

WELFARE:
AS AMERICAN BASEBALL

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There are great many things that Americans can truly claim as their own, welfare is one of them. Welfare has become and American staple that rivals fords and baseball. America has created an ideology that is both accepting and allowing of consumerism and inefficiency, when it comes to fiscal responsibility. Americans idealize capitalism and also charity work, causing a collision of ideas politically and socially. The allowance for both has brought on two schools of thought. In one school, we as a culture press for innovation and poise in society, in the other we see classes of people who are constantly behind the economical curve. As they have come to coexist, the principles of our society have learned to accept that some people will accelerate and others will struggle with assistance of the government. Welfare has become cyclical (from adult to child, and then to that child as an adult) because we as a culture accept that welfare exists through legislation, ideals and in the business sector. Welfare has become a truly American innovation, spreading, and expanding, creating an entire genre of social status. Welfare is an American staple because even though we as a culture recognize its continued presence, we have yet to understand it. Comprehensive approaches to both education and the dolling out of American tax dollars would correct and also alleviate the fiscal beating that we as a society experience, and also remove the stigma applied to welfare recipients.

Welfare is a topic that has found its way into mainstream media, bibliographic stories, and the senate floor. Welfare exists as the punch line of jokes and is also the crux of many arguments for and against governmental spending. It is a subject that most middle-class Americans will brush up against numerous times in their lives, but never intimately. It will happen while visiting a major metropolitan area or leaving

the grocery store. But do these encounters truly give a voice to poverty and welfare? Where is it that middle-class and wealthy America encounter poverty beyond debates and voting referendums? How often do people interact with the recipients, and have a dialogue on their varying points of view about its distribution and how much is enough? Poor people now have their own neighborhoods, schools and shopping centers. Undesirable places are easy to spot and even easier to avoid, a person can just drive a few more minutes and get back to their 'neck of the woods'. Poverty exists in suburbia; but it's not where it lives. Classical views of tenet buildings in cities and clapboard houses in the South are where most choose to keep the least desirables of our country, at least in our minds. In truth, it's next door or down the street.

Poverty is the reason for collections at church and 'fundraising' drives at holidays. In recent history, we have seen major corporations take welfare from the taxpayer, and also seen cities refuse it. We have seen welfare and poverty as the reason for natural disasters being exasperated into 'states of emergency', like after the hurricanes in New Orleans. Welfare is why people won't help themselves, and also why people continue to have children. Welfare is why housing costs are being driven down and salaries taxed. Welfare has rebuilt cities all around the world ravaged by natural disaster (Haiti & Samoa), and also crippled countries that can't dispense enough of it (think Africa). Welfare is a miraculous and damaging entity that exists in every city and town in every state of this country. Welfare is probably one of the most constant influences in American politics, and the most metamorphic. Its reach is far extending, and its tendrils are in the things it can't exclusively claim.

What seems to be most often forgotten about welfare is that it is for, and about people. Welfare is designed to be accessed and utilized by human beings. Welfare is not a piece of paper to display, like a diploma; it is a living, breathing, and ever evolving entity on which many people base the quality of their lives. Welfare has always been met with a great deal of resistance no matter what the source of the funds. It can be said though that contemporary history has seen the most tumultuous relationship yet. Perhaps it is because the idea of welfare is so often coupled with extreme poverty, and poverty should not still exist in America. Welfare is in constant reform and review, as it has been deemed inefficient by both recipients and providers. Welfare often comes with the stigma (for example) of being lazy, African-American and female; additionally these women have multiple fathers to their multiple children, whom they continue to produce to continue their government aid. While this idea may seem outlandish, simply by looking at welfare statistics, it continues to prevail as the main archetype of welfare. Moreover, there have not been many sources to counter this argument and if so, their voice is much smaller than the Republican machine yelling over it, and thus the myth stands.

Another common theory about these people is that they are undeserving of the services they receive, because the government and agencies are just 'give away' monies without consideration for who is receiving it. This idea asserts our government is a foolish Grandparent dispensing goodies to the misbehaving grandchild, and would thusly raise considerable doubt about our government and the officials who have been elected to run it. Have we as a society lost that much faith in

the efficiency of our government and our ability to choose competently for ourselves and our country?

This paper will look into the history of welfare, who currently receives welfare, their quality of life and also if common perceptions are accurate. It will also attempt to distinguish if welfare has inhibited, perpetuated or extinguished a person's desire to better their lives or situation. There will also be a discussion of the governments' behavior with respect to the need that is currently being communicated by welfare recipients. It is the opinion of this paper that while the government has programs in place to help people in need but systematically fails these people in their outreach attempts, thus allowing welfare and its recipients to exist on a cyclical rotation.

Welfare: A Constitutional Arrangement?

The United States of America is governed through the thoughts and feelings of our founding fathers. They drafted documents that echoed their beliefs and intentions for the generations to follow them. They fought for and won a country that was free to be molded into an egalitarian society where people were able to believe in the religions of their choosing and live a life of their making, something almost completely impossible in Europe. They won a country and went about creating it in a way that allowed for differences, and assurances that had not existed previously. They attempted to set up a life that was away from the informal caste systems of England and its sister countries. Across the ocean was a world of indifferent leaders and ever widening gaps of poverty and wealth. Places where the poor were poor and the rich were rich and persecution was as whimsical as its leaders. Our founding fathers wanted more for the budding America and her people so they attempted to design a more inclusive country, and so they crafted governing legislation to help ensure that the vision they had for America would be able to endure even after they perished. They created one of most durable and important bodies of legislation that our country has ever seen. And so, the Constitution of the United States was bore out of the greatest minds to inhabit the early United States of America. The Constitution is packed full of important and long-lasting phrases that govern, protect and promote the ideology of the contemporary United States citizens.

The opening of the Constitution of United States reads like this: “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general

Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.” (The Charters of Freedom) An initial reading of the opening to Constitution would suggest that the word welfare was included rather purposefully. It is placed in the company of words like ‘justice’, ‘liberty’ and ‘tranquility’—words that no American would ever question as part of their inheritance, being a citizen of the United States of America. But then there is the word welfare, a word that even in this context can be seen in any number definitions. In this particular context, is it suggesting that we the people are mandated to maintain the welfare of all other people? Or perhaps the Constitution is ensuring our physical welfare, and so we will not be attacked in our beds by a foreign country? Perhaps, just by being in the United States one should assume that they are enjoying the ‘blessings of liberty’, and so a person’s general welfare is already taken care of? Our founding fathers went to great lengths to explain the legislative, democratic and judicial systems. They mapped out who could and could not serve our country, and how bills and laws can be introduced and passed, but they left welfare and what has become the welfare state to be battled out by every generation. Certainly, during the inception of our country there were poor and debilitated persons, surely there were woman widowed and men without work, and yet, the Constitution does not outline how, when and at what length the government and conversely the tax payers of the United States should extend amenities to proved for the ‘general welfare’ of its people.

