leaders such as Obama, whose rhetoric was steeped in the 'American Dream' ideology, further endorsed the myth of growth, which in reality serves the few, and far between.

Arguably, such spending cycles had been integral to the War on Poverty, as a means by which liberal reform could prompt broader spending across the board in domestic affairs.

Regardless, as the economic hopes and dreams of average Americans were increasingly divided by outstanding income gaps, the indebtedness of the American government exhibited their indirect oppositions to long-term social service investment.

The American people, are, in effect, disempowered by the prevailing social system in which the rapidity of financial exchange is necessary in order to uphold the hypercapitalist norm. Despite enjoying the rights of citizenship within the most powerful economy in the world, Americans' struggle for economic mobility is paralyzed by the quicksands of poverty.

"Obama's first [economic recovery] program was based on the recovery getting underway quickly after one year and relied on the market – i.e. the business sector – to do the heavy lifting after that year. That failed...The first program's failure proves that a recovery strategy must be longer term and cannot rely on the market after only a year," Rasmus wrote, pointing out the short-term models of investment business as they have infiltrated government through moneyed election campaigns.

"A successful program cannot rely on insufficiently funded, capital-intensive, long-run infrastructure spending...When subsidies ran out and businesses did not spend its tax cuts after a year, the administration was left holding an empty policy bag" (170).

When Americans engage in the voting system, they do not only place their trust in the possibility of political change, but also affirm the compromise of American democracy by simultaneously placing their interests in the intractable business of hypercapitalist investment.

In their collective work on poverty reduction, business economist Jack Rasmus, as with Cornel West and Tavis Smiley, detailed, how, in fact, multi-billion

dollar capital is self-serving. In reference to Reagan-era rhetoric, wherein the War on Poverty was declaredly ‘lost’ and so, over, ‘trickle-down’ economics is a deceptive falsity, having proven time and again to merely deviate and coerce national wealth — which all people should theoretically earn and own in a free democracy — so that it falls into the hands of the few, and stays there.

America’s economic standard demonstrates a proven capacity to reduce poverty, as seen in the example of virtually every other OECD nation. Yet, the failure of antipoverty measures since the War on Poverty reveals not only the depth of hypocrisy in American democracy, but also the ulterior motives of the prevailing economic models of incessant growth, which have flown in the face of lasting and meaningful civil progress.

“U.S. large corporations accumulated more than \$2 trillion in cash on hand, while U.S. multinational corporations were able to build a cash hoard of another \$1.2-1.4 trillion in their offshore subsidiaries. Both continue to hold more than \$3 trillion in cash, not investing it in the U.S. to create jobs and contribute to sustained recovery. Not to be outdone, big banks accumulated – and then also sat on – about \$1.5 trillion in excess cash reserves, mostly refusing to lend to smaller businesses to create jobs and assist recovery,” Rasmus wrote, connecting the dots between where corporate and bank wealth achieves, and hoards, greater wealth by virtue of exploiting and disassociating from the growing underclass.

“In contrast, more than three years after Obama took office there are still roughly 24 million unemployed...More than 50 million officially – and more in fact – are without any kind of health care coverage. Food stamp usage has more than doubled in the past two years...Trillions of dollars in seniors’ retirement ‘nest eggs’ have disappeared forever, as Congress in late 2011 nonetheless proposed to reduce their medical and retirement benefits further” (2).

In contemporary American society, the government’s relationship to the general public is indicative of national economic development, especially with respect to poverty reduction. In the job market, specifically for migrant laborers who typically work for strict wages which keep them below the poverty line, America’s shrunken rural economy reflects a microcosm of the larger truth of insurmountable economic immobility which especially disadvantages communities of color.

The vicious cycle of multigenerational poverty is based on a system of trade wherein small business owners are forced to keep their overhead low, in turn demanding low-wage labor. In comparison, the American government is in the pocket of multinational corporate business. Equally, both rungs of the economic ladder, from the very high, to the very low, depend on and perpetuate cycles of poverty within the underclass.

“Today, an increase in the number of seasonal farm jobs is associated with more rather than fewer poor residents, primarily because the average earnings of seasonal farmworkers are consistently below the poverty line. This means that planting more strawberries and depending on newcomers from abroad to harvest them increases the number of poor people in agricultural areas,” Philip Martin wrote in his 2009 book, *Importing Poverty? Immigration and the Changing Face of Rural America*, explaining how the economy introduces exploitative labor practices into the domestic economy, while globalizing the working poor not only through outsourcing, but also by exploiting economic migrants from the Global South.

“Farmers do not plant oranges and strawberries unless they believe there will be workers available to harvest them, creating a circular relationship between farm jobs, immigration, and poverty. Farmers create farm jobs, the workers who fill these jobs are immigrants with low earnings, and the result can be poverty amid prosperity: rising farm sales, more immigrant farmworkers, and more poor people” (47).

Sadly, poverty amid prosperity has been the conditioning of employers and laborers in the U.S., most remarkably, of course, when associated to the working poor. Examined within the American social context, employment, i.e. job creation, is merely one side of the coin in the overall equation, or more accurately, gamble, of poverty reduction, as relative to the foundational economic triplet: unemployment, underemployment and employment. The other side of the coin is immigration, also as applied to the overarching spheres of economic globalization in outsourced labor and offshore investment.

“It is possible to create 17 million jobs without increasing the deficit. To do that, the government must directly create jobs since it is increasingly apparent that the private sector – those big corporations sitting on \$2 trillion in the U.S. and another \$14 trillion offshore

– refuse to do so. It is also necessary because the big banks refuse to use their \$1.7 trillion in excess reserves to lend to smaller businesses to create jobs,” Jack Rasmus wrote, essentially mapping out a path of economic recovery based on gains made during the War on Poverty, through unmediated programs funded by the federal government.

“If banks won’t loan and businesses can’t or won’t spend to create jobs in the U.S., then the only option is for the government to create jobs directly...A direct job creation program that does not add to deficits and debt requires a fundamental restructuring of the tax system” (173-174).

Professor Rasmus outlined the required tax restructuring and job creation programs that the federal government is capable of applying for the betterment of

the U.S. economy, even in spite of the self-serving, capitalistic greed of big banks and the corporate sector.

Economic globalization, free trade and corporate investment all contribute to such devastating effects as global warming and ecological ruin, which have, in many cases literally caused the perfect storm of poverty in America, as it has reverberated around the globe. Clearly, poverty in America is the result of multiple forces regarding political influence over social, economic and environmental concerns. Intransigence in the private business sector has led to a severe downfall in participatory democratic engagement throughout all levels of society.

“Obama wants to include tough environmental protections in all future trade agreements. It doesn’t make much sense in a world of global warming and other global environmental impacts to export highly polluting industries overseas and not expect ramifications to America,” bestselling author and media figurehead John R. Talbott explained in his book *Obamanomics: How Bottom-Up Economic Prosperity Will Replace Trickle-Down Economics*.

“He believes in the decency of average Americans, and believes that if big business and big corporations were not unduly influencing our elected representatives in Washington, average Americans would want to share the benefits of international trade more equally with those who are harmed by it. Obama would like to see American support plans that allow for better training of unskilled workers in America and that open up more educational opportunities for their children, including college for those who cannot afford it, and he would like to see health benefits that are portable and can be carried with a person from job to job, thus making job loss and displacement easier on Americans. If explained properly, most Americans would be in favor of dramatically raising the minimum wage.” (125).

Crucial is the point that Talbott makes in reference to Obama’s relationship to populism in American democracy. Obama’s presidency bridged sterile government officialdom with the colorful public sector. Not only did the majority of voters elect Obama as the representative of the people to lead the executive branch of government and to negotiate with lobby groups in the best interest of the American people as a whole nation. He was also chosen to negotiate within the American people.

