



Poor People's United Fund

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Boston's Spare Change Community

Advocating for poor women is apparently a revolutionary act. When we were arrested (during sit-in) you would have thought we were serial killers- leg shackles and handcuffs. Helping the poor is apparently an act of subversion. But making them hungry and homeless is not. What's wrong with this picture, sisters and brothers. (Kip Tierman)

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Even though we have been listening to candidates for over a year the word poverty did not pass anyone's lips. Certainly not the self-proclaimed billionaire's. If the candidates won't talk about poverty, we will. Our newsletter articles highlight twenty years after Welfare Reform (we think it is more accurate to say DE-form) and document that things have gotten much worse for poor people. At the core of these so-called reforms is that poor people are to blame for their poverty. Georgia, James Jennings and Ann Withorn each point out the punitive nature of welfare reform. The news is pretty depressing. BUT things would be far worse were it not for the efforts of advocates who constantly have their ears to the ground to understand how specific legislators are thinking and their eyes on how that thinking will effect policy decisions.

Speaking of the formation of harmful policy as I write this letter, there's only 24 hours left before the first presidential debate. God help us! More reality TV. It sure is tempting to throw one's hands up in the air and go hide. But we do not have the luxury of doing that. Too much depends on us remaining in this struggle. A quote from Kippy says it best... *"I think the time is ripe for all of us who are disillusioned and who feel powerless to renew our spiritual values and come together in some kind of community of resistance, with a clear vision of how things might yet be."*

The PPUF board is taking Kip's words seriously and are looking for ways to support Rev. William Barber in his push for a moral movement. Ann Withorn mentions this multi-state movement in her article, *Keeping On Keeping On Twenty Years After Welfare Reform*. If you have access to a computer read more about Rev. Barber and the Movement at <http://www.moralmondayga.com/>.

For many decades Kip gave numerous clarion calls for us to be our brothers and sisters keepers- to demand justice not charity. She said, "blaming someone already on their knees says more about us than about them." Kip was filled with rage about the lack of moral fiber that allows children to go hungry. She was filled with compassion for people who were forced to the streets and did what she could to alleviate the suffering while tirelessly working to eliminate the causes for the suffering.

Her powerful moral voice, her love for poor and homeless people will be recognized by the dedication of a piece of public art on **June 17th 2017**. The dedication of this memorial will take place on what would have been Kip's 91st birthday. Please save the date! Stay tuned for more details as we get closer. (see page 6 for an image of the memorial) God we miss her.

*In Struggle and Hope.
Lynnette, Margaret, Georgia, and Fran*

Welfare Reform Had Little To Do With Fighting Poverty

By James Jennings

Upon the twentieth anniversary of the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act of 1996, I would offer the following reflective thought: the legislation had little to do with fighting or reducing persistent poverty in the United States. According to interests who supported this legislation the key problem was “dependency.” This concept was discussed widely as a social disease that could be treated effectively with policies and regulations forcing poor people to act more like hard-working and responsible Americans. An important part of this narrative was that poor families, and especially Black and Latino families, lacked middle-class family values. In a number of simplistic ‘tough love’ articles in papers like The New York Times, and others, it was offered that punishment in the form of sanctions, family caps, forced work for modern day alms, or barring families from social services like public housing, was justified in order to prevent or discourage poor people from becoming complacent or apathetic regarding their obligations to society.

President Bill Clinton’s proud espousal of this legislation blessed, in effect, oppressive and victim-blaming ideas emerging from conservative think tanks such as the CATO Institute a bit earlier where in one of this organization’s reports, it was stated: “...by removing the economic consequences of an out-of-wedlock birth, welfare has removed a major incentive to avoid such pregnancies” (1994). And we should not forget the urging by U.S. Representative John Mica, quoted in The New York Times on March 27, 1995: “Don’t feed the alligators...unnatural feeding and artificial care create dependency. When dependency sets in, these otherwise able alligators can no longer survive on their own...I submit to you that with our current handout, non-work welfare system, we’ve upset the natural order.” Except for using alligators as metaphor, this idea was adopted in the very Preamble of the Welfare Reform Act of 1996. I would be remiss not to mention that these kinds of approaches were also supported by many liberals and their think-tanks.

James Jennings is Professor Emeritus of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning, Tufts University

Your Spare Change Can Help



Don't forget ! You can bring
your spare change
to any TD bank and deposit it
to PPUF's account! Most TD
banks have free change
counters.

No fuss! No muss!