Sotirious A. Barber has taken on the task of discussing and applying the American constitution to today’s society in the book appropriately named “Welfare

and the Constitution”. This book goes to great lengths to discuss the political right and left and also how and where constitutional language is correct and applicable. Barber argues extensively that the American people should hold a “welfarist” or positive view of the governmental obligation that currently exists in America. He uses the words of James Madison to assert this belief. Madison “believed that the ‘real welfare’ of the people was the ‘supreme object’ of the constitutional government and the bedrock principle animating this work.” As with many people who support welfare Barber believes in a comprehensive approach to welfare. Barber urges its not just about money or graciousness of the government through stipends, but to approach people as holistic beings who are in need of far more than money. “Most importantly for Barber, protecting the general welfare includes an obligation to provide the poor and uneducated with the wherewithal to develop themselves politically, socially, and economically.” (Kahn, pg1)

Barber speaks extensively on negative liberties. There are negative and positive liberties that apply very astutely to the idea of welfare. Both are used often to support and detract from what people have come to deserve verses where the government should cease assistance. A negative liberty in this instance would be welfare itself. Negative liberties ask the question: 'What is the area within which the subject — a person or group of persons — is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons'."(Berlin) A negative liberty belief about the constitution would essentially assert that the American people, no matter what the circumstance, should be left to their own devices to assure and assist in their own well-being. Certainly, that is not an absurd assertion, that people should

help themselves, but there are times when the situations people are facing are either created by the government (an instance of war), are out of their control (like a natural disaster), or come about due to lack of foresight and planning by the private sector (like the stock market crash). All of these examples have created devastating effects on the American public and its socioeconomic well-being. The question can be raised though, that in instances or periods of time where extreme situations are not present, such as war, what is the argument *for* welfare? And the answer to this would be that we as a society are always recovering from something. No society in the world is free from retroactive happenings; they are never out in front of the economic trends, but rather, always catching up. We create policies (more often than not) to combat an already existing trend, not usually to circumvent it. So, if poverty is due to illiteracy, abuses (emotional and physical) and inefficient government programs (that do little more than substantiate a person economically), can we as a country legitimately say our constitution supports a lack of interference?

The negative liberties argument supports the idea that people are entitled to their privacy and lack of interference from government and governing bodies. However, if this were the case the American people would be subjected to the whims of private interests, and popular votes. No society can function as a subsidiary of popular interests. Society would never have the ability to evolve if the government did not impose rationale ideals on societal behavior. A clear example of this would be Civil Rights. Had our country meandered on encompassing the popular voting agenda, we never would have moved passed such abrasive societal constraints. By stating that the constitution is designed to designate negative liberties would also

mean the government can begin to scale back many of its attempts to make a more harmonious and safe environment. Governments are not created to not to do anything, if that were the case, we would not be in need of government.

Government's purpose is to design and implement a proactive, non-oppressive society where people can flourish. Government is not creating a utopian society, but it is designed to be helpful to its people whether it is through laws, legislation or assistance.

The constitution was written to tell the government where to stop and where to start. It was written to create a system of checks and balances so that no one person or agency could monopolize power in the interest of itself. The constitution was written to bring people together under a non-oppressive and helpful government. Our constitution does not exist to allow people to not be held accountable, but it is the opposite—full accountability. “The constitution is more a charter of positive benefits—a positive and welfarist constitution, if you will— than a charter of negative liberties and that a central question for constitutional theory is not *whether* state facilitated welfare but *what* state-facilitated welfare and *for whom*.” (Barber, 2) Had our founding fathers meant to shy away from the subject of welfare, it would not have been included in the Constitution. The deliberate and thoughtful words used to craft our most trusted document is a sure sign that “*We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union*” have always intended to have the best interest and the well being of our citizens at the fore front of our intentions, even if that means assisting them along the way.

An Immigrant History of Welfare (In Chicago): America Creates Beggars

Welfare is inundated with stigmas, it always has been, and very truthfully, it probably always will be. To receive welfare has always been seen as a shameful admission of a person's inability to care for themselves and their families. We as a society are not accepting of people who lack self sufficiency. The American dream is that of hard work and prosperity. The Statue of Liberty does not symbolize handouts and lifelong care for people, it symbolizes opportunity. It symbolizes being given a chance to succeed in spite of race, color or creed. This was never quite as prevalent as with our immigrant great-grandparents who were the first to see the government become the predominant benefactor of assistance.

As many people are aware, the great boom in American industry and the conquering of the great west brought about a tremendous influx of immigrants. People from around the world came to United States in the hopes of tapping into her gold lined veins. America, at the turn of the century was ripe for the proverbial picking. There were jobs in industry, there were towns and cities that were swelling into suburbs and best of all a chance for peasants of Europe to become middle-class. For most people, the prospect of being an 'American' was enough to instill a sense of pride. Where else in the world does hard work materialize into status? If that could be said for European nations, there never would have been the immigrant rush of the mid-1800s through the late 1900s.

Most immigrants lived in cities, and these cities reflected the employer needs, as well as being broken up into neighborhoods based on not only ethnicity and trade.

This can very clearly be seen in early 1900s Chicago. Chicago was broken in to working neighborhoods, but inside the neighborhood was not only a type of laborer but also an ethnic group that worked in those industries. “Each community isolated workers geographically and culturally from other workers in the city.” (Cohen, 21) Immigrants would live in these neighborhoods even if it meant a considerable commute to the factory where they were employed. Ethnic solidarity where they lived far exceeded a short commute. “When a steelworker identified himself as a resident of the southernmost stretch of Chicago, he located himself in one of these four steel towns and usually in an even smaller neighborhood defined primarily by residents’ ethnicity: typical were the Bush, inhabited mostly by Polish unskilled laborers; the brick bungalows of Cheltenham, reserved for skilled workers, more often than not the Swedes and Germans who had once dominated the labor force of the plants; and the Greenbay known to as the vice district, with its rooming houses, pool rooms, and growing number of Mexican residents, the most recent immigrants to come to work in the mills. Neighborhood boundaries, at times invisible to the outsider, were well known and respected by those who lived here. But whether an ethnic enclave extended for one side of the street or for many blocks, individuals from another ethnic group were rarely far away.” (Cohen, 24)

The ethnic neighborhoods were the center piece of immigrant identity, because the neighborhoods were the source of their livelihood as well as their social experiences. People shopped in their neighborhood stores; they socialized, participated in sport groups and went to church there. These neighborhoods were also where people initiated and received welfare. An immigrants’ life was continually

unstable because of rolling unemployment, death and other common life experiences, so it became vital that neighborhoods and ethnic groups could care for themselves, by themselves. Immigrants were wary of government agencies, and also unaccustomed to them because many of their homelands did not have social services. They had a strong distaste for county and state interference, and also saw government welfare as a reflection of ethnic identity and not just the family or person receiving it. For all of these reasons many neighborhoods developed charity and welfare systems to ensure the wellbeing of their people. It was a source of pride for many immigrants to take care of their community and its members and also helped to shape and secure the integrity of the neighborhood and its inhabitants. More impressive, is that much of the assistance that was done anonymously.

