



Seed Sowing  
Sister, Inc.<sup>™</sup>  
PUBLICATION



poverty

in america

Homeless



# Introduction



As a vast number of Americans find themselves waking up in the nightmare of poverty, others wake up without a clue as to the realities of poverty right here in our own backyard. Americans don't have an accurate picture of what poverty in the United States looks like, at least according to a new survey. For many living in poverty the struggle of survival is a sad reality. To better understand poverty, the definition of poverty will be the "extent to which an individual does without resources" including: Financial, Emotional, Mental, Physical, Support Systems and Role Models. I read in a recent article that on average, Americans believe the annual income that makes a family "poor" is approximately \$18,472 – almost \$4,600 less than the federal poverty level for a family of four, which is \$23,050.

Overall, Americans believe that 34 percent of the population is living in poverty. In reality, that totals about 16 percent of Americans, or roughly 49 million people, according to the Salvation Army recent Survey. Two reports recently released by the ICPH (Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness, Intergenerational Disparities Experienced by Homeless Black Families, documents that in 2010, nearly one quarter (23.3%) of black families lived in poverty, three times the rate of white families (7%). The lack of economic independence has resulted in many American families, especially black families without access to safe housing and employment.

Whether its generation or situational poverty, many of Americans are suffering. Some believe a good work ethic is all one needs to overcome poverty, while others may believe it's none of their concern. The fact of the matter is it should be our concern.

The poverty experience will expose the harsh realities of poverty that many Americans are experiencing. If I could ask one question, it would be "Do you have 3 hours to experience how over 37 million American men, women and children are living"?



# Table of Content



- Introduction
- Poverty Experience Proposal
- Agenda Outline
- Things to Think About
- Articles
  - Many Americans Don't Recognize Poverty
  - Poor and Homeless Populations
  - 'Back At Square One' As States Repurpose Welfare Funds, More Families
  - Fall Through Safety Net
  - Poverty Promotes Obesity





# Poverty Experience Agenda Outline



Introduction of presenters

Personal story of poverty from Angelica Norton,  
chief architect of the Poverty Experience

60 minute video of children living in motels in Orlando

Discussion of the primary differences between  
generational poverty and situational poverty

Discussion of primary issues facing those in poverty transportation,  
access to the internet, medical and dental care, deteriorating job skills,  
literacy rates, criminal justice records, etc.

Introduction and instructions of the poverty simulation

Debriefing

Closing Remarks

## For More Information, Contact:

**Angelica Norton**

813-476-3802

seedsowingsister@gmail.com

**Shelba Waldron**

727-644-1209

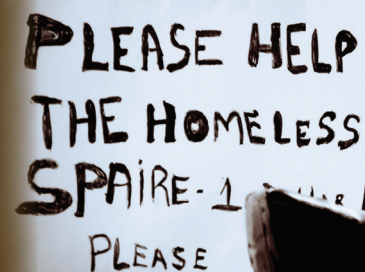
<http://shelbawaldronblogspot.com>

## Visit Us Online At:

[www.SeedSowingSister.com](http://www.SeedSowingSister.com)

 SSSAngelica

 SeedSowingSister



PLEASE HELP  
THE HOMELESS  
SPAIR-1  
PLEASE



# The Poverty Experience

**Presenters:** Angelica Norton and Shelba Waldron

**Length:** 3.0 Hours

**Target Audience:** Therapist, Counselors, Case Workers, Attorney's, Teachers, Behavior Techs, and Supervisors

The poverty experience is a presentation where participants are asked to simulate a month in the life of a family living under the poverty line. Participants are given a real life family story and asked to make decisions that impact whether or not they can afford rent, food, childcare and transportation. During the simulation each person will grapple with the day to day decisions, problems and barriers that are true to the life of someone in poverty. The simulation primary intent is to bring to the forefront the challenges of poverty, but the barriers those in poverty face that hinder ultimate success. Participants will work with others to devise solutions to problems, but also discuss elements of vulnerability, prejudice, systematic barriers, and apathy.

## Participant Learning Objectives:

- Identify systematic problems faced daily for those in poverty
- Look at the difference of those in situational poverty vs. generational poverty and how it effects techniques in counseling
- Discuss personal prejudice of those in poverty
- Discuss trends in poverty regarding special populations such as women, veterans, youth, the elderly, and those facing domestic violence



## Things to Think About

Please take note of the following issues that those living in poverty either situational or generational face on a daily basis.


Definitions:

Situational Poverty—Situational poverty involves a shorter time and is caused by circumstance, i.e. death, illness, divorce

Generational Poverty--Generational poverty is defined as being in poverty for two generations or longer.