Listening, empathy and action define leadership. Before the eyes of the American people, Obama demonstrated his capacity to listen and understand the vox populi, without which not only are popular issues sidelined, but also the very fabric of democracy is torn.

Traditionally, the role of a progressive, executive social leader should envision future prosperity in the forthcoming generations as the legacy of the nation. Given the fact that the most highly effective lobby groups are bound to

quarterly investments and four-year election cycles, there is generally too little time to apply such ideals.

As the War on Poverty aspired to achieve community action, impoverished Americans, as well as top intellectuals and senior researchers alike, aspire to influence corporatized action. Consumer values are shifting as marijuana legalization, GM referendums and carbon taxing, among countless other issues, have changed public, political debate toward the emergence of alternative economic potential.

People are becoming more aware of how consumer trends impact the environment, and consequently their socioeconomic wellbeing. Obama was an intelligent, albeit compromised, presidential voice, who while impotent to meet serious political challenges concerning the corporate overhaul of America's economy, represents the American people's will to overcome the detriments of poverty.

In the American context, capitalism and democracy are at odds, in practice and ideologically, exposing the open wounds of communities vulnerable to economic immobility and the paralyses of political underrepresentation.

Part VII

Trump

The rich got richer.

America's 200 richest people increased their wealth by \$1 trillion.

The poor got poorer.

From February to September 2020, the poverty rate in America increased from 15% to 16.7%, following a rise since Trump took office in January 2017. (While many attribute this to the global pandemic, it was Trump's fumbling over health measures that exacerbated poverty.)

Conclusion

American Poverty / American Wealth

By definition, wealth implies poverty, as poverty implies wealth. As Olfa Kaabia pointed out in her piece for The Conversation, ‘Has America become poorer under Donald Trump, as Joe Biden claimed?’, published November 26, 2020, “...there is no international consensus about the definition of poverty. The two major organizations, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program, agree on the causes of poverty but not its definition.”

In American cities, many poor and affluent communities live side by side. Wealth and poverty are measured in diverse ways, in housing, whether opulent or spare, or in food, whether decadent or cheap, in clothing, whether worn to identify class orientation or by necessity, through education, whether distinguished or incomplete, or healthcare, whether well-treated or sorely neglected.

Rather than study poverty in isolation, a more comprehensive approach might examine the relationship between the poor and the wealthy. As noted in the history of the War on Poverty, and within the greater context of hypercapitalist American society, wealth creates poverty, as poverty creates wealth, considering the importance of cheap labor. Both economic conditions arise mutually out of an unequal social order in which children and multigenerational families live in poverty beside the wealth of investment bankers, or the inherited riches of settler society.

Since the inception of America’s socioeconomic order, as it dawned in the era following national economic independence in the late 18th century, dominant history cites the preeminence of a wealthy class who signed onto and conceived a society of equals, where the “pursuit of happiness” was enshrined as the epitome of economic justice.

Such founding figures as George Washington, John Hancock, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, all of whom owned impressive riches, would not live to see the twin birth of human rights and civil rights cast an embittered, hypocritical shade over their legacies. As the pages of America’s early history have since yellowed in museum vitrines, the foundations of the nation’s economic narrative are increasingly exposed as the superficial whims of the privileged.

Through diplomacy with the Iroquois Confederacy, when it was respected as an equal, America’s founding fathers conceived their national ideals of democracy, peace and equality. During the second session of the 100th congress, which convened in October of 1988, the U.S. Senate concurred on resolution #331, which explicitly demonstrated to the Select Committee on Indian Affairs how, in fact, crucial the Iroquois confederacy had been to the making of America.

“To acknowledge the contribution of the Iroquois Confederacy of Nations to the development of the United States Constitution and to reaffirm the continuing government-to-government relationship between Indian tribes and the United States established in the Constitution,” read the landmark resolution.

“Whereas the original framers of the Constitution, including, most notably, George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, are known to have greatly admired the concepts of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. Whereas the confederation of the original Thirteen Colonies into one republic was influenced by the political system developed by the Iroquois Confederacy as were many of the democratic principles which were incorporated into the Constitution itself...”

Still, in today’s America, the rewriting of history is often challenged and neglected, however, the age of information is turning the tables. The Indian Country Today Media Network supported an argument published at Cracked.com highlighting the landmark 1988 resolution after debunking the myth that America’s foundational governance solely resulted from its colonialist intelligentsia.

Since May of 2012, millions upon millions of Americans have become aware, helped by social media, of the historic truth that not only were the founding fathers influenced by the Iroquois’ exemplary political model, but also that Indigenous nationhood was essential and fundamental to modern American values.

In light of the history of poverty and wealth, it may be said that America’s acknowledged “influences”, i.e. direct borrowings, from Iroquois politics is integral to its history of wealth, as acquired and inherited in America, while its distribution or lack thereof is fundamental to understanding America’s history of poverty.

In 1987, Cornell University held a conference to mark the 200th anniversary of the American Constitution, wherein hundreds of scholars analyzed history with a sharper lens. Convened by the university’s American Indian Studies Program, some 200 scholars examined scholarly and historical evidence that the earth’s oldest democracy isn’t the United States of America, but rather the Six Nation Confederacy of the Iroquois, which the Indian Country Today Media Network staff upheld in reference to a widely-circulated article published at Cracked.com on May 15, 2012.

The Indian Country Today Staff wrote: “When the first Europeans swept into the northeast of the New World, far from finding a organizational blank canvass on which to create a brand new system of government, it should be part of the curriculum for students in the Americas to understand that they instead encountered a highly organized, very powerful alliance of six nations...The Iroquois League was, and still is, the oldest participatory democracy on Earth.”

For American historians and Indigenous studies scholars alike, the conference marked a momentous achievement, academically and politically. The

reason for underlining the history of the Iroquois Confederacy in relation to the mythology of the American Dream emphasizes how the vicissitudes of poverty and wealth influence national identity.

The Iroquois Confederacy cultivated democratic ideas, but their communities were soon impoverished under the domineering colonial framework, which overran America's idealist, economic elites. During the years when the War on Poverty fomented in the halls of government, the Iroquois Confederacy had been demeaned by belligerent traditions of state violence, perpetuating the colonialist land grab in Indian Country.

"The United States government signed more than four hundred treaties with Indians and violated every single one. For instance, back in George Washington's administration, a treaty was signed with the Iroquois of New York: 'The United States acknowledge all the land within the aforementioned boundaries to be the property of the Seneca nation...', wrote Howard Zinn in an abridged version of *A People's History of the United States*, exposing popular ignorance regarding 20th century economic reform and the uninterrupted ties that contemporary society maintains with the earliest and most problematic chapters in American history.

"But in the early sixties, under President Kennedy, the United States ignored the treaty and built a dam on this land, flooding most of the Seneca reservation" (283-284).

For 25 years, although arguably for centuries, Indigenous Peoples around the world worked with the United Nations on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was adopted by the UN in September of 2007. Three years later, the United States became the very last nation of the four who voted against the UN Declaration to finally endorse it when Obama stated that America would ratify before the White House Tribal Nations Conference on December 15, 2010.

The other countries that initially voted against the declaration were Canada, New Zealand and Australia, all of which were once ruled by a post-colonial non-Indigenous populous hailing from former dominions of the UK.

"Noting that the United States was the last government in the world to sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, even then, [President of Quinault Indian Nation and Affiliated Tribes of the Northwest, Fawn] Sharp says, the U.S. State Department denied UNDRIP provisions affirming the principle that Indigenous peoples must directly participate in developing policies and actions that affect their rights and interests," read a report by Intercontinental Cry Magazine, published on November 17, 2013 as part of preparation for the 2014 UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

"Given that in 2009 President Obama celebrated his administration's settlement of tribal mineral, oil and gas royalties -- systematically stolen by the

Department of Interior -- for pennies on the dollar, tribal leaders probably shouldn't get their hopes up that Obama will significantly shift the centuries old paradigm of cheating American Indians."