Despite actions taken by ethnic neighborhoods, circumstance soon took over their grassroots approach to civil duties. In the wake of World War I neighborhoods were finding that the need to be met was far greater than anyone single entity could manage. It was at this time that the welfare agencies began to pool resources in an attempt to become more efficient at the services they were providing. “Despite such lingering misgivings about the institutionalization of charity in America, by 1920 ethnic agencies offered their clients cemeteries, hospitals, dispensaries, orphanages, day nurseries, old people’s home, employment services, and some relief benefits. America has clearly taught ethnic communities to support charitable institutions as patrons as well as clients.” (Cohen, 60) It became the intention of ethnicities to keep their people as solidified as possible, in the face of such extreme economical happenings. Jews and Catholics were exceptional at the organization and execution of

social services and became the leaders of social assistance, what we now call welfare. “Catholics as well as Jews in the 1920s increasingly recognized that religious affiliation offered material, not just spiritual salvation.” (Cohen, 61)

An important distinction to be made here is that county welfare/assistance did exist at this time. It was not as prominent as what contemporary Americans are aware of, but it was there. More than 75% of the assistance that came from the city in this time period went to American-born families. (Cohen, 62) While immigrants were facing discrimination and dire, sometimes fatal working conditions, native born Americans were utilizing the majority of the assistance being offered in the city of Chicago, while also enjoying the esteem that came with the pedigree of being a true American. “Ethnic communities by no means satisfied every need, but they provided more assistance than other institutions, public or private, which were only viewed as a last resort. Few protested this arrangement. State and private social service workers wanted nothing better than for ethnic and religious groups to care for their own.” (Cohen, 64)

Welfare capitalism also changed the country’s views of what welfare entailed and where it could come from. Welfare capitalism is when businesses attempt to provide welfare like services to their employees. In the beginning, as industry turned into the livelihood of the nation, its leaders initially attempted to pit ethnic groups against one another or to have them separated to avoid cohesion. Leaders believed that somehow exploiting cheap labor and discouraging fraternization, they would be able to better control the masses of laborers. The leaders felt that by having people work with their people of their own ethnic identity, it would somehow lead to a shift

in power. After the strikes during World War I, the leaders discovered that, in fact, by promoting cohesion it would benefit the company through loyalty and the reduction of turnover.

Companies began to offer loan services (for house building), stock options, sport clubs and running newspapers celebrating the lives of its employees. Companies invested in neighborhoods and donated to churches. Social responsibility became the zeal of business owners due to the far reaching benefits that a loyal employee would return to them. “But businessmen did not just concern themselves with amenities in their neighborhoods or their reputations around town. Rather, their whole conception of welfare capitalism depended on viewing the corporation as the most responsible institution in society, more properly charged with general welfare than was government. Much the way employers developed welfare programs to challenge the hold ethnic benefit associations had over their workers, they assumed civic responsibility to compete with state welfare. What welfare capitalism did not provide, the government surely would, employers feared.” (Cohen, 181) Welfare was beginning to gain a foothold in the America identity.

This information would suggest that America promotes, and encourages welfare. While some immigrants may have initially thought of welfare as a stigmatized (American) government creation, had now become a necessity to any worthy employer. Welfare had now become so enticing that companies believed that they needed to get in the business of social awareness to show that they too were in the industry of caring for people, not just profit. What was the major change in this time period that drove the country to believe that rather than re-visit their approach to

social development, it instead should create 'safety nets' and have companies compete for the title of most generous philanthropist? Based on the idea of the American dream, it should be assumed that producing jobs, commerce, and contributing to overall economy would be sufficient enough make a company a reputable employer, but instead, social perception became the focus of most companies' business models.

During the beginning of the 19th century, the United States of America saw an economic boom, and also, what many consider to be the beginning of our modern era. There was the influx of immigration to industry laden communities, as well as the wars of the world. During all of this, ethnic groups, communities and employers attempted to provide and distribute their own brand of welfare. From there, it became industries turn to take care of employees beyond a source of employment and income. And finally, as welfare continued to evolve, it became the government's responsibility. This time, welfare would change forever. It happened the day the stock market crashed and sent most of America into nearly irreversible economical downward spiral. The government took over welfare with the inception of the New Deal and began an ever deepening cesspool of inefficiency, bogged down political agendas.

The Great Depression Invents the Welfare State: How Policy became Ideology

October 29th, 1929 marked the launch of the worst economic crisis that the United States of America (and perhaps the world) has ever faced. ‘Black Tuesday’ as it has come to be known marked the beginning of a widespread and deep economic crisis that lasted well into the 1930s. The crash made the country a dredge on the world, and also its people. The crash created a domino effect of collapse in the country’s various forms of economy. After the stock market went down, it systematically buckled the construction and farming industries. Because these were the primary sources of economic stabilization, it was not long until the dependent industries began to crumble as well. Due to the length of time and magnitude of the depression, it was clear that without help, the country would not be able to resurrect itself. Assistance was desperately needed for the estimated 25% of unemployed people of the United States, and its floundering economy. It was determined that through government programs, the country would once again regain a foothold in economic stability.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote a great many programs into action inside of The New Deal. The New Deal was government designed stimulus program. It incorporated all of aspects of the failed country’s economy, but the most noteworthy and lasting program to come out of the New Deal was that Social Security Act of 1935 (SSA). Inside of the Social Security Act were many far reaching and progressive programs aimed at stabilizing people, jobs and the security of all dependant persons. It was here; in these sweeping legislations that our country learned a new mentality. It is one of entitlement and dependence on the federal

government. In the Social Security Act of 1935 Roosevelt established new guidelines for the working people and unemployed people of the United States. The SSA allowed for unions to form, if there were shortcomings at work places, the government would be able to oversee its correcting. There were guarantees on bank deposits—no longer would a person have to worry that their money be where they had left it. It slowed and stopped foreclosures on the houses that the roaring 20s had dealt to people. It also created jobs. “Although these programs are often remembered best for their contributions to the nation’s cultural – to art, theater, music, folklore, and so forth- the majority of the federal dollars went to employ manual laborers to renovate public facilities like parks, streets, sewers, and schools.” (Cohen, 278)

The SSA breathed life into national parks and upgrading the country’s municipalities. But most importantly, it created Welfare as we know it. Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal moved welfare services out of communities and neighborhoods, away from employers and placed them almost solely on the federal government. “The Social Security Act, signed by Roosevelt in 1935, established a permanent system of unemployment compensation, old age insurance, and aid for disabled and dependent children.” (Cohen, 272) Before the Social Security Act shame was a major deterrent of taking government charities, people shied away to maintain respect and familial esteem. After the legislation, they were merely Americans cashing in on the American way. Before the Act, people were at the mercy of their neighbors, friends, family and employers to help them sustain themselves. There was no government assurance that daily needs and wants would be provided, and now there was. Since 1935, there has been a solemn assurance that if in need, FDR (or

any president since) and his band of merry government agencies would come and provide for all people finding themselves ‘in need’. The Aid to Dependent Children act was initially designed to cover widows, orphans divorced of deserted children. It was a modest program that was initiated to help the neediest of our country. “By 1939, ADC covered only about 700,000 people, and at least two-thirds of eligible children were not covered. The program grew slowly but steadily over the next two decades, providing assistance to about 3 million people by 1960. Growth accelerated during the 1960s and 1970s, however, and enrollment in the renamed Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in 1994 reached a peak of 14.2 million recipients, a figure comprising 5.0 million families and 9.6 million children.” (PolicyAlmanac)

FDR’s New Deal was not to be a long term solution for the people in the United States. It was a quick fix that created a beggar’s paradise. Under President Harding’s government, people would have never thought to ask the government for assistance. They would have relied on the resources they always used. They would have used family, friends, or ethnic charities. They would have battled for a reasonable job, and from there attempted for a working relationship with their employer so they could have reaped the rewards from that relationship (housing loans, competitive compensation, and retirement assurance), but now, that had all changed. FDR opened the door to activist voters, who continually attempt to expand the open hand of the federal government and in turn the tax payer. The government had now become responsible for every child, family and working person of the United States of America. Where the American dream used to be liberty, prosperity

and justice, it had now morphed into land of open hands waiting on the next legislation reform that ensures the government payroll keeps on writing checks.

