

# Generational Poverty in America

By: Floyd Davis

As we enter the 14<sup>th</sup> year of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, fifty years after the victories of Civil Rights Pioneers like Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and 149 years after the end of chattel slavery in these United States, the African American community continues to suffer under the yoke of generational poverty and all of the branches that stem from this evil root.

The failed public school systems, perpetually high unemployment rates, healthcare that in most cases is limited to ER services, and the effects of violence that permeates throughout our communities like smoke from a fire, can all be attributed to poverty.

According to researchers at the University of California- Berkley the greatest gains and the greatest acceleration of these gains came in the first term of President Obama, thanks to the 830 billion dollar stimulus package. Between 2009 and 2012 the top 1% in this country captured 95% of income gains in the first three years of this recovery, under President Clinton it was 45%, under President Bush 65%.

A political system that perpetuates poverty by failing to enact legislation to provide funding to create economic engines in impoverished areas of the country is immoral. On the national and local levels we have failed to learn from past strategies that have worked in our behalf. Today, we look and see our leaders; elected and selected, holding up President Johnson's failed War on Poverty. I can't help but ask the question: "If Dr. King had any faith in the "War on Poverty" in 1964, why did he create the Poor Peoples Campaign in 1967?"

Dr. King called the Poor Peoples Campaign, the 2<sup>ND</sup> Phase of the Civil Rights movement. In this plan he called on the government to allocate 30 billion dollars to build the inner cities, Appalachia and other parts of the country, to ward off the growing dangers America would face as a result of generational poverty.

In 1968 Dr. King was murdered and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase of the movement was abandoned as a vehicle of change for the masses, and we settled for individual stories of black success to hold up as examples of progress.

We live in a society that has created billion dollar Industries off of the misery of the poor. This country incarcerates more of its citizens than any other country on the face of this earth. But, be mindful of the fact, that Slavery; according to the U.S. Constitution, "is abolished in these United States except for punishment of a crime". So I would say the new "Plantations" are the prisons, with their billion dollar budgets.

The Voters Rights Act enabled African Americans to elect more candidates to office to further the cause of Civil Rights. Legislation and Court decisions dismantled a system that had been in place for generations. Today, we must hold elected officials to that same standard and push to create a National Anti-Poverty Act or elect new ones who are accountable to the voice of the people.

When we organize around the issue of poverty block by block, city by city, and state by state and elect candidates that support an Anti-poverty Act, then and only then will we see funding to create jobs. Green

technology, Information technology; and so many more pillars of growth still depend on manufacturing. We must bring manufacturing jobs back to America. Wall Street and the major corporations have experienced record breaking profits under this administration, it's time to share the wealth and begin to bring this generational poverty to an end.