Additionally, the International Labor Organization was particularly vital in the making of the UN Declaration. Article 169 of the International Labor Organization, also termed the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, explicitly protects the vulnerable economic and cultural elements of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples globally. The international protection is especially pertinent in light of debates on poverty and wealth, as concerns the antipoverty angle of the War on Poverty.

ILO 169 is an exemplary model of protections for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples around the world, stressing, albeit in subtext, the enduring strength of ancient human traditions in confrontation with the hypercapitalist economic culture of Western modernism.

What may be evinced from a more broad scope of humanity's economic history is not necessarily the poverty-wealth binary that defines the War on Poverty, and other similar measures internationally, but an affirmation of a more essential human experience which is not only derived from personal income and GDP, but the right to access local natural resources.

Within the UN General Assembly, the closest relative to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with regard to poverty reduction, or poverty eradication, was outlined as part of the Millennium Declaration, penned during the 2000 convention. Under subheading three, 'Development and poverty eradication', the eleventh article of the Declaration sets in writing the intent to eradicate poverty from the world map.

"We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want," the UN General Assembly stated, adopting, over a total of ten articles the design of poverty eradication in relation to economic development, national debt, children's education, disease prevention, and substandard housing.

Parallel to habits of overconsumption and perpetual financial growth, the dominant economic engine of the American Dream, however, runs counterintuitive in the practice of poverty eradication, as seen in the history of the War on Poverty. In comparison with the American Constitution's adaptation of the Iroquois Confederacy, the ideals of civil equality and economic justice fall short when applied to the malleability of national structures and the technological transformations of trade and finance.

A multigenerational society of entitled, wealthy settlers may propound notions that support their constituents' political conscience, but as long as they retain their economic position they will perpetuate the rule of nationalist colonizers over the land defenders of the Earth.

In other words, while triumphant philosophically, the occasion of wealth distribution has been a hard-won battle in practice. That war is far from over and will be fought over the course of multifaceted, autonomous bouts of civil engagement, as opposed to the ordained and enshrined idealisms of the state that would exploit and subdue the economic empowerment of its most vulnerable and disenfranchised communities.

"The ceaseless expansion of economic exploitation, the engine of global capitalism, has come to an end. The futile and myopic effort to resurrect this expansion—a fallacy embraced by most economists—means that we respond to illusion rather than reality," wrote Chris Hedges for Truthdig.com in 2012, as he began touring his new book, *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* in September of that year.

"The quality of our lives will depend on the quality of our communities. If communal structures are strong we will be able to endure. If they are weak we will succumb to the bleakness."

Reflecting on America's crises of domestic exploitation of local economies and resources, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Chris Hedges mused on the works of "post-carbon" intellectuals as Joseph Tainter, author of *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, and Richard Heinberg, who wrote, *The End of Growth*, as well as James Howard Kunstler, author of *The Long Emergency*.

Researchers have forecasted the collapse of the American economy if it continues on the track of fossil fuel dependency, and other non-renewable energy sources. More than a technological and economic shift, the future of America, and the world, will require the reclamation of social alternatives to modern nationalism, of early forms of community perhaps more akin to the archaic, or pre-industrial.

"Somehow we have to prepare individually for the ending of growth (a process likely to be accompanied by economic and political upheavals) while at the same time preserving and building social cohesion and laying the groundwork for a new economy that can function in a post-growth, post-fossil fuel environment," Heinberg explained.

"The maintenance of social cohesion must be our single highest priority in a future of mounting economic and environmental challenges" (268-269).

Accounting for the socioeconomic repercussions of climate change has come full circle to burst the bubble of the American Dream. Individuals increasingly share in the responsibility of the federal government and multinational stakeholders who precipitate the pace of economic "progress", marginalizing local

citizenries in the process. Awareness of individual accountability, as understood by Post-Carbon Institute senior fellow, Richard Heinberg, demands that people look beyond political change, to examine their personal lives as the root of economic justice.

More than to impose liberally “progressive”, i.e. green-washed consumerist idealizations for economic change, the very way of life that people have become accustomed to leading in a fossil-fuel dependent economy is coming under increasingly heavy fire from intellectuals, activists, farmers, and architects, among other unsuspecting proponents of climate science who have lived for generations immersed in renewable energy, harvesting local natural resources and building on grassroots community foundations.

In the context of national political and economic reform, such approaches are alternative to mainstream governmental change, instilling an independent course of action, one that could become more practical as the traditional structures of the nation-state fail to adapt to the primacy of environmentally conscientious values and pollution-free lifestyles.

The individualistic tendencies of American egoism, the symbolism of iconic politicians, challenges the nature of change, which should be a positive, inclusive nexus on which to build a new society. One more example of this problematic mentality is the erasure of the past as a virtue of hypercapitalist economics.

“This certainty, that the future would be so much better than the past that it could be detected in the space of a generation, is what we call the American Dream. The phrase itself was coined only in 1931, once the gains of the second industrial revolution had dispersed and inequality had begun to dissipate,” wrote Benjamin Wallace-Wells in mid-2013 for The New York Times Magazine, wherein he examines the work of 72-year old economist Robert Gordon.

Wallace-Wells critiqued the bleak realism of contemporary American economists as counterbalanced against the unbridled optimism that is rife in the predominant paradigms of traditionalist growth-seeking capitalism.

That the American War on Poverty came to a conclusion with the notion that increased wealth would resolve poverty issues, as a legacy of the Reagan-era, not only have researchers found that increased wealth exacerbates poverty, but also that neither isolated focuses on wealth, or on poverty, can lead to humanistic measures toward poverty eradication, or, more enduringly, economic justice.

By understanding the conditions within which poverty is related to wealth, a paradigm of shared economic independence may evolve which is not needful of wealth nor averse to poverty. In turn, the relative values of both poverty and wealth might expand into broader fields of economic diversity.

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Part I

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The rain-swept Boston Fish Pier, crowded with fish carts, fishing boats, and workmen, ca. 1950

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_rain-swept_Boston_Fish_Pier,_crowded_with_fish_carts,_fishing_boats,_and_workmen,_ca._1950_-_NARA_-_541953.tif

Sgt. Joshua Paxson, an Affton, Mo., native, Lance Cpl. Joe Monnig, a Highland, Ill., native, and Lance Cpl. Jason Worthen, a Highland, Ill., native, all with Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, install plywood into the floor of a house in Boston May 5, 2010

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:USMC-100505-M-2156H-042.jpg>

Cpl. Timothy Serback, a St. Louis native, shares stories of the Corps with Clive Allen, a local resident who served in the Marine Corps from 1977-80, in Boston May 5, 2010

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:USMC-100505-M-2156H-163.jpg>

Arthur Rhames busking on Broadway c.1980

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arthur_Rhames_on_sax_busking.jpg

"Three boys and 'A Train' graffiti in Brooklyn's Lynch Park in New York City (1974)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lynch_park_boyz.jpg

Wall painting at Division and Forsyth streets in lower Manhattan, New York City (1974)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WALL_PAINTING_AT_DIVISION_AND_FORSYTH_STREETS_IN_LOWER_MANHATTAN_NEY YORK CITY THIS PROJECT_IS_A_PORTRAIT_OF_THE...-_NARA_-555911.tif