FDR was aware of the changing ideals of the America people, and spoke about it.

“We find our population suffering from the old inequalities, little changed by our past sporadic remedies. In spite of our effort and in spite of our talk, we have not weeded out the overprivileged and we have not effectively lifted up the underprivileged.... We have... a clear mandate from the people, that Americans must forswear the conception of the acquisition of wealth which, through excessive profits, creates undue private power over private affairs and, to our misfortune, over public affairs as well. In building toward this end we do not destroy ambition, nor do we seek to divide our wealth into equal shares on stated occasions. We continue to recognize the greater ability of some to earn more than others. But we do assert that the ambition of the individual to obtain for him and his a proper security, a reasonable leisure, and a decent living throughout life is an ambition to be preferred to the appetite for great wealth and great power.”

(Adams & Goldbard)

However thoughtful and considerate Mr. Roosevelt seems to have been on the subject, it is clear that he is aware that despite our best efforts as a country, and activists and educators, we are not all created equal. We need to be aware of the neediest of our country, and should extend a hand of help to these people. Still, the

question that is being continually posed to us today is, how far should we reach? The New Deal legislation opened up a floodway for government assistance, to the now expectant citizens of our country. “It is very possible that the New Deal’s impact should be measured less by the lasting accomplishments of its reforms and more by the attitudinal changes it produced in a generation of working-class Americans who now looked to Washington to deliver the American dream.” (Cohen, 289)

And so, the New Deal had changed the minds of the American people. The stigma of welfare being a needy person’s livelihood went to a citizen’s right. With these changes came further and continual reform and changes to help perpetuate these policies. America has a much different view on welfare in today’s society. While welfare still has a great deal of stigma attached to it, it is only one that is grumbled privately because welfare, in all forms, has become the norm.

What is Welfare? And what does it have to offer (me)?

Many people have heard of welfare, and in fact many people have been a part of welfare and have no idea they have, because in United States of America, we often call it 'rights' and not welfare. As American citizens we are owed a certain amount of amenities simply because we are citizens. Never the less, Americans live in a welfare state and that is defined as a 'government that provides for the total well-being of its citizens'. (Welfare Information) There are not many true welfare states, but America clearly is one. A true welfare state does not exist because that would mean the country was a socialist government, and in America the word socialist is synonymous with numerous obscenities and entails great danger to the America way of life, however America is as close as it comes while still being a capitalist democracy. The 'total well-being' is the part most hotly contested by opponents of welfare, and attempts are routinely made to reign in how much 'well-being' is provided for by the government and tax payers. Having said that, it is important to note that we live in a 'welfare state', everyone, all of us—not just the poverty stricken mothers and children of our country, but all of us. We routinely engage in, utilize and access America's built in welfare benefits. An example of welfare is a work study program at a university or college, or a head start program at a school. These benefits are the most distinguishing aspect of our welfare state, because they are broad and far reaching, and were built into our democracy to make certain that all citizens had some guarantee of quality of life.

The Department of Health and Human Services oversees all of the welfare programs in United States. This particular section of the government had grown so

large and was in need of more thorough regulation, that in 1979 it had to be broken into its own department moving out of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, thus ensuring that all programs were more efficiently run. Individual states are responsible for the distribution of its resources, and also oversee and regulate the application process for recipients. These programs that US citizens are eligible to apply for all have their own guidelines and qualifying determinants, but they are open to anyone meeting the criterion set forth by the government. In fact, many programs are open to people who are not legal citizens, or lack a social security number. Most programs are not lifelong, and are designed to get recipients to full self sufficiency through temporary assistance. Generally, a case worker is assigned to the family or recipient and services are suggested and regulated by that person.

Welfare services are available and accessible in all 50 states of the country, and have a great many services that it provides. “Welfare encompasses those government programs that provide benefits and economic assistance to no or low income Americans. It can also be defined as financial assistance to impoverished Americans which is supplied through the taxes paid by the working class. One of the main goals of welfare US is to improve the quality of life and living standards for the poor and underprivileged. Welfare help is usually extended to people groups other than just the poor and underprivileged such as the elderly, the disabled, students, and unpaid workers, such as mothers and caregivers.” (WelfareInfo.Org) Welfare programs available in the United States include: Medicaid, Food Stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Head Start, Work

Study, and Medicare. Social Security, often times called an entitlement program, is also considered one of the welfare programs in the U.S.. TANF is probably one of the most recognized of the welfare programs. Formerly known as Aid to Families with Dependant Children (AFDC), TANF was a reform measure for this program. No longer a lifelong program as AFDC was, TANF limits welfare benefits to a specified period of time. The states set these limitations, and most state's plans terminate TANF benefits after five years." (WelfareInfo.Org)

All of these benefits are accessible through an application, and the meeting of eligibility requirements by the applicant. A further explanation of these benefits are as follows:

“Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF: This department of welfare oversees a program that provides families with little or no income with cash assistance. This program has requirements for the head of the household to be in job training or looking for a job so that they will be able to leave this welfare program. To help overcome the former problem of unemployment due to reliance on the welfare system, the TANF grant requires that all recipients of welfare aid must find work within 2years of receiving aid, including single parents who are required to work at least 30 hours per week opposed to 35 or 55 required by two parent families. Failure to comply with work requirements could result in a loss of benefits.”

“Child Support Welfare: This segment of the welfare department provides partial or full child care fees for those families to help them be able to take advantage of work opportunities. This gives the care takers the needed support to provide quality child care for their child while they are at work.”

“Energy or Utility Assistance: This program provides partial or full support for utility bills for those who can not afford to heat their homes or pay for their water or other utilities. This program is available for those with limited income, who otherwise cannot afford to heat their homes. This program can pay for gas, electricity and even water.”

“Food Stamps: This department of welfare is one of the US welfare programs most beneficial to those in need. This program provides groceries at no cost to those who qualify. This program does have income restrictions as well as restrictions on the items that maybe purchased with food stamps. Only WIC approved items can be purchased from stores who participate with the program. This program is strictly monitored by state welfare departments. A monthly evaluation is performed to keep one qualified in this welfare program.”

“Medical Assistance Program: This part of a state welfare department is a very important welfare program that provides medical treatments to those without insurance and who can not afford medical coverage

on their own. This program provides well visits as well as prescription coverage through Medicare and Medicaid coverage.”