- Child Care—
  - o Licensed child care is expensive and often times difficult to find for infants.
  - o Many parents do shift work that doesn't allow for a traditional 9 to 5 schedule. Most child care centers close around 6:00 p.m.
- Transportation—
  - o Bus schedules lack convenience and direct routes through Pinellas County, forcing time spent travelling that could be better used in the pursuit of returning to a more stable life.
- Internet—
  - o Many job notices are posted in an on-line forum and those who don't have 24 hour access to a computer with internet capability suffer from the convenience of looking for jobs, especially if they work shift work and cannot use a public computer during normal business hours.
- Job skills—
  - o Anyone out of work for a lengthy period of time lose the ability to keep skills updated, especially if they are forced to take a job out of necessity.
  - o Many employers are reporting that they only are hiring people who currently have jobs, leaving millions out of the running for current job openings
- Education and Literacy Rates--
  - o Many in poverty, especially generational poverty have higher dropout rates and higher rates of illiteracy. This makes them more vulnerable to missing necessary information needed for public assistance. It also increases their vulnerability to scams for making "fast money."
- Natural Disasters/States of Emergency—
  - o When a disaster occurs such as a major hurricane, those in poverty because of their limited resources suffer from the inability to evacuate.
  - o They often have minimal to no insurance on their personal effects.
  - o They usually don't have pre-made disaster kits such as water, canned food, and generators.
  - o Oftentimes their networks consist of a bartering system, so when people in their communities become displaced, it takes them much longer to recover than those in the middle class.



- 
- Clothing and Hygiene—
    - o Many people in poverty struggle to gain employment due to issues related to having resources to wash and iron clothes.
    - o Resources to water are not always available for showers and other hygienic needs
    - o Dental care is extremely difficult to get as there are few dentists who take Medicaid
  - Domestic Violence
    - o Many people, especially women who have been in a relationship of violence have been living in a sense of fear, creating low self-esteem and the inability to navigate the system of housing, banking, job search, and child care.
  - Access to Health Care
    - o Access to primary care physicians, limited income for co-pays, limited options of physicians will inhibit those in poverty from seeking medical care when needed or participate in healthy behaviors. Also, time plays a factor as many jobs for the poor are hourly leaving them fearing for losing money or their job if too much time is missed.
  - Access to Healthy Foods
    - o Although choice is always a factor when choosing healthy vs. non-healthy foods, there are significant differences with the poor vs. the middle class in terms of availability of grocery stores or fresh food markets, time to shop, resources in house such as pots and pans or spices, and availability of convenient stores and fast food. (Please see handout, "Poverty promotes obesity, studies find")
  - Criminal Records
    - o People in poverty who find themselves with criminal records regardless of the reason, suffer from finding jobs due to a record that haunts them compounding the fact that they usually do not have the resources for to have the record expunged. Most in poverty are also dependent upon the state for legal services and suffer from misperceptions from juries creating a disproportionate number of minorities in jail and prison.
  - Education
    - o Children from poverty suffer the most in early childhood where their brain is craving stimulation. Children raised in poverty start kindergarten with smaller vocabularies and less developed social skills. Hunger, poor socialization skills, and poor health care impacts learning and have significant long term effects.
  - Extra-curricular/Healthy Activities
    - o Children from poverty have less opportunity to participate in after school activities due to costs involved and transportation. Many older children are expected to serve as care givers to younger children as well. Adults are limited as well due to limited income, transportation, and time due to non-traditional work schedules.



PLEASE HELP  
THE HOMELESS  
SPAIR-1  
PLEASE



## Families Applying for Food Stamps & TANF Program differences...

- There is a right to food stamps. You go to the office and, if you meet the statutory definition of need, they help you.
- For welfare, the street-level bureaucrats can, pretty much at their own discretion, just say no.

## Criminal Justice

The most reliable – way to be criminalized by poverty is to have the wrong color skin. For starters, racial profiling. Whole communities are effectively “profiled” for the suspicious combination of being both dark-skinned and poor.

- Flick a cigarette and you’re “littering”
- Wear the wrong color T-shirt and you’re displaying gang affiliation.
- Just strolling around in an upper class neighborhood can mark you as a potential suspect. And don’t get grumpy about it or you could be “resisting arrest”.

## The Working Poor

- An astounding 29% of American families living in what could be more reasonably defined as poverty, meaning that they earned less and on a very slim budget covering housing, child care, health care, food, transportation, and taxes – though not, it should be noted, any entertainment, meals out, cable TV, Internet service, vacations, or holiday gifts.