Three young girls in Brooklyn, New York City (1974)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:THREE_YOUNG_GIRLS_IN_BROOKLYN_NEY YORK CITY THE INNER CITY TODAY_IS_AN_ABSOLUTE CONTRADICTION_TO_THE_MAIN_STREAM...-_NARA_-555941.jpg

Young man with his leg in a cast in Hiland Park of Brooklyn New York City (1974)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:YOUNG_MAN_WITH_HIS_LEG_IN_A_CAST_IN_HILAND_PARK_OF_BROOKLYN_NEY YORK CITY THE INNER CITY TODAY_IS_AN_ABSOLUTE...-_NARA_-555914.jpg

Occupy Wall Street (2011)

<http://thecollegeconservative.com.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/occupy-wall-street.jpg>

Avenue D Housing Project on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in New York City (1974)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AVENUE_D HOUSING_PROJECT_ON_THE_LOWER_EAST_SIDE_OF_MANHATTAN_IN_NEY YORK CITY THE INNER CITY TODAY_IS_AN_ABSOLUTE...-_NARA_-555940.jpg

Latin youths at Lynch Park in Brooklyn, New York City (1974)

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:LATIN_YOUTHS_AT_LYNCH_PARK_IN_BROOKLYN,_NEW_YORK_CITY._THE_INNER_CITY_TODAY_IS_AN_ABSOLUTE CONTRADICTION_TO_THE_MAIN..._-_NARA_-_555906.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:LATIN_YOUTHS_AT_LYNCH_PARK_IN_BROOKLYN,_NEW_YORK_CITY._THE_INNER_CITY_TODAY_IS_AN_ABSOLUTE CONTRADICTION_TO_THE_MAIN..._-_NARA_-_555906.jpg)

Part II

President Johnson's poverty tour in 1964

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:President_Johnson_poverty_tour.jpg

Slag Heap above housing on Buffalo Creek near Logan, West Virginia (1974)

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:SLAG_HEAP_ABOVE_HOUSING_ON_BUFFALO_CREEK_NEAR_LOGAN,_WEST_VIRGINIA._SLAG_HEAPS_ARE_ONE_OF_THE_ITEMS_WHICH_MAKE_MINING..._-_NARA_-_556467.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SLAG_HEAP_ABOVE_HOUSING_ON_BUFFALO_CREEK_NEAR_LOGAN,_WEST_VIRGINIA._SLAG_HEAPS_ARE_ONE_OF_THE_ITEMS_WHICH_MAKE_MINING..._-_NARA_-_556467.jpg)

Resident of "LITTLE KOREA", one of several poverty pockets in Birmingham (1972)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RESIDENT_OF_%22LITTLE_KOREA%22,_ONE_OF_SEVERAL_POVERTY_POCKETS_IN_BIRMINGHAM._MANY_BLACKS_STILL_LIVE_IN THESE_SUBSTANDARD_HOUSES..._-_NARA_-_545520.tif

Poverty characterizes the situation of most of the blacks on St. Helena's Island

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:POVERTY_CHARACTERIZES_THE_SITUATION_OF_MOST_OF_THE_BLACKS_ON_ST_HELENA%27S_ISLAND_-_NARA_-_546987.tif](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:POVERTY_CHARACTERIZES_THE_SITUATION_OF_MOST_OF_THE_BLACKS_ON_ST_HELENA%27S_ISLAND_-_NARA_-_546987.tif)

Martha Ann Crider comes from a coal mining family and is the wife of a retired miner living in Fireco, near Beckley, West Virginia (1972)

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:MARTHA_ANN_CRIDER_COMES_FROM_A_COAL_MINING_FAMILY_AND_IS_THE_WIFE_OF_A_RETired_MINER_LIVING_IN_FIRECO,_NEAR_BECKLEY..._-_NARA_-_556492.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MARTHA_ANN_CRIDER_COMES_FROM_A_COAL_MINING_FAMILY_AND_IS_THE_WIFE_OF_A_RETired_MINER_LIVING_IN_FIRECO,_NEAR_BECKLEY..._-_NARA_-_556492.jpg)

Barry, Bridget, and Blair Martin talk to a FEMA Pensacola DRC worker about aid. Pensacola, Escambia County, Fla. (2005)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FEMA_-_14678_-_Photograph_by_Marvin_Nauman_taken_on_09-01-2005_in_Florida.jpg

Paul Callis, President of the Tennessee Consolidated Coal Company with Headquarters at Jasper, Tennessee (1974)

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:PAUL_CALLIS,_PRESIDENT_OF_THE_TENNESSEE_CONSOLIDATED_COAL_COMPANY_WITH_HEADQUARTERS_AT_JASPER,_TENNESSEE,_NEAR..._-_NARA_-556526.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PAUL_CALLIS,_PRESIDENT_OF_THE_TENNESSEE_CONSOLIDATED_COAL_COMPANY_WITH_HEADQUARTERS_AT_JASPER,_TENNESSEE,_NEAR..._-_NARA_-556526.jpg)

CHILDREN OF MIGRANT WORKERS PLAY MARBLES WHILE THEIR PARENTS WORK IN FIELDS (1972)

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:CHILDREN_OF_MIGRANT_WORKERS_PLAY_MARBLES_WHILE THEIR_PARENTS_WORK_IN_FIELDS._BECAUSE THEIR_FAMILIES_MUST_CONSTANTLY..._-_NARA_-543859.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CHILDREN_OF_MIGRANT_WORKERS_PLAY_MARBLES_WHILE THEIR_PARENTS_WORK_IN_FIELDS._BECAUSE THEIR_FAMILIES_MUST_CONSTANTLY..._-_NARA_-543859.jpg)

Rand, WV., with much of its population living in poverty (1973)

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:RAND,_WV.,_WITH MUCH_OF_ITS_POPULATION_LIVING_IN_POVERTY,_HAS_MANY_UNPAVED_ROADS,_SUBSTANDARD_HOUSES,_AND_JUNKED..._-_NARA_-551005.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RAND,_WV.,_WITH MUCH_OF_ITS_POPULATION_LIVING_IN_POVERTY,_HAS_MANY_UNPAVED_ROADS,_SUBSTANDARD_HOUSES,_AND_JUNKED..._-_NARA_-551005.jpg)

A miner asleep in his home. Southern Coal Corporation, Bradshaw Mine, Bradshaw, McDowell County, West Virginia (1946)

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:A_miner_asleep_in_his_home._Southern_Coal_Corporation,_Bradshaw_Mine,_Bradshaw,_McDowell_County,_West_Virginia._-_NARA_-541033.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_miner_asleep_in_his_home._Southern_Coal_Corporation,_Bradshaw_Mine,_Bradshaw,_McDowell_County,_West_Virginia._-_NARA_-541033.jpg)

Company houses in Brookside, Kentucky, USA, photographed in June 1974 during the Brookside Mine Strike

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brookside-company-houses-ky1.gif>

Rand, WV. has many unpaved roads, substandard houses, and junked automobiles (1973)

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:RAND,_WV.,_WITH MUCH_OF_ITS_POPULATION_LIVING_IN_POVERTY,_HAS_MANY_UNPAVED_ROADS,_SUBSTANDARD_HOUSES,_AND_JUNKED..._-_NARA_-551002.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RAND,_WV.,_WITH MUCH_OF_ITS_POPULATION_LIVING_IN_POVERTY,_HAS_MANY_UNPAVED_ROADS,_SUBSTANDARD_HOUSES,_AND_JUNKED..._-_NARA_-551002.jpg)

New houses at Kimbereley were built by Buffalo Housing (1973)