(WelfareInfo.Org)

These programs provide for and attempt to address a variety of economical hardships that families encounter, particularly families with children. As children are the most defenseless citizen of our communities, it important that particular attention is paid to them, and their well-being. An oft used argument for the protection and special consideration of children is that, children did not asked to be born, and so they should not be punished for the shortcomings of the people who brought them into the world—thus there are so many programs directed at children. However, for many of the programs there are stipulations that need to met by the parents of the children, to maintain enrollment in the programs. “All minors must keep their immunization up to date. These minors must be enrolled in school attend school to stay qualified for benefits. These are just a few of the requirements to be eligible for welfare assistance programs offered by the Department of Health and Human Services.”

(WelfareInfo.Org)

Welfare is not designed to be a lifelong assistant to people or families. It is there to revive people from hardships, and assist them in attaining more stable jobs and income sources, and this is done through education. The latest trend in welfare is to get people into work, so they can get off of welfare. “The passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996 ushered in a new era of welfare reform that emphasizes economic self-sufficiency through a "work-first" approach designed to move welfare recipients into the work

force as quickly as possible” (Imel) Having an educated and trained workforce can only benefit the United State economy, and also relieve people’s reliance on the government assistance. “Since one of the goals of US welfare is to help individuals and families break the cycle of dependency on welfare, educational assistance can ensure that individuals will receive a better education thereby potentially allowing them to obtain a better job.” (WelfareInfo.Org) Education and vocational experience is an important way to combat welfare.

“One of the foundations of this country is personal liberty, and dependency on a government agency for financial assistance can detract from this feeling and way of life and move into more of a welfare state condition. While some individuals may rely too heavily on the welfare system, there are a great many more that simply need temporary assistance and use the welfare system only as needed. This is what separates the U.S. from welfare states and will hopefully lead to better jobs those who do get assistance.” (WelfareInfo.Org)

Who is on Welfare, and for What Reason(s)?

Many leaders have spoken of equality both economically and socially, but as of yet it has not become a reality. Welfare places people into an unequal citizenship, not intentionally, but it does. Welfare recipients and their children lack anonymity. Section-8 housing (low income housing designated by townships) is apparent and in less than desirable areas of towns, special debit cards are given to people to use at stores, WIC only allows for certain brands and types of foods—these are tangible examples of welfare recipients existences. Welfare has become an example of what not to be in our society. But what is it that makes this stigma so offensive to people not receiving welfare, and why? Welfare recipients are commonly perceived to be young African-American woman with no job, and multiple children. They are desolate people with no ambition to either better this situation or be removed from it. They got here on their own accord, and are happy to be at the whim of the voters, legislators and unpopular opinion. These perceptions will be examined and discussed in the following paragraphs.

The Gale Group Inc. did a survey of needy families from October 2000 through September of 2001, and found that 39% of welfare recipients are African-American and that 30.1% of them are what is considered to be white. It found that the recipients were predominately single and between the ages of 20-29. However, “as of April 2002, 8.02 million women, infants, and children were enrolled in the WIC Program, an increase of 2 percent over the program's April 2000 enrollment. Children accounted for half of WIC participants; infants, 26 percent; and women, 25 percent. From 1998 to 2002, the proportion of children enrolled in WIC declined

slightly, the proportion of infants stayed the same, and the proportion of women increased slightly. Hispanics account for largest ethnic group of WIC participants. Hispanics made up the largest ethnic group of WIC participants (38 percent), up from 23 percent in 1992. Whites were the next largest group (36 percent) followed by Blacks (20 percent), and others (Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, or Alaskan Native) (5 percent). The racial/ethnic composition of WIC participants has changed steadily since 1992: The percentage of Hispanic WIC participants rose while percentages of Black and White participants decreased.” (Family Economics and Nutrition Review, spring, 2003) While the image of who utilizes welfare is generally similar, there seems to be no clear picture of who monopolizes it. Welfare, as stated before comes in a variety of forms, and those who utilize it vary, depending on the type of welfare. Welfare is not a racial or gender experience, it is an American experience. Additionally, the reasons that particular people are more apt to use a particular type of welfare being accessed vary. SSI and social security welfare are for elderly people and disabled people, so they use these benefits more often, setting them up to be the highest participants in this area of welfare. Hispanic people are generally said to be the fastest rising population in the United States, so perhaps it would make sense that they are using WIC at higher rates than other racial groups. African-Americans are consistently incarcerated at higher rates than other ethnic groups, so perhaps these accounts for more single parent African-American households. These examples are not absolutes as to who utilizes services and why, they are merely suggestions to add to the debate over the circumstances of welfare

and its recipients, suggesting at a larger problem—one that is not necessarily entrenched in taxes and more about people and behavior.

The ethnic group or groups of people who are accessing welfare are not nearly as important to the debate about welfare, as are the reasons that these people are using welfare. While ethnicity is common denominator to welfare, it is not the determinant. Being African-American or Hispanic or Native American does not mean you are destined to or are already on welfare, but the circumstances which lead a person to welfare are more important. There are more significant and telling reasons that people are on welfare, that have nothing to do with race. Single parents use welfare at nearly six times the rate of married couples. (Gale Group Inc.) This makes a clear case for dual income households. Children are largest beneficiaries of welfare, making a clear case for early education and prevention programs for children who are already living in squalor. People, who make less than 20,000 dollars a year, are four times as likely to use welfare benefits as people making at least that much in year. (U.S. Department of Commerce) This makes a case for better jobs for people with limited or minimal education, or expanding our economy to include these people in a greater market share of profit by extending health care or housing stipends, or any other ways to reduce the expenditure of incomes earned.

But what about the single African-American mothers who have multiple children? It would seem, that in there is not much literature to support this claim, unless it is propagandized politically motivated literature. African-American woman with children seem to have been used as a scapegoat on this issue. Yes, certainly

African-American women have a significant involvement in welfare services, but they are not allocated special resources. It would seem that due to their lack of advocacy, they are an easy target, and also a very visual one. A quick Google search of the phrase 'the ghetto' will provide you with images of dilapidated houses (that are clearly urban row-houses), pregnant African-American teens, graffiti and African-American groups of people just waiting to (apparently) be ogled by the photographer. Poor representation for any group can cause major public relations issues. It can be assumed that most African-American people, our President for instance, would urge people to examine this issue without using a Google search and instead a human search.

A recent article in the Washington Post did just that, this thoughtful and researched article that depicts the United States system as not only absurd, but archaic. The Washington Post writer posed an interesting and provocative question: "What if the 100-member Senate were designed to mirror the overall U.S. populations—and were based on statistics rather than state lines?" The findings are astonishing. "Half of the population of the nation lives in 10 states, which have 20 senators. The other half lives in 40 states that have 80 senators," says the official Senate historian, Donald Ritchie. Small states and states whose representatives might tip the balance on a key vote make out like bandits, as their senators demand outsize appropriations in return for their support." (Lowrey) This information suggests that yes, densely populated states should be acting in the best interest of the people inhabit their states, especially since they wield the most power. However, the people who have acquired this power do not act in the best interest of most prominent people, just

the richest. “White women would elect the biggest group of senators -- 37 of them, though only 38 women have ever served in the Senate, with 17 currently in office.

White men would have 36 seats. Black women, Hispanic women and Hispanic men would have six each; black men five; and Asian women and men two each.”

(Lowrey) What would the Senate floor look like if woman were behind legislation?

Would welfare benefits be the first slashed? Common sense would tell us that childhood services, medical assistance and government assistance in any form for children would certainly be the last on the list to lose funding.