Just let the machine count your spare
change, take paper receipt to the teller
with PPUF's acct number (825-0954845).
If you send us thedeposit slip, we will
send you a thank you note for your
records.



The PPUF Crew

L to R

Volunteers Lynnette Frazier & Margaret
Rhodes, Georgia Mattison (staff), Fran
Froehlich (staff)

Keeping on Keeping On Twenty Years after Welfare Reform

by Ann Withorn (www.radicalreentry.com)

Throughout the 1990's, most anti-poverty and welfare rights activists fought "welfare reform," hard. Professional advocates wrote position papers. Clergy, poverty lawyers, Head Start parents and labor leaders spoke out. We held forums, meetings, speak-outs and rallies. We testified at legislative hearings in Massachusetts and in Congress.

The energy was intense. And the messages stayed clear: "welfare reform would hurt poor women, and their children....It should not be passed: it was wrong."

We argued fiercely against new Reformers' revised contentions that income benefits should not subsidize "workforce participation;" nor was education and training "cost effective." Instead, the goal of Welfare Reformers was to make benefits harder and harder to get, to cut the rolls, and simply to impose time limits on any eligibility -- 2 years (in Massachusetts) or 5 years federally. They argued that only their approach could end insidious "welfare seeking behaviors." After all, if there was no meaningful welfare to seek, then the problem would be solved, right? Especially after the Feds turned it into over state block grants, with loose oversight.

Activists insisted instead that "all mothers worked"; that the circumstance facing poor women were complex and individualized. Income maintenance as provided under the Social Security Act, had become a Welfare Right. And, besides, we all knew that available jobs alone were unlikely to provide adequate wages or time to nurture children well.

Talking past each other, we asked what would happen during the next recession, while others asked how quickly we could cut welfare rolls. . We published endless Fact Sheets, proving that the welfare reform proposals were racist in intent, and effect -- because poverty was so racialized – even though more white people would actually be hurt.

We tried to get folks to see that at some point in most lives, bad things happen: a worker could lose a job, a father would disappear; life could just become too hard for anyone to manage. Drink and drugs could make it all worse. And it might not be temporary. Children always needed so much. We thought most people would make the connections, if only we warned them often enough.

But we were wrong.

After 1996, we had to acknowledge how the depth of public fear of "dependence" was reinforced by the real stigma of living on welfare. Or how most working people needed to accept the slogan justifying Reform that "any job is a good job" -- because it meant you are a "hardworking person who never asked for a handout or help from anybody."

We also missed the shallowness of the support for welfare among white non-poor liberals. They were tired. Once welfare reform was passed, with bi-partisan support, then "welfare as we knew it," in Clinton's infamous words "was ended." Poof, gone. No more fussing.

Conservatives mostly just expressed quiet, not gloating, relief. A lot of liberals and social workers soon urged making the best of a bad situation, helping everyone find a job as soon as possible, or if that failed, to find ways to get a child, or even a parent, labeled "disabled" and therefore still qualified for something. Some concerned businessmen received incentives to get people "job ready," and to initiate programs aimed at the now inevitable "transition from welfare to work" --regardless of what that work might mean for already demanding lives.



Big Crowd Shows Up For First Moral Monday

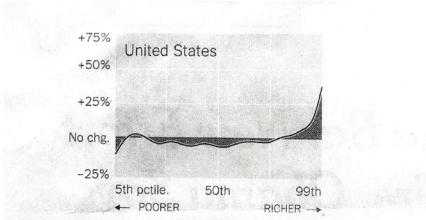
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Twenty Years After Welfare De-Form

by Georgia Mattison

Welfare benefits were “reformed” twenty years ago, allegedly to increase families’ independence, with a shift from welfare to jobs. This shift, however, did not take into account, nor provide for, the multiple factors affecting poor people. From 1994-2014 incomes for both the poor and middle class fell more precipitously in Massachusetts than any other state except Connecticut, according to the September 6, 2016 New York Times. The poor in the Commonwealth lost nearly 50% of their income during this period due primarily to the disappearance of Transitional Assistance to Families with Dependent Children TAFDC. The current caseload of 32,000 households continues its drop from 90,000 households in 1996. Middle class income in the Commonwealth has fallen approximately 15% over the same time frame due primarily to wage stagnation. The top 10% in income gained a 50% hike.