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:NEW_HOUSES_AT_KIMBERELEY_WERE_BUILT_BY_BUFFALO_HOUSING_BUFFALO_HOUSING_ORIGINATED_AT_THE_WEST_VIRGINIA_INSTITUTE_OF..._-_NARA_-551110.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NEW_HOUSES_AT_KIMBERELEY_WERE_BUILT_BY_BUFFALO_HOUSING_BUFFALO_HOUSING_ORIGINATED_AT_THE_WEST_VIRGINIA_INSTITUTE_OF..._-_NARA_-551110.jpg)

Outside the Job Corps Center on Summers Street in Downtown Charleston (1973)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:OUTSIDE_THE_JOB_CORPS_CENTER_ON_SUMMERS_STREET_IN_DOWNTOWN_CHARLESTON_-_NARA-551143.jpg

Lady Bird Johnson, the First Lady, reading to children enrolled in Project Head Start at Kemper School in Washington, DC. (1966)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lady_Bird_Johnson_Visiting_a_Classroom_for_Project_Head_Start_1966.gif

Princeton, KY, February 21, 2009 -- At a Red Cross shelter, shelter manager Bill Carrington comforts Lynn Jones

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FEMA_-_40028_-_Red_Cross_manager_comforts_a_resident_in_Kentucky.jpg

Photograph of a Louisiana Fisherman's Family, 07/1972

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louisiana_Fisherman_Family_1972.jpg

In the spring of 1973 the Mississippi River reached its highest level in more than 150 years (1973)
http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/2013/03/national_archives_searching_foto.html#photo14

George Raymond Mug Shot George Raymond, Jr. was an eighteen-year-old CORE activist living in New Orleans, Louisiana (1961)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:George_Raymond_Mug.jpg

Lilly Mae Sheets, Fireco, West Virginia (1974)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:LILLY_MAE_SHEETS,_FIRECO,_WEST_VIRGINIA,_NEAR_BECKLEY,_STANDS_OUTSIDE_HER_RALEIGH_COUNTY_HOME._HER_HUSBAND_WAS_HURT..._-_NARA-556487.jpg

Rand, WV. with much of its population living in poverty (1973)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RAND,_WV.,_WITH_MUCH_OF_ITS_POPULATION_LIVING_IN_POVERTY,_HAS_MANY_UNPAVED_ROADS,_SUBSTANDARD_HOUSES,_AND_JUNKED..._-_NARA-551004.jpg

President Lyndon B. Johnson on his poverty tour, Knoxville Tennessee (1964)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Poverty_Tour_LBJ.jpg

Part III

American Gothic by Grant Wood (1930)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Grant_Wood_-_American_Gothic_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

Mansfield, Ohio, September 8, 2007 -- FEMA Mitigation Outreach representative Barbara Glynn (R) speaks with a homeowner whose house was damaged from recent flooding in the community (2007)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FEMA_-_32746_-_FEMA_mitigation_workerSpeaks_to_residents.jpg

This little girl on Chicago's West Side will have many hurdles to overcome while growing up (1973)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:THIS_LITTLE_GIRL_ON_CHICAGO%27S_WEST_SIDE_WILL_HAVE_MANY_HURDLES_TO_OVERCOME_WHILE_GROWING_UP._THE_SCHOOLS_ARE_POOR_IN..._-_NARA_-_556140.tif

Hutterite girl holding her baby sister (1950)

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hutterite_girl_holding_her_baby_sister_\(3380762768\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hutterite_girl_holding_her_baby_sister_(3380762768).jpg)

Men work with a hay baler on a farm near Pt. Pleasant, close to the Ohio border (1973)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MEN_WORK_WITH_A_HAY_BALER_ON_A_FARM_NEAR_PT_PLEASANT_CLOSE_TO_THE_OHIO_BORDER_IN_THIS_PART_OF_THE_KANAWHA_RIVER..._-_NARA_-_551158.jpg

Youngster picks up an ear of corn at the Hale Farm which is adjacent to the Western Reserve Village near Akron, Ohio (1975)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:YOUNGSTER_PICKS_UP_AN_EAR_OF_CORN_AT_THE_HALE_FARM_WHICH_IS_ADJACENT_TO_THE_WESTERN_RESERVE_VILLAGE_NEAR_AKRON,_OHIO...._-_NARA_-_557937.jpg

Peoria County, Illinois landowner is a conservation enthusiast (2011)

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NRCSIL00034_-_Illinois_\(4159\)_NRCS_Photo_Gallery.tif](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NRCSIL00034_-_Illinois_(4159)_NRCS_Photo_Gallery.tif)

Midwest Floods, July 1993

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FEMA_-_2858_-_Photograph_by_Andrea_Booher_taken_on_07-09-1993.jpg

Morning sunrise over soybean field on northeast Ohio farm (2012)
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NRCSOH07009_-_Ohio_\(717396\)\(NRCS_Photo_Gallery\).tif](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NRCSOH07009_-_Ohio_(717396)(NRCS_Photo_Gallery).tif)

A day without immigrants, May 1, 2006
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_Day_Without_Immigrants_-_Man_wearing_American_flag.jpg

Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (2008)
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DREAM_Act.jpg

Young migrant worker weeds sugar beets from 7:00 A.M. until dusk for \$2.00 an hour (1972)
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:YOUNG_MIGRANT_WORKER_WEEDS_SUGAR_BEETS_FROM_7-00_A.M._UNTIL_DUSK_FOR_\\$2.00_AN_HOUR_-_NARA_-_543853.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:YOUNG_MIGRANT_WORKER_WEEDS_SUGAR_BEETS_FROM_7-00_A.M._UNTIL_DUSK_FOR_$2.00_AN_HOUR_-_NARA_-_543853.jpg)

Migrant workers weed sugar beets from dawn to dusk for \$2.00 an hour (1972)
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MIGRANT_WORKERS_WEED_SUGAR_BEETS_FROM_DAWN_TO_DUSK_FOR_\\$2.00_AN_HOUR_-_NARA_-_543862.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MIGRANT_WORKERS_WEED_SUGAR_BEETS_FROM_DAWN_TO_DUSK_FOR_$2.00_AN_HOUR_-_NARA_-_543862.jpg)

Grape/lettuce boycotters picket the Jewel Food Store (1973)
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:GRAPE-LETTUCE_BOYCOTTERS_PICKET_THE_JEWEL_FOOD_STORE_-_NARA_-_551938.jpg

Farm workers and supporters boycotting Jewel Food Store
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FARM_WORKERS_AND_SUPPORTERS_BOYCOTTING_JEWEL_FOOD_STORE_ON_BROADWAY_IN_THE_%22NEW_TOWN%22_AREA_OF_THE_CITY,_CLOSE_TO_THE..._-_NARA_-_551968.jpg

Farmer John Dolezal in rain gear passes his barn during downpour (1973)
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FARMER_JOHN_DOLEZAL_IN_RAIN_GEAR_PASSES_HIS_BARN_DURING_DOWNPOUR._PROBLEMS_WERE_INCREASED_FOR_LOCAL_FARMERS_THIS_YEAR..._-_NARA_-_547315.jpg

Near Bee, Nebraska unusually heavy rainfall this year added greatly to problems of local farmers (1973)
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FEET_OF_FARMER_JOHN_DOLEZAL_SLOGGING_THROUGH_MUD_ON_DOLEZA

L%27S_FAR_M_NEAR_BEE,_NEBRASKA,_UNUSUALLY_HEAVY_RAINFALL_THIS..._-
NARA-_547422.jpg

A senior citizens' march to protest inflation, unemployment and high taxes (1973)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:A_SENIOR_CITIZENS%27_MARCH_TO_PROTEST_INFLATION,_UNEMPLOYMENT_AND_HIGH_TAXES_STOPPED_AT_A_BAND_SHELL_ALONG_LAKE_SHORE..._-
NARA-_556255.jpg