To bring this musing to another level, lets discuss senators by income.

“Imagine a chamber in which senators were elected by different income brackets -- with two senators representing the poorest 2 percent of the electorate, two senators representing the richest 2 percent and so on. Based on Census Bureau data, five senators would represent Americans earning between \$100,000 and \$1 million individually per year, with a single senator working on behalf of the millionaires (technically, it would be two-tenths of a senator). Eight senators would represent Americans with no income. Sixteen would represent Americans who make less than \$10,000 a year, an amount well below the federal poverty line for families. The bulk of the senators would work on behalf of the middle class, with 34 representing Americans making \$30,000 to \$80,000 per year.” (Lowrey) Information like this suggests that the poor are owed a lion’s share of consideration—which they are certainly not afforded. After all, social services are usually the first to get cut in budget deficits.

These musings by Ms. Lowrey open up a large discussion as to the inner workings of the government. Looking at these numbers, it would be reasonable to assume that woman's rights, inner city and densely populated areas and lower and middle class Americans were at the forefront of all policies written and executed in the United States. Welfare and its programs would have to seem appropriate and immediate as well as essential—but alas, that is not that case. It has long been assumed that the government does not always act in the interest of its people, but by examining numbers like this, it is fair to say that while welfare is an American problem, it is one because it has been perpetuated to be so. If our elected officials were mandated to act on the behalf of the people they represented, than welfare and its reform would not be an argument over race or earnings, it would be a discussion of the American people and their needs. These numbers suggest a clear need and a dominating population that is immediately effected by our elected officials, who are overtly forgotten.

Welfare Done on Wall Street's Terms: Corporate Bailouts for the Undeserving

The American people know they pay taxes, but most would seem unable to tell you what purpose that money serves. Americans are well versed in the politics of welfare and money for the undeserving and the lazy. But how much do they know about taxes and corporations? Looking across the breadth of the U.S. budget and policies, a key question arises: Whose welfare is the government serving -- the people or corporations? It's not a new question. Upon leaving the U.S. presidency in the late 1800s, Rutherford B. Hayes wrote in his diary: "The real difficulty is with the vast wealth and power in the hands of the few....It is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people no longer. It is a government of corporations, by corporations, and for corporations." This remains the same today. The Recession of 2009 (that has continued deep into 2010), has shown Americans that not only are they at the mercy of their governments economy but also the corporations who caused the collapse.

The Recession is unprecedented but not for reasons that one would think. It is not because of unemployment or foreclosures levels, it is not due to impeccable government planning to help revive the country. But instead, it is due to the American taxpayers dolling out extraordinary levels of corporate welfare. It would seem that our country cannot stand the idea of lazy people collecting paychecks to help sustain themselves and their families. However, dress those people in suits and call them CEOs and executives', banks or securities, and America stands up with open wallets and closed eyes. The American government, also synonymous with the American tax payer allotted failed and struggling banks \$204,808,576,320; so far \$96,249,045,000

has been repaid by the banks, but still that leaves the American people with a negative balance of \$108,487,042,320. (CNN Money) There is also more money that was handed out by the government to other businesses like mortgage companies, automakers, insurers, homeowners, and financial firms, these account for another 700 billion dollars. (Sigtarp) The total money spent is over a trillion dollars, and all of this money was a necessity to maintain the country's infrastructure—also known as big business. These sums of money are massive and unimaginable to the average person. It is important to note that the government and the American people did not hesitate or delay this expenditure. The response was immediate because the need was immediate.

The money was given to *save* and *sustain* the banks until they could get themselves in a position to be self sufficient. The money was used almost identically to what an American family would use the money for—which is a continually contested, delayed and scrutinized practice. An outside observer would have to wonder where the government and political activists' priorities lie. Essentially, it would appear that the government believes that corporations are far more important than the people they serve. Additionally, this is a capitalist country, one where competition, ingenuity and competition thrive. How can a solid business practice be borrowing from the people who frequent your establishment? Would someone at a restaurant allow the waiter to borrow money from the patron and then be obliged to also pay their dinner tab? Never, yet this was (and is) the expectation from the American people. Finally, one should consider that the banks and corporations who received this money were not mandated to remediation programs, or business classes.

People who receive welfare have to make an effort to remediate their situations through classes and trainings to receive and maintain their assistance. This was not the case with the corporations, and in fact at this very moment in time, they are fighting the senators or our country on reform.

Hypocrisy exists. There is no doubt about that, but hypocrisy at this level, with these sums of money is absurd. The wars and welfare do not account for this much money, and if they do it would not be in the lump sum that these businesses needed it. What would happen if the government took a trillion dollars and applied it to the problem of welfare? It would stand to reason that the problem would be solved, probably for good. Welfare, at times, covers housing expenses like rent and utilities, a much contested issue, however, taxpayers were happy to hand out rebates and also mortgage extensions and reconciliations to people who entered foreclosure difficulties. This says that we as taxpayers are more comfortable with allowing people to live beyond their means, then give people means to live within.

The answer here is not to ignore problems in our economy, but instead to have foresight and proactive programs to circumvent these things. The recession has doubled over the American and subsequently every other economy in the world. We cannot allow business to dictate how quality of life can be available. By allowing business to govern our society the American people were struck with a double edged sword. On one side, they were thrust into unemployment, rampant foreclosures, inflation and the collapse of virtually every industry causing budget crises across the country, and on the other corporate handouts to correct it. Essentially people are unemployed and paying companies to keep them that way. How can United States

citizens allow themselves to be toyed with so incredibly, and yet oppose welfare that assures that children will eat? We as a society are lost, while corporations are found (to be enjoying the American taxpayer's allowance).

The Opposition to Welfare: Hypocrisy in the Republican Right, And the Bible

Welfare has always existed. Even still, it finds a great deal of opposition, specifically in the United States by people who align themselves with the political right. These people are generally associated with believing that government involvement in daily activities should be as limited as possible. They also tend to believe in capitalism and free market happenings are essential to American capitalists—damn the consequences. The political right is also generally associated with the richer people of the United States. Essentially, they are the opposite of the people who are generally associated with welfare rights and they are definitely not the welfare recipients. (Again, these are not statements meant to be entirely encompassing, they are blanket observations, but are also frequent characteristics of the political right in the United States.) While America is definitely a Christian country, the political right finds many religious leaders and groups on this side. They are ‘defending American values’ and embodying the American way. These people are also the most prolific opponents of welfare. Two very specific examples of their opposition to welfare and its expansion would be in the recent stimulus plans that President Obama enacted in an attempt to stop and reverse the Recession and also health care reform, both of which were battled vehemently by the political (republican) right. These defenders of America claim to be Christians and yet do not always embody consistent Christian values. While the bible is not entirely clear on what welfare should be practiced, it does offer insight and perspective on the topic.

