

# Reading / Viewing Materials for Changing Poverty and Economic Mobility in America

By participating in this initiative, you are taking the first step toward changing the narrative around poverty and economic mobility. But the work doesn't end after your 90-minute session: In addition to convening, we encourage you to continue growing your knowledge of these issues and the work that's being done throughout the country to shift misperceptions, shine a light on the millions of people experiencing poverty, and amplify the conversation around expanding economic mobility.

To that end, we've assembled critical works of news reports, opinion pieces, tips, videos and speeches to help participants and others better understand and empathize with people living in poverty.

## Research & Reports

### [What Poverty Does to the Young Brain](#)

*The New Yorker*, 2015

The conditions that attend poverty—what a National Scientific Council report summarized as “overcrowding, noise, substandard housing, separation from parent(s), exposure to violence, family turmoil,” and other forms of extreme stress—can be toxic to the developing brain, just like drug or alcohol abuse.

### [Child Poverty Is a Moral Tragedy. This Policy Would Significantly Reduce the Number of Kids Affected](#)

*TIME*, 2020

Nearly 1 in 5 American children is officially poor. That's roughly 15 million kids. But the number living with significant deprivation—insufficient food, seriously overcrowded housing or a lack of access to medical care due to cost—is actually much higher. According to the latest studies, it's more like 1 in 3. Why do we tolerate this?

### [Public Perceptions & Narratives of Poverty in the U.S.](#)

*GOOD*, 2019

This research from GOOD, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, investigated four questions: What are the dominant narratives of poverty in America? Who believes them, and why? What can be done to shift narratives? How can we move this work forward?

### [Understanding Perceptions of Poverty and People Experiencing Poverty](#)

*Olson Zaltman, in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2020*

For the first time ever, children in the US are less likely to earn more money and build a better life for themselves than their parents did. Poverty and economic mobility are very difficult issues, and how people unconsciously and consciously think and feel about poverty has a major impact on the success of efforts to address those issues. This research seeks to better understand perceptions of poverty, as well as those experiencing it.

For additional materials on this research, read [this article](#) or watch [this webinar](#).

### [Audiences @ Narrative Observatory](#)

*Harmony Labs, 2021*

This website is a critical tool that people can use to identify narratives used in poverty and economic mobility. It allows for audience segmentation, as well as tracking of poverty and economic mobility narratives.

## **Opinion Articles**

### [America's Enduring Caste System](#)

*The New York Times Magazine, 2020*

Our founding ideals promise liberty and equality for all. Our reality is an enduring racial hierarchy that has persisted for centuries.

### [Working Anything but 9 to 5](#)

*The New York Times, 2014*

Like increasing numbers of low-income mothers and fathers, one American woman, Ms. Navarro, is at the center of a new collision that pits sophisticated workplace technology

against some fundamental requirements of parenting, with particularly harsh consequences for poor single mothers.

### [Here's Why Black Families Have Struggled for Decades to Gain Wealth](#)

*MarketWatch, 2019*

The U.S. has a long history of government policies that facilitated wealth for white Americans but not for blacks, argues these two authors.

### [Poor Journalism: Is Media Coverage of the Poor Getting Better or Worse?](#)

*California Magazine, 2016*

The reason behind the longstanding dearth of U.S. media coverage about poverty? It's depressing. The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism [found](#) that poverty coverage accounted for less than one percent of stories in 52 mainstream news outlets from 2007 to mid-2012. Meanwhile, 46.7 million Americans—nearly 15 percent—were living in poverty in 2014, according to the U.S. Census.

### [Bryan Stevenson on What Well-Meaning White People Need to Know About Race](#)

*Pacific Standard Magazine, 2018*

An interview with Harvard University-trained public defense lawyer Bryan Stevenson on racial trauma, segregation, and listening to marginalized voices.

### [The U.S. Can No Longer Hide From Its Deep Poverty Problem](#)

*The New York Times, 2018*

Surely no one in the United States today is as poor as a poor person in Ethiopia or Nepal? As it happens, making such comparisons has recently become much easier. The World Bank decided in October to include high-income countries in its global estimates of people living in poverty. We can now make direct comparisons between the United States and poor countries.

### [Addressing Poverty Can Heal an Increasingly Divided Country](#)

*The Brookings Institution, 2019*

Here is a rarely publicized fact about our booming economy: Despite stock market highs and low unemployment, poverty in the U.S. is pervasive. The number of people earning less than \$25,750 for a family of four is rising in both Republican and Democratic districts, and across racial and geographic lines.

### [Racial Microaggressions Take a Major Toll on Black Americans](#)

*The Washington Post, 2020*

White people gawking at or complimenting Black people for doing ordinary things is literally harming their health, research shows.

### [Ending Poverty in the United States Would Actually Be Pretty Easy](#)

*An Interview with Joanne Goldblum and Colleen Shaddox*

*Jacobin Magazine, 2019*

“... That saying summarizes everything that’s wrong with how the United States addresses poverty: we say the problem is the person, so we need to fix the person and what that person lacks in skills. But does he even have a fishing pole? Is he too weak with hunger to go fish? Is the “he” in question actually a woman, and women aren’t allowed to fish there? It’s so paternalistic and so horrible. Yet people say it all the time, like they’ve said something wise and caring.”