Black woman exhibitor at Push Expo, an annual exhibit of Black talent, Black products and Black education in Chicago (1973)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:BLACK_WOMAN_EXHIBITOR_AT_PUSH_EXPO,_AN_ANNUAL_EXHIBIT_OF_BLACK_TALENT,_BLACK_PRODUCTS_AND_BLACK_EDUCATION_IN_CHICAGO...._-
NARA-_556150.jpg

A poor neighborhood, mostly black, on the near North Side (Chicago-1973)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:A_POOR_NEIGHBORHOOD,_MOSTLY_BLACK,_ON_THE_NEAR_NORTH_SIDE_NEAR_OAK_STREET_AND_ABOUT_A_MILE_FROM_N._MICHIGAN_AVENUE...._-
NARA-_551924.jpg

Black student welders work in a machine shop course taught at the Chicago Opportunities Industrialization Center (1973)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:BLACK_STUDENT_WELDERS_WORK_IN_A_MACHINE_SHOP_COURSE_TAUGHT_AT_THE_CHICAGO OPPORTUNITIES_INDUSTRIALIZATION_CENTER_AT_A..._-
NARA-_556267.jpg

Black neighbors outside on Chicago's West Side (1973)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:BLACK_NEIGHBORS_OUTSIDE_ON_CHICAGO%27S_WEST_SIDE,_THEY_ARE_PART_OF_THE_NEARLY_1.2_MILLION_PEOPLE_OF THEIR_RACE WHO_MAKE..._-
NARA-_556169.jpg

Older housing in the black community on Chicago's West Side this area in 1973 had not quite recovered from the riots and fires during the mid to late 1960'S

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:OLDER_HOUSING_IN_THE_BLACK_COMMUNITY_ON_CHICAGO%27S_WEST_SIDE_THIS_AREA_IN_1973_HAD_NOT_QUITE_RECOVERED_FROM_THE RIOTS..._-
NARA-_556165.jpg

Part IV

Migrant Mother (1936)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lange-MigrantMother02.jpg>

Poor soil, damaged by accumulated salt, is examined by Mexican farmer (1972)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:POOR_SOIL,_DAMAGED_BY_ACCUMULATED_SALT,_IS_EXAMINED_BY_MEXICAN_FARME_R,_GILBERTO_BUITIERREZ_BANAGA,_NEAR_MEXICALI..._-_NARA_-_549083.jpg

President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Poverty Bill (1964)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Signing_of_the_Poverty_Bill.jpg

Church Street in San Francisco, California. A homeless person resting (2005)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Homeless-Church-Street-SF.jpg>

Black and White Ghetto (1971)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Black_and_White_Ghetto_-_NARA_-_559350.jpg

American Propaganda during the Cold War

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:America_Under_Communism_Cold_War_Propaganda.gif

Police arrest a man during the Watts Riots (1965)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wattsriots-policearrest-loc.jpg>

Farm workers in one of the few remaining fields near the ocean in fast growing Orange County, California (1975)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:FARM_WORKERS_IN_ONE_OF_THE_FEW_REMAINING_FIELDS_NEAR_THE_OCEAN_IN_FAST_GROWING_ORANGE_COUNTY,_CALIFORNIA,_SOUTH_OF..._-_NARA_-_557478.jpg

Photograph of President William Jefferson Clinton Greeting People in a Large Crowd at a "Get Out the Vote" Rally in Los Angeles, California, 11/02/2000

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:Photograph_of_President_William_Jefferson_Clinton_Greeting_People_in_a_Large_Crowd_at_a_%22Get_Out_the_Vote%22_Rally_in_Los_Angeles,_California,_11_02_2000.jpg

A street performer along the beachside boardwalk in Venice, Los Angeles, California, July 21, 2009

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Venice_Beach_Street_Performer.jpg

Ku Klux Klan members supporting Barry Goldwater's campaign for the presidential nomination at the Republican National Convention, San Francisco, California, as an African American man pushes signs back (1964)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:Ku_Klux_Klan_with_Barry_Goldwater%27s_campaign_signs_03195u_original.jpg

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:GOVERNOR_OF_MEXICAN_STATE_OF_BAJA_CALIFORNIA,_MILTON_CASTELLANOS,_MEETS_WITH_ME_XICAN_COTTON_FARMERS_IN_MEXICALI..._-NARA_-549073.jpg

Governor of Mexican state of Baja California, Milton Castellanos, meets with Mexican cotton farmers (1972)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:GOVERNOR_OF_MEXICAN_STATE_OF_BAJA_CALIFORNIA,_MILTON_CASTELLANOS,_MEE_TS_WITH_MEXICAN_COTTON_FARMERS_IN_MEXICALI..._-NARA_-549073.jpg

Mexican Green Card farmworker (1974)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:MEXICAN_GREEN_CARD_FARMWORKER,_JUGO_OLIVAS,_AND_HIS_WIFE_CROSS_BORDE_R_AT_CALEXICO_TO_SHOP_IN_AMERICAN_STORES._HIS..._-NARA_-549090.jpg

A day without immigrants, May 1, 2006

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_Day_Without_Immigrants_-_Gringo_also_protesting,_Mexican_and_American_flags.jpg

Mexican farm worker in the Imperial Valley (1972)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:MEXICAN_FARM_WORKER_IN_THE_IMPERIAL_VALLEY,_HE_CARRIES_A_GREEN_CARD_WHICH_PERMITS_HIM_TO_WORK_ON_U.S._FARMS_-NARA_-549080.jpg

In lettuce fields along the Colorado River (1972)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:IN_LETTUCE_FIELDS_ALONG_THE_COLORADO_RIVER,_MEXICAN_FARM_WORKER_CARRIES_BOXES_TO_FIELD_PICKERS_-NARA_-549084.jpg

Colorado River at the Mexican Border (1972)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:COLORADO_RIVER_AT_THE_MEXICAN_BORDER_(ON_MEXICAN_SIDE)_-_NARA_-_548831.tif

The Colorado River shrinks to a trickle at the Mexican border (1972)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:THE_COLORADO_RIVER_SHRINKS_TO_A_TRICKLE_AT_THE_MEXICAN_BORD
ER._THESE_SWIMMERS_AND_BATHERS_ARE_ON_THE_MEXICAN_SIDE_-_NARA_-
_549030.tif

U.S. Soldiers with the 8th Sustainment Command, hit the streets to help homeless veterans during the Soldier for life Veteran's Outreach Program, in downtown Honolulu, June 11, 2013

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:U.S._Soldiers_with_the_8th_Sus
tainment_Command,_hit_the_streets_to_help_homeless_veterans_during_the_Soldier_for_life_
Veteran%27s_Outreach_Program,_in_downtown_13 0611-A-VR663-826.jpg

Miss America 2000, Heather French, speaks to homeless children during the closing ceremonies of Operation STAND DOWN

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Heather_French_-_Operation_Stand_Down.jpg

Disposal site for the approximately 1,200,000 gallons of liquid sludge from the nearby contaminated five acre pond (1974)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:DISPOSAL_SITE_FOR_THE_APPROXIMATELY_1,200,000_GALLONS_OF_LIQUID_
SLUDGE_FR OM_THE_NEARBY_CONTAMINATED_FIVE_ACRES_POND._A..._-
NARA-_555879.jpg

California--Sierra National Forest (1972)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CALIFORNIA_SIERRA_NATIONAL_FOREST_-_NARA_-_542616.jpg

Desert 70 miles west of Phoenix (1972)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DESERT_70_MILES_WEST_O F_PHOENIX_-_NARA_-_544014.jpg

Economy of California (1972)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CALIFORNIA_-_NARA_-_542851.jpg