The political right and bible have a long history of leaning on each other to further their agendas. However, the bible is not entirely clear on how welfare should

be applied, something that the political right seems to often ignore. In fact, it is very often called for in the bible, specifically for widows and children, which, by using a loose term for widow, would still be the case today. A widow is person who has lost her husband to death, but what about a woman who never succeeds in wrangling in the father of their children? A quick and convenient answer to that would be to avoid sex. However, I think we as a society would be hard-pressed to find a woman who willingly engages in an act that might land her in severe poverty, and constant hardship while saddled with a child. Honestly, who would choose that? Something else to be considered is that women have a unique relationship to children because the child's maternity is never in question. On the other hand, men can more easily persuade people of not having any responsibility (the woman is a liar or a 'hoe'). These circumstances can be mitigated rather efficiently, however, money it may hinder such an attempt. If a person, in this case a woman is so destitute that she is petitioning for child support, WIC and welfare, what is the likelihood of her having the cash for a lawyer and a paternity test? Thus, in a way ensuring that she becomes the modern version of a widow. (The attempt of this paper is not to make excuses, but more accurately portray the people and the society who has the most constant interaction with welfare and poverty.)

Welfare, from the Bible through to today, has had a slow evolution. Helping others has always been a commitment of most communities, but it was not called or considered welfare. It was meeting social responsibility for the people with which we constantly and consistently interact. It would seem that modern day politicians have a more compassionate relationship with their political careers and agendas than they do

to the people for whom they serve. It would seem obvious that anyone who is going to align themselves as a Christian, attempting to put that agenda in the forefront of their behavior and decision making, they should really enact the lessons of the bible, that being to help fellow man.

The Bible addresses welfare and responsibility numerous times, but we will look at more complex verses that do not advocate blind giving. The bible, while it is explicit to help, it does also come with some stipulations to the help and also when and where it is appropriate for welfare. Understandably, what the bible says is not the final verdict on the theme of welfare, in fact, there a great many people who do not even believe in the Bible and teachings at all. But it is a starting place, especially since America claims to be one of the most Christian concentrated places on the planet. (Ash, pg 160-161) The bible is one of the oldest religious texts known to humans; it would seem fitting that is a place to refer to and to at the very least consider. However, as we said welfare is alive, and has evolved into a much more complicated entity then to simply base it on theology.

Ezekiel 16:49-50: English Standard Version (©2001)

Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.

This passage is an important as a reminder that enjoying things, especially in excess or at the expense of someone else (in this case a city) is something the God will find offensive, and in fact downright despises. This passage is a strong argument

for the continuation of welfare, but in doing so doing it as a community, especially if your neighbors are finding life a more troubled then you and your neighbors. Calling a city to aid another city seems outlandish, over done, and probably dramatic, but with the recent rash of natural disasters, the world (not just the United States of America), has shown itself to be a very willing and also able helping hand. Is it that natural disasters are literally put upon people, and welfare is seen as a decision or lifestyle and not a matter circumstance? That would seem to be the only rational argument. An impeccable example of this would be the recent earthquake in Haiti. It is this that exemplifies welfare and the ability that all people, not just governments have, to help out one another. The Haitian Relief Fund that the American Red Cross initiated was able to raise in excess of one hundred million dollars and they did so in a just a few days, through a text message campaign. (Tedford, NPR.Org) This is not even taking into account the fundraiser that celebrities and musicians put together. The total amount of money that the Haitian people will have to help them rebuild their lives has yet to be completely tallied. One thing is for certain though; it is more money than their government has ever seen.

Haiti prior to the earthquake was bringing in approximately 524 million dollars in export money and only had budget revenue of 960.6 million. (CIA.Gov) Understandably, rebuilding a city after it has met ruin is not a cheap or easy task, however, by all accounts Haiti was a 3rd world country, having 54% of the population living in abject poverty. (CIA. Gov) Perhaps, if these monies were allocated to Haiti before this tragedy struck, buildings would have been made more efficiently? Housing and housing developments would have been more suitable instead of

sprawling ghettos just waiting to be washed out by seasonal rains. Perhaps, there would have been rescue and warning systems in place so that if tragedy were to strike, a quick and efficient response would be possible. Perhaps, this small forgotten island would have been seen as an attractive manufacturing destination and not a dilapidated landscape where deals would come easily for large companies. Consider this, instead of being completely reactionary, the tragedy could have been avoided through progressive and forward thinking planning for economical and societal growth. There could have been an efficient welfare system that helped its people move out of poverty and its perpetual welfare state and it could have possibly saved lives. The suggestion here is not that welfare would have saved Haiti, but certainly having at least reasonable living accommodations would have helped the situation. The monies from relief funds, these grand scale 'collection plate' offerings will put Haiti into an entirely new economical existence. There are a lot of 'possibilities' here, but seeing the money that an earthquake shook out of the earth for this extreme example of poverty, is a shining example of what welfare can look like when people give a damn.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 New Living Translation (©2007)

Even while we were with you, we gave you this command:

"Those unwilling to work will not get to eat."

The bible, like the rest of life is not without contradictions. Here, in the book of Thessalonians, we are shown in direct contrast to Ezekiel, God's good graces or

expectations (depending on how you read these texts) are not without the prospect of returned gratitude coming in the form of a particular behavior, which in this instance is work. This passage illustrates that the outcome of work, will be food, thus ensuring that all good or appropriate deeds are rewarded. A person who is not in favor of welfare could use these words as an exacting defense for why people who don't work should not receive governmental assistance. This is probably the most prevalent issue that people have with welfare which is-- that people are receiving benefits without the likelihood of output on their behalf. People who work for a living and are paying taxes, are certainly entitled to expect that their tax money should be used in a productive and efficient manner benefitting people who are deserving of their hard earned wages, and that theory is supported here in Thessalonians.

Haiti was used to support the Ezekiel passage and now Thessalonians would be a reason as to why the outreach was unmerited and even worse, unnecessary. Haiti does not contribute to the global economy and in fact has a great deal of debt, some of which has even been recently erased in the interest of spurring growth in the small nation while also relieving some strain on the non-existent economy. As this passage illustrates, we are not to give to people who are unwilling to contribute to their own well-being. Now, the bible is not exact in its definition of work, so the perimeters of this passage's reach are questionable. Because of its lack of exactness, we as the contributing nation would have certainly been able to take liberty in its interpretation. The donors could have combed through employment records and seen who has been working and paying taxes, and then given them the help they had earned. However, that would raise a whole other argument, that being: is there a certain output (by a

recipient) that is expected for someone to begin to receive aid, and if so, is this an all encompassing behavior? Is holding a job where you work ten hours a week sufficient, or are there stages that can be reached by contributing certain numbers of labor? Dismantling labor as a way of excising aid from a government or agency contributes to the complexity of this subject. Depending on the amount of money or longevity of the giving, it would make sense to put levy on the transaction; however, it would seem that this should be done with care and consideration for the population that is being served. After all, elderly, disabled, children and mentally ill people would certainly contribute to the complexity of your recipient brackets.

The average person (based on the United States model of employment) who is working 40 hours a week and living a modest lifestyle would absolutely be enraged to find out that the money they lose in taxes goes to someone who is unwilling to try the same, if not more, in an attempt to solidify their quality of life. Herbert Hoover promised everyone a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage, but he didn't say it would come on the back of the American taxpayer. In fact, a lot of people would probably opt to have a bigger chicken and a nicer car, if they had the opportunity to disperse their money at their own choosing. Goodwill is not dead, as Haiti and other natural disaster have illustrated, however the welfare that extended came at each person's own accord, it was not automatically taken from their paychecks, and if it had been, the press coverage over the uproar would have surely pushed the news of the earthquake onto the backburner of everyone's mind.