It has been very difficult to advocate with the legislature to block ever more punitive “Welfare Reforms” as the Welfare Coalition must battle the belief that being poor is a moral problem. Twenty years ago this was touted as the reason Welfare must be changed to reform the poor. This year welfare advocates did block the Legislature’s initiative to count Supplemental Social Security SSI benefits as income which would have denied TAFDC benefits to 8500 households headed by a disabled parent. But we were not able to block the documented job search before application as an eligibility requirement for benefits, a ludicrous requirement sure to reduce the caseload and increase poverty even more.



The middle class is disappearing, due to wage stagnation and loss of jobs from multiple factors: the recession/depression of 2008, millions of jobs moving overseas, the almost complete disappearance of unions, and killer student debt. According to “The Fragile Middle Class” written by Sullivan, Warren, and Westbrook, families are one money crisis away from joining the much maligned poor.

Ann Withorn continued from page 3

Too many non-poor activists warned too frightfully of immediate deathly results. Most poor people, especially Black and Latino people, knew instead that hard lives would be even harder, with fewer options, and less hope. And fewer people would notice, much less care.

“The hard evidence” is still coming in, but it seems clear that more women simply wrote off public help as a viable option. They took bad jobs with little security, stayed with dangerous men or relied on families which had failed them in the past. More mothers gave up on that college degree or that hope for whatever had seemed possible before.

It didn’t happen overnight, but more and more people started to expect less, to work off the books more, thereby become less visible, less able to make demands. Obama, sadly, didn’t really help. The 2008 Great Recession, yielded no calls even to rethink welfare reform, much less to reweave the safety net for all. For eight years he didn’t blame or demonize poor people, but chose not to take up poverty as his cause; he soon joined the Clintons in safer concern for the plight of the “middle class.”

So what now? I miss Kip’s indefatigable energy that led me to join her in getting arrested and jailed in protest of Massachusetts’ 1997 imposition of Time Limits. Today, Rev. William Barber’s “Moral Revival” inspires me to join a new Movement beyond electoral limitations. Barber offers the same hope that Kip did: that if we build a movement, not about Left vs. Right, but about Right vs. Wrong, then we may be able “rediscover poverty as the central moral and political issue facing us all.”

So, “to keep on keeping on” today, twenty years after Welfare Reform, means that our only hope is still “not to mourn, but to organize.” But I also wonder more than I ever did: Can we? Will we? Who is the “we?” And

How? For all our sakes, let’s keep talking.

Homeless People Living With Addictions

A group of advocates seeking to reduce the personal and public health consequences associated with injection drug use met with the Commonwealth's Commissioner of Public Health, Monica Bharel.

We specifically wanted to talk with her about adding Safer Injecting Facilities (SIF) to the approaches being considered to address the crisis of drug addiction. SIFs are controlled health care settings in which participants can more safely inject illicit drugs under clinical supervision.

Part of the rationale is that addicted individuals who are homeless or unstably housed often have no choice but to inject drugs in public areas such as public restrooms, abandoned buildings, cars, stairwells, parks, and alleyways. Even individuals who are stably housed may choose to inject drugs in public when doing so presents the fastest means by which to avoid the immediate onset of withdrawal symptoms.

Risks associated with public injection include robbery and assault by street predators, confrontation with police, risky injection practices including sharing and re-using of syringes, and overdose.

Several locations are currently experimenting with SIF sites: New York City, San Francisco, New Mexico, Canada, and Germany.

The centers also serve as points of referral into health and social services including medical treatment, detoxification and substance abuse treatment. The centers are designed to complement not replace existing prevention, harm reduction and treatment interventions. The overall goal is harm reduction -that is, it is an effort to reduce harm to the addicted person as well as to the neighborhood residents and businesses that are impacted by public injection. Our group looks forward to working with Commissioner Bharel on this and other issues that impact homeless people.

Information source : Harm Reduction Action Center, Denver Colorado



(L to R Caasie Hurd, AFSC; Dylan Hillerbrand, City Mission, Rev. June Cooper, City Mission, Jim Stewart, First Shelter Cambridge, Laura Ha, Medical Student, Fran,

It's been 2 years since they closed Long Island Shelter. Many still on the street.





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Save the Date!

Rosie's Place Announcement



Save the Date!

Kip Tiernan Memorial Dedication

June 17, 2017

Dartmouth Street, Boston



Mark June 17, 2017 on your calendar for the unvieling and dedication of the Kip Tiernan Memorial. We will celebrate on the 91st anniversary of Kip's birth with food, jazz and friends- just as Kip would have done.

Look for more details this spring.