A child of migrant workers will receive very little schooling in his life (1972)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:A_CHILD_OF_MIGRANT_WORKERS_WILL_RECEIVE VERY_LITTLE_SCHOOLIN
G_IN_HIS_LIF E_WHEN_THIS_PHOTOGRAPH_WAS_TAKEN,_THIS..._-NARA_-
_543870.jpg

Pipeline on California Coast

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PIPELINE_-_NARA_-_543257.jpg

Part V

The broken sign is an example of damage by tourists in the remote Havasupai Indian Country (1972)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:THE_BROKEN_SIGN_IS_AN_EXAMPLE_OF_DAMAGE_BY_TOURISTS_IN_THE_REMOTE_HAVASUPAI_INDIAN_COUNTRY_-_NARA_-_544297.jpg

Chaske Spencer is a member of the Fort Peck Tribe of Montana and a role model for Native youth (2011)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chaske_Spencer_with_Lets_Mo_ve.JPG

Arizona--Navajo Reservation (1972)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ARIZONA-NAVAJO_RESERVATION_-_NARA_-_544385.jpg

Arizona--Hopi Indian Reservation

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ARIZONA-HOPI_INDIAN_RESERVATION_-_NARA_-_544432.tif

Havasu Falls on the Havasupai Reservation

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:HAVASU_FALLS_ON_THE_HAVASUPAI_RESERVATION_-_NARA_-_544335.jpg

Federal Bureau of Investigation wanted poster for Leonard Peltier

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leonard_Peltier_FBI_Poster.gif

Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation, MT, August 18, 2010

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FEMA_-_45059_-_Clean_up_at_Rocky_Boy_Indian_Reservation_in_Montana.jpg

Navajo boys plow corn field on the Navajo Reservation (1972)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:NAVAJO_BOYS_PLOW_CORN_FIELD_ON_THE_NAVAJO_RESERVATION_-_NARA_-_544319.jpg

Paiute woman at the laundromat in Nixon, Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation (1973)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:PAIUTE_WOMAN_AT_THE_LAUNDROMAT_IN_NIXON,_PYRAMID_LAKE_INDIA_N_RESERVATION_-_NARA_-_553098.jpg

Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation, MT, August 18, 2010

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FEMA_-_45051_-_Rocky_Boy%5E%5E39,s_Indian_Reservation_flood_survivor_in_Montana.jpg

Paiute Indian children outside grocery store in Nixon Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation (1973)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:PAIUTE_INDIAN_CHILDREN_OUTSIDE_GROCERY_STORE_IN_NIXON_PYRAMID_LAKE_INDIAN_RESERVATION_-_NARA_-_553097.jpg

Operator of grocery and post office at Nixon, Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation (1973)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:OPERATOR_OF_GROCERY_AND_POST_OFFICE_AT_NIXON,_PYRAMID_LAKE_INDIAN_RESERVATION_-_NARA_-_553092.jpg

Paiute Indian children at the school yard in Wadsworth Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation (1973)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:PAIUTE_INDIAN_CHILDREN_AT_THE_SCHOOL_YARD_IN_WADSWORTH_PYRAMID_LAKE_INDIAN_RESERVATION_-_NARA_-_553096.jpg

Paiute Indian fishermen at Pyramid Lake, Center of the Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation (1973)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:PAIUTE_INDIAN_FISHERMEN_AT_PYRAMID_LAKE,_CENTER_OF_THE_PYRAMID_LAKE_INDIAN_RESERVATION_-_NARA_-_553666.jpg

Sheepherding on the grounds of the Utah International Mine on the Navajo Reservation (1972)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:SHEEPHERDING_ON_THE_GROUNDS_OF_THE_UTAH_INTERNATIONAL_MINE_ON_THE_NAVAJO_RESERVATION_-_NARA_-_544317.jpg

Logging truck loaded with cedar in a clearcut area of the Quinault Indian Reservation (1972)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:LOGGING_TRUCK_LOADED_WITH_CEDAR_IN_A_CLEARCUT_AREA_OF_THE_QUINAULT_INDIAN_RESERVATION_-_NARA_-_545046.jpg

Navajo weavers at Hubbel Trading Post, the first such post on the Navajo Reservation (1972)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:NAVAJO_WEAVERS_AT_HUBBEL_TRADING_POST,_THE_FIRST_SUCH_POST_ON_THE_NAV AJO_RESERVATION_-_NARA_-_544431.jpg

Spring roundup of Paiute-owned cattle begins at Sutcliffe Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation (1973)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SPRING_ROUNDUP_OF_PAUTE OWNED_CATTLE_BEIGNS_AT_SUTCLIFFE_PYRAMID_LAKE_INDIAN_RESERVATION _CORALLING_AND_BRANDING_IS..._-_NARA_-_553114.jpg

Two children of Merwin Wright, Elected Tribal Chairman of the Paiute Indian Tribe, Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation (1973)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:TWO_CHILDREN_OF_MERWIN_WRIGHT,_ELECTED_TRIBAL_CHAIRMAN_OF_THE_PAUTE_INDIAN_TRIBE,_PYRAMID_LAKE_INDIAN_RESERVATION_-_NARA_-_553099.jpg

Rug-weaving at Hubbard Trading Post. This was the first such post on the Navajo Reservation (1972)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RUG-WEAVING_AT_HUBBARD_TRADING_POST._THIS_WAS_THE_FIRST_SUCH_POST_ON_THE_NAVAJO_RESERVATION_-_NARA_-_544360.jpg

Coralling and branding is done in five stages around Pyramid Lake (1973)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SPRING_ROUNDUP_OF_PAUTE-OWNED_CATTLE_BEGINS_AT_SUTCLIFFE_PYRAMID_LAKE_INDIAN_RESERVATION._CORALLING_AND_BRANDING_IS..._-_NARA_-_553117.jpg

Spring roundup of Paiute-owned cattle begins at Sutcliffe Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation (1973)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SPRING_ROUNDUP_OF_PAUTE-OWNED_CATTLE_BEGINS_AT_SUTCLIFFE_PYRAMID_LAKE_INDIAN_RESERVATION._CORALLING_AND_BRANDING_IS..._-_NARA_-_553115.jpg

Spring roundup of Paiute-owned cattle begins at Sutcliffe Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation (1973)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SPRING_ROUNDUP_OF_PAUTE-OWNED_CATTLE_BEGINS_AT_SUTCLIFFE_PYRAMID_LAKE_INDIAN_RESERVATION._CORALLING_AND_BRANDING_IS..._-_NARA_-_553113.jpg

Field lunch near Rawhide Point (1973)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SPRING_ROUNDUP_OF_PAUTE-OWNED_CATTLE_BEGINS_AT_SUTCLIFFE_PYRAMID_LAKE_INDIAN_RESERVATION._CORALLING_AND_BRANDING_IS..._-_NARA_-_553112.jpg

Navaho workmen at Four Corners Power Plant on Navaho Reservation

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

File:NAVAHO_WORKMEN_AT_FOUR_CORNERS_POWER_PLANT_ON_NAVAHO_RESERVATION._PLANT_IS_OWNED_BY_ARIZONA_PUBLIC_SERVICES_AND_FIVE..._-_NARA_-_544366.jpg

Spring roundup of Paiute-owned cattle begins at Sutcliffe Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation (1973)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SPRING_ROUNDUP_OF_PAIUTE-OWNED_CATTLE_BEGINS_AT_SUTCLIFFE_PYRAMID_LAKE_INDIAN_RESERVATION_-CORALLING_AND_BRANDING_IS...-_NARA_-_553111.jpg

Part VI

United States President Barack Obama rings a large bell during a tour of the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon on 19 November 2012

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barack_Obama_strikes_bell_at_Shwedagon_Pagoda.jpg