The bible is a good starting place for the discussion of welfare because it constantly varies within itself. There are a great many passages that contribute to the

appropriateness of welfare and also ones not so favorable, but these two were chosen because they are in contradiction to each other. The United States has laws closely related to biblical values and so one can ask, why did we not mat this issue out a long time ago? Did our forefathers always expect prosperity and able bodied people to inhabit our great country? By opening up a dialogue about where, when and how welfare should be dispersed we can begin to see how truly enigmatic this subject has become, and one that is not so easily thrust on either side of the political fence. It is easy to cast politicians as insensitive or non-committal on a subject, but as we have seen, the subject of welfare in the bible is both of those things, so how can any one person choose?

How to Fix Welfare:

Welfare and its recipients is a dredge on our society, but mostly because we the people don't care to open up our minds and hearts to better, less demeaning ways of handling the issue. Color, creed, and socioeconomic status have dominated this argument. Politicians point fingers at laws and lawyers and leaders as a way of creating noise and hype that will drag people away from issues and pit them against their neighbors. Race and taxes are historically hot button issues for Americans and rather than moving past or through these issues, we have instead begun to use them as ammunition. The 'not in my backyard' mentality dominates our motives damming up our resources and intellect on very real and very negotiable societal issues. We as Americans need to move past our necessity for debate and start dealing with the issues that truly plague our system. The issue of welfare is inscrutable and trying, and no one fix will solve all of the problems that are tangled up in this web of politics, people and law. However, there are many suggestions that would help begin to untangle some of its parts.

Welfare Creates Jobs:

The American people need to understand that welfare creates jobs. That sounds like an oxymoron, but is in fact very true when considered. Welfare has governmental workers on all levels from federal to local governments. Welfare allocates billions of dollars a year to help solve, relieve and remove people from it. Welfare Agencies have offices, case workers and advocates—most of which do not work for free. Welfare supplies business to non-profit incentives and township

endeavors. Welfare has become a business, and it needs to be recognized as that. It is not say that people are getting rich off of welfare and its recipients, but there are certainly great sums of money that are moving through the programs, and that money should be regulated and acknowledged, whether it is for Haiti or the local homeless shelter. Perhaps, these services would benefit from having similar causes and objectives. Our human services need to be coordinated in to a cooperative effort.

Education:

We as a society are very allowing of seeing people fail. Schools should get a majority of resources to make them as efficient as possible, for all people. There should not be so much focus on test scores, as actual tangible results. Children would benefit from having educations that were tailored toward interests and a child's skills sets. If a child finds success in an academic setting they will find interest as well. More schools should vocational settings to ensure that children are allowed to discover and excel at occupational endeavors. Also, because children are mandated by law to have to go to school lets start talking about sex. A lot of people believe that welfare recipients create their own circumstances by having children and missing out on a free education. So we as a responsible country should begin to discuss adult situations with children in schools. They are going to be there anyway, so why not maximize the time spent there? Kids need to learn about the outcomes of unprotected sex. Abstinence only education has been continually shown to be inefficient. Vocational and comprehensive family education for students will not only better them as teenagers, but will also give them a foundation to begin making more responsible

adult decisions. We as a society have the ability to address children in true need of services, well before they are on welfare services. Educators and employers can work together to create a workforce and viable jobs. For people already in welfare, we need to get out and meet them and their needs past money. Without reaching out, we can not solve the problem at hand. The internet is an incredible tool, because it cheap, easy, and fast, but being proficient on the internet is the only way to ensure that people are can utilize it. Without this help, the cycle of welfare families will continue.

Politicians and Lobbyists:

Government has moved away from the American people. Politicians work for lobbyists and large campaign contributors. They do not work for the people who are directly affected by the policies and the 'reforms' that they enact. Wealthy politicians live far beyond the reach of tax increases and recessions. They are generally exceptionally rich leaving them out of touch with their political constituents. The American people deserve far more from their political servants than they are receiving, and it is time that we the people regain our foothold in our political well being. The Washington Post article depicted very clearly who among Americans should have power and sway in the political arena, and it is apparent that they have not been participating very actively as of late.

Reach Out:

Welfare is about people. People are who benefit from tax revenues and charitable events. Certainly there are people who have duped the system, and are stealing, but that is true in any situation in the world. People seem to be willing to help when there is transparency involved, as has been the case with natural disasters. People (through media) have a visual depiction of what and where a need is. If groups of people can mobilize to reach out for a very specific, very accomplishable goal, it would seem that Americans would happily get on board with any endeavor. If the stigma of welfare can be removed by both the recipients and the givers a more collective effort might evolve, and actual helping can begin.

There are great many things that Americans can truly claim as their own, welfare is one of them. Welfare has become an American staple that rivals Ford and baseball. America has created an ideology that is both accepting and allowing of consumerism and inefficiency, when it comes to fiscal responsibility. Americans idealize capitalism and also charity work, causing a collision of ideas politically and socially. The allowance for both has brought on two schools of thought. In one school, we as a culture press for innovation and poise in society, in the other we see classes of people who are constantly behind the economical curve. As they have come to coexist, the principles of our society have learned to accept that some people will accelerate and others will struggle with assistance of the government. Welfare has become cyclical (from adult to child, and then to that child as an adult) because we as a culture accept that welfare exists through legislation, ideals and in the business

sector. Welfare has become a truly American innovation, spreading, and expanding, creating an entire genre of social status. Welfare is an American staple because even though we as a culture recognize its continued presence, we have yet to understand it. Comprehensive approaches to both education and the dolling out of American tax dollars would correct and also alleviate the fiscal beating that we as a society experience, and also remove the stigma applied to welfare recipients.

Welfare is a complicated subject that will not be solved with thick packet of legislation and a signature. It will also not be solved by ignoring it or removing aid. It is a multi layered problem that is in grave need of attention from the American tax payer and politician. We can no longer blindly allocate money for people with attempting to circumvent the problems that contribute to the reasons that people need welfare. America needs to become an industry country again so that there are decent paying jobs. America needs to look ahead instead of constantly attempting retroactively solve problems. If America is the greatest country in the world it needs to begin to act that way, and it can start with by putting its people and their well-being first.

America's willingness to save corporations and countries as opposed to people who inhabit its borders, and create its infrastructure is both sad and scary. America should learn to treat herself and her people as they do all other countries. Her willingness to look abroad is admirable, but at what costs does our social diligence come? America needs to put corporations and businesses behind the people who support it. America's face should represent her people—we are not all rich white

people with a singular capitalist agenda, we are teachers, and parents and friends who at times need help and assistance from the government who extended its hand many generations ago. As people have learned to depend on what has always existed (at least to current generations) society has changed. We no longer fear the government, but welcome its ideals and philosophies of prosperity instead. How can the government who initiated such reliance pull back its hand and then chastise its people? It doesn't make sense. Legislation will not clean up this issue, people need to do it. WE as a country need to coexist with those less fortunate than us, instead of looking to for motivation from news stories. Life exists in our own neighborhoods and we have the ability to enrich if we only choose. Welfare may be as American as baseball, but its evolution has not been.

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