## The Spiraling Down of The Middle Class

- Media attention has focused, understandably enough, on the “nouveau poor” – formerly middle and even upper-middle class people who lost their jobs, their homes, and/or their investments.

## Suicide

- No one could call suicide a “coping strategy”, but it is one way some people have responded to job loss and debt.
- There are no national statistics linking suicide to economic hard times, but the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline reported more than a four-fold increase in call volume between 2007 and 2009, and regions with particularly high unemployment, such as Elkhart, Indiana, have seen troubling spikes in their suicide rates.
- Foreclosure is often the trigger for suicide – or, worse, murder-suicides that destroy entire families.

## Homeless

- Most cities, for example, have ordinances designed to drive the destitute off the streets by outlawing such necessary activities of daily life as sitting, loitering, sleeping, or lying down.
- Urban officials boast that there is nothing discriminatory about such laws: “If you’re lying on a sidewalk, whether you’re homeless or a millionaire, you’re in violation of the ordinance,” a St Petersburg, Florida, city attorney stated in June 2009.

## Substance Abuse

- The experience of the poor and what it details resemble that of someone trying to find relief from a great amount of pain. And if they should try to escape this nightmare reality into a brief, drug-induced high, it’s “gotcha” all over again, because that of course is illegal too.







## ICPH Brief Finds Black Families and Women Overrepresented Among Poor and Homeless Population

Two reports recently released by the Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness (ICHP), *Intergenerational Disparities Experienced by Homeless Black Families* of Risk No. 6: Maternal Health and Well-being, found that black Americans and women are significantly overrepresented in U.S. homelessness and poverty statistics.

The first report, *Intergenerational Disparities Experienced by Homeless Black Families*, documents that in 2010, nearly one-quarter (23.3%) of black families lived in poverty, three times the rate of white families (7.1%). Black families also experience homelessness at a much higher rate, with one out of every 141 persons in black families staying in homeless shelters in 2010 – a rate seven times higher than in white families (ICHP, 2010). Systemic and interrelated barriers to economic independence have resulted in black families having unequal access to decent housing, employment, and education.

Discrimination in all three sectors is still a reality for black individuals and families, resulting in longstanding poverty, higher unemployment, lower educational attainment and earned income, considerable gaps in wealth accumulation, and homelessness. These inequities leave black families more likely to have smaller financial reserves to fall back on in emergency situations, thereby making them more vulnerable to poverty and homelessness.



## Understanding Poverty:

### Mindset of poverty:

- A. Money in poverty is meant to be spent or shared. Money tends to be used on entertainment.
- B. Extra money is shared or spent quickly. The feeling is that no one will get ahead financially.
- C. Even though the income may rise, patterns of thought and social interaction tend to remain the same unless there's intervention.
- D. View organized society with considerable skepticism, and even distrust.

### Individual Roles of poverty:

- A. The mother is the most powerful figure in generational poverty.
- B. Children are often forced to take on adult roles early. Many parent themselves and their young siblings.
- C. Youth and young adults in poverty need to have two sets of behaviors to choose from: one for home and neighborhood and school and work.
- D. The primary role of the man is to work hard physically, to be a fighter and a lover.

### The Needs of Poverty:

- A. Two things that help individuals move out of poverty are education and relationships.
- B. Successful relationships occur when a student is respected.
- C. Resilient kids usually have one or more caring adult outside the home in their life.
- D. The need of the individual comes first. People are often all they have.

### Education

- A. Education is viewed as abstract not real.
- B. Students will work harder for teachers who have established a positive, respectful relationship with them.
- C. Educators have tremendous opportunities as role models. Students from poverty must be taught that they have choices. From caring adults they also need insistence, expectations and support.
- D. The role of the educator is not to save the student but present a choice. The choice belongs to the student.

### Challenges & Circumstances

- A. A job is about making money to survive; it's usually not a career. Typical reason for quitting is they don't like the boss.
- B. Discipline is not necessarily about change.
- C. Family patterns can be confusing in poverty because many are common law.
- D. Income may rise, but patterns and social interactions tend to remain the same, unless there's intervention.
- E. For many, jail –for themselves or others in their extended family- Is a regular part of life.
- F. The educational attainment level of the mother is the most important influence on the educational success of her children.





## Article Links:

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/19/breakdown-tanf-needy-families-states\\_n\\_1606...](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/19/breakdown-tanf-needy-families-states_n_1606...)

<http://www.thenonproffitimes.com/article/detail/many-americans-don-t-recognize-poverty-...>

[http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/health/2011999243\\_obese01.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/health/2011999243_obese01.html)

<http://largo.patch.com/article/caregivers-help-communities-understand-the-hardship-of-poverty>



**NOTES:**