In honor of Martin Luther King Day, President Barack Obama serves lunch in the dining room at So Others Might Eat, a soup kitchen in Washington January 18, 2010

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MLK_service_obama.JPG

President Barack Obama talks with kids attending a Let's Move! tennis clinic on the South Lawn of the White House, Aug. 3, 2010

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Obama_with_Let%27s_Move!_kids.jpg

Senator Barack Obama with students outside the United States Capitol building (2008)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barack_Obama_with_Students.jpg

Habiba Akumu Obama, Barack Obama's paternal grandmother

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Obama%27s_Grandmother.jpg

United States President Barack Obama visits a pre-kindergarten classroom at the College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center in Decatur, Georgia on 14 February 2013

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barack_Obama_through_a_magnifying_glass.jpg

United States President Barack Obama hugs Stephanie Davies, who helped keep her friend, Allie Young, left, alive after she was shot during the 2012 Aurora shooting

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barack_Obama_visiting_victims_of_2012_Aurora_shooting.jpg

McCain - Obama presidential race; imperialism

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:UsElections_Obama_Latuff.png

United States President Barack Obama embraces Amy Simpson, principal of Plaza Towers Elementary School, outside the remains of the school on 26 May 2013 following the tornado that struck Moore, Oklahoma

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barack_Obama_at_tornado-smashed_school_in_Moore,_Oklahoma.jpg

Senator Barack Obama of Illinois talks with a Soldier from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division stationed in Kirkuk, Iraq (2006)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barack_Obama_Iraq_2006.jpg

Illinois Senator Barack Obama enjoys breakfast with service members of Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan during a visit at Camp Eggers in Kabul, Afghanistan, July 20 (2008)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barack_Obama_2008_Afghanistan_2.jpg

Sen. Barack Obama hangs out with service members at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, July 18 (2008)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barack_Obama_2008_Kuwait_5.jpg

Senator Christopher (Kit) Bond, Senator Barack Obama, and Congressman Harold Ford, Jr. stand with Bastogne Soldiers at FOB Warrior (2006)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ford_Bond_Obama_Iraq.jpg

The Obama family performing community service, from one of the features on the White House.gov website in January 2009

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Obama_family_performing_community_service_1-09.jpg

President Barack Obama speaks with working families at the White House

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barack_Obama-speaks-with-working-families-at-the-White-House-4-15-09.jpg

President Barack Obama fist-bumps Make-a-Wish child Diego Diaz after reading a letter he wrote, during his visit in the Oval Office, June 23, 2011

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:President_Obama_greets_Make-a-Wish_child_Diego_Diaz_-_June_23_2011.jpg

President Obama visit to La Follette High School, Madison Wisconsin, Sept. 28, 2010

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Obama_visit_to_La_Follette_High_School.JPG

President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama help paint along with other volunteers at a Habitat for Humanity site in Washington, D.C., Sept. 11, 2009

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Michelle_and_Barrack_Obama_paint_at_a_Habitat_for_Humanity_site.jpg

United States President Barack Obama hugs Donna Vanzant, the owner of North Point Marina, as he tours damage from Hurricane Sandy in Brigantine, New Jersey on 31 October 2012

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:President_Barack_Obama_Tours_Storm_Damage_in_New_Jersey_10.jpg

President Barack Obama and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie talk with local residents at the Brigantine Beach Community Center in Brigantine, N.J., Oct. 31, 2012

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:President_Barack_Obama_Tours_Storm_Damage_in_New_Jersey_8.jpg

President Barack Obama and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie talk with local residents at the Brigantine Beach Community Center in Brigantine, N.J., Oct. 31, 2012

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:President_Barack_Obama_Tours_Storm_Damage_in_New_Jersey_7.jpg

President-elect Barack Obama participates in a service project with high school students on Martin Luther King Day (2009)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barack_Obama_participates_in_service_project_1-19-09_2.JPG

President-elect Barack Obama participates in a service project with high school students on Martin Luther King Day (2009)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barack_Obama_participates_in_service_project_1-19-09_1.JPG

Youngster takes a hefty swing at a ball while playing in the equipment yard of a coal company (1974)

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:YOUNGSTER_TAKES_A_HEFTY_SWING_AT_A BALL WHILE PLAYING IN THE EQUIPMENT_YARD_OF_A_COAL_COMPANY_\(SEEN_IN_BACKGROUND\)_A_T...-_NARA_-_556583.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:YOUNGSTER_TAKES_A_HEFTY_SWING_AT_A BALL WHILE PLAYING IN THE EQUIPMENT_YARD_OF_A_COAL_COMPANY_(SEEN_IN_BACKGROUND)_A_T...-_NARA_-_556583.jpg)

This sign read "Ban Strip Mines" before being painted out (1973)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:THIS_SIGN_READ_%22BAN_STRIP_MINES%22_BEFORE_BEING_PAINTED_OUT_LOCAL_POSITION_TO_STRIPPING_IS_MILD_BECAUSE_MOST_PEOPLE...-_NARA_-_554818.jpg

President Barack Obama meets with Paul David "Bono" Hewson, lead singer of U2 and anti-poverty activist, to discuss development policy in the Oval Office, April 30, 2010

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bono_with_Barack_Obama.jpg

Conclusion

Homeless man sleeping on doorway of Penn Central's 30th Street Station

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HOMELESS_MAN_SLEEPING_ON_DOORWAY_OF_PENN_CENTRAL%27S_30TH_STREET_STATION_-_NARA--552724.jpg

William Penn is shown at center with the Delaware Indians at the time of the Treaty of Shackamaxon in 1682

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flickr_-_USCapitol_-_William_Penn_and_the_Indians.jpg

Flag of the Iroquois Confederacy, Hiawatha Belt

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_the_Iroquois_Confederacy.svg

1940 US government publicity photo meant for newspaper and magazine publication: Minnesota farm worker scene of Chippewa baby (at a rice field) strapped to cradleboard while teething on an Office of Indian Affairs print magazine called "Indians at Work"

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1940_govt_photo_minnesota_farming_scene_chippewa_baby_teething_on_magazine.indians_at_work.jpg

1914 - Buffalo New York, Panoramic View of Iroquois CREDIT: "Iroquois Indians." c1914

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1914_Panoramic_View_of_Iroquois.jpg

At the Water's Edge- Piegan (Blackfeet) Tipis (1910)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Piegan-_At_the_Waters_edge.jpg

Hopi woman dressing hair of unmarried girl, 1900

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hopi_woman_dressing_hair_of_unmarried_girl.jpg

A design for Int'l Day for Eradication of Poverty

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:17-Oct--international-day-for-the-eradication-of-poverty-.jpg>

Peabody Coal Company on Navajo Indian Reservation, Arizona (1972)

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

[File:PEABODY_COAL_COMPANY._COAL_IS_SHIPPED_OVER_200_MILES_TO_BULL_HEAD_CITY,_ARIZONA_-_NARA--544367.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PEABODY_COAL_COMPANY._COAL_IS_SHIPPED_OVER_200_MILES_TO_BULL_HEAD_CITY,_ARIZONA_-_NARA--544367.jpg)

New Navajo community, built by Navajo pine industry (1972)

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:NEW_NAVAJO_COMMUNITY,_BUILT_BY_NAVAJO_PINE_INDUSTRY_-_NARA_-
_544398.tif](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NEW_NAVAJO_COMMUNITY,_BUILT_BY_NAVAJO_PINE_INDUSTRY_-_NARA_-_544398.tif)

Reclining on feed sacks (Navajo Indian Reservation - 1972)
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RECLINING_ON_FEED_SACKS_-_NARA_-
_544365.tif](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RECLINING_ON_FEED_SACKS_-_NARA_-_544365.tif)

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5