## **Tips & Guides**

### [Download : A Guide to Talking about Poverty and Economic Mobility in America PDF](#)

*Ad Council, 2021*

### [Briefing Guide: Framing Poverty as a Social Problem](#)

*Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI), 2008*

People tend to attribute poverty to individual responsibility and are unlikely to want to help those who are seen as responsible for their own misfortune. Policies aimed at equality of opportunity may be more appealing than policies aimed at “helping the poor.” Research in this area suggests that policies that are framed in terms of equality and systemic roadblocks to opportunity will be viewed more favorably.

## [Tips for Covering Poverty](#)

*International Journalists' Network, 2018*

As humans, journalists can't escape personal opinions and preconceived notions. But just as we have to interrogate ourselves on implicit bias around gender and race, we have to do the same for poverty.

Bryant explains that most journalists have grown up in a world that perpetuates inaccurate narratives about meritocracy, work ethics and the "bootstrap theory" — that anyone can succeed if only they work hard enough. "It's important to question all of the things you think you know about the topic," she said.

## [Covering Poverty: What to Avoid and How to Get It Right](#)

*The Journalist's Resource, 2018*

Generally speaking, news coverage tends to exclude people experiencing economic hardship as though they don't participate in the same societal, political and economic systems as everyone else, Bryant says. "They are, instead, most often depicted as the victims of some force or policy; the criminal element that the rest of society has to fear and punish; or the 'exceptional poor person' who walks miles to work or school, has multiple jobs or good grades or has managed to do something to be worthy of help or an escape from their economic situation," she says.

## **Videos & Documentaries**

### [A Portrait of Poverty in America: Job Insecurity and Payday Lending](#)

*The Wall Street Journal, 2018 | Viewing time: 5 min.*

Many families in Tchula, Miss. struggle to make ends meet with a patchwork of jobs and high-interest loans. Community leaders and the town's only bank try to help, but the cycle of despair isn't easily broken.

### [The Story of American Poverty, as Told by One Alabama County](#)

*PBS, 2018 | Viewing time: 10 min.*

This is part of an ongoing series of reports called "Chasing the Dream," which reports on poverty and opportunity in America, and is supported in part by the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

### [Why Is There Still Poverty in America?](#)

*The Economist, 2020 | Viewing time: 10 min.*

In America, almost 40 million people—one eighth of its population—live in poverty. Why does the richest big country in the world still have so many people living in profound need?

### [How COVID Has Impacted Poverty in America](#)

*PBS Frontline, 2020 | Viewing time: 53 min.*

The film follows children from three families in Ohio already struggling to make ends meet when the coronavirus hit. It offers a glimpse into how the virus and its economic fallout introduced new uncertainties into the children's lives, affecting their emotional wellbeing, their schooling and their parents' jobs.

### [The Line: Poverty in America](#)

*Linda Midgett, 2012 | Viewing time: 30 min.*

A documentary about the lives of three Americans struggling with poverty.

### [Against All Odds: The Fight for a Black Middle Class](#)

*PBS, 2017 | Viewing time: 77 min.*

In this revealing documentary, veteran journalist Bob Herbert examines the often heroic efforts of black families to pursue the American dream in the face of unrelenting barriers.

### [Moundsville](#)

*PBS, 2020 | Viewing time: 57 min.*

A West Virginia town struggles with recovering from deindustrialization.

### [Hillbilly Elegy](#)

*Netflix, 2020 | Viewing time: 1 hr. 56 min.*

A man escapes Rust Belt poverty to build a life at Yale Law school and beyond.

## Speeches & Talks

### [Mia Birdsong: The Story We Tell About Poverty Isn't True](#)

*TEDTalks, 2015 | Viewing Time: 15 min.*

As a global community, we all want to end poverty. Mia Birdsong suggests a great place to start: Let's honor the skills, drive and initiative that poor people bring to the struggle every day. She asks us to look again at people in poverty: They may be broke—but they're not broken.

### [Lashon Amado: My Path Out of Poverty](#)

*TEDxTalks, 2015 | Viewing Time: 12 min.*

How can young people who grow up in neighborhoods with more liquor stores than grocery stores, more drug dealers than college students, and more funerals than weddings, break out of the cycle of poverty and achieve their full potential? Lashon Amado, one of our country's most inspirational young leaders, shares his moving, personal story of how YouthBuild USA helped him create a path out of poverty and live the American dream.

### [Rutger Bregman: Poverty Isn't a Lack of Character; It's a Lack of Cash](#)

*TED, 2017 | Viewing Time: 15 min.*

"Ideas can and do change the world," says historian Rutger Bregman, sharing his case for a provocative one: guaranteed basic income. Learn more about the idea's 500-year history and a forgotten modern experiment where it actually worked—and imagine how much energy and talent we would unleash if we got rid of poverty once and for all.

### [Joanne Goldblum: National Diaper Bank Network](#)

*Fred Rogers Symposium, 2017 | Viewing Time: 13 min.*

Joanna Goldblum describes how she came to found the National Diaper Bank Network, discussing her epiphany about poverty when she sent her children to school. "I saw over and over again a lack of things", she says. "There's very little money we spend on

concrete products. I became obsessed with the idea that my kids had whatever they needed, and kids in the same city I lived in didn't."

### [Cynthia Greenlee and Eduardo Porter: How Has Racism Shaped the American Economy?](#)

*Zócalo Public Square, 2020 | Viewing Time: 46 min.*

What is the relationship between American economics and American racism, and can it be severed? How will systemic racism, past and present, slow our emergence from the current downturn? New York Times journalist Eduardo Porter, author of the new book *American Poison: How Racial Hostility Destroyed Our Promise*, visited Zócalo with historian and writer Cynthia Greenlee to discuss economic disparities that have been centuries in the making.