

Alarming Hunger and Poverty among African-American Children

Written by Admin
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The U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Agriculture has released new data revealing that hunger and poverty in America remain high, especially among Black children.

The African-American and African-American child hunger and poverty rates are even greater than the national averages—sometimes nearly twice as high, states Bread for the World (BFTW), a D.C.-based organization specializing in hunger in America. BFTW has issued a special report on the numbers. According to the analysis more than one in seven Americans, or 15 percent of the entire population, live below the poverty line (\$22,811 for a family of four with two children), according to the Census stats released in late 2012.

Hunger closely mirrors the poverty figures: 14.9 percent of households in the United States (50.1 million Americans, or one in six) are food insecure—meaning that the people in the household are unsure of how they will provide for their next meal at some point during the year.

Households with children are more likely to experience food insecurity. Around the country, nearly one in four children—16.7 million—lives in a food insecure family. More than a quarter of all children under age 5 lived in poverty in 2011.

The most recent food insecurity data released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture reveal that 25.1 percent of African-American households are food insecure. Among African-American households with children, 29.2 percent are food insecure, compared to 20.6 percent of all U.S. households with children.

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Similarly, 27.6 percent of African-Americans live in poverty. The African-American child poverty figures are particularly disturbing: 38.8 percent of children under age 18 and 42.7 percent of children under age 5 live below the poverty line.

A specific 20 states have the highest African-American child poverty rates in the country. Those states and the rate of African-American child poverty are: Iowa 55.7; Ohio 50.5; Michigan 50.0; Mississippi 49.6; Wisconsin 49.1; Indiana 48.7; Louisiana 48.3; Kansas 46.2; Alabama 45.8; Minnesota 45.8; Kentucky 45.7; Arkansas 45.4; Illinois 44.8; Oklahoma 44.8; South Carolina 44.4; Tennessee 43.6; Washington, D.C. 43.2; Missouri 41.7; Florida 41.2; and Pennsylvania 40.8.

In Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania, African-American child poverty rates are double the overall child poverty rates. In Iowa, the poverty rate for African-American children is more than triple the overall child poverty rate, states the Bread for the World analysis.

As the economy continues to rebound, federal initiatives play a tremendous role in protecting African-American children and families from falling into hunger and poverty. These initiatives include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

During the recession of 2008, poverty and unemployment skyrocketed while the number of hungry people held relatively steady, due largely to programs like SNAP. In 2011, more than 3.9 million

African-American families received SNAP benefits.

Likewise, the health and potential of some of our most vulnerable community members are safeguarded through monthly packages of food that supply important nutrients to mothers and their infants and children under age 5. WIC served nearly 9 million women and children in 2012. The most recent racial and ethnic data, published in February 2012, found that 20 percent of women and children enrolled in WIC are African-American.

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“In a land of plenty, it is unacceptable that so many of our children go hungry,” said Bishop Don Dixon Williams, associate for racial-ethnic outreach at Bread for the World. “With figures this alarming, we must ask ourselves why people of color tend to suffer more than others. And we must tell lawmakers to take actions that do not hold hungry black and brown children responsible for the nation’s financial gaps.”