



Written by [Kurt Williamsen](#) on November 21, 2013

## Do Progressive Policies Hurt Black Americans?

Years ago as part of my college coursework to become a high-school English teacher, I was required to be a student-teacher for a semester. The rules allowed me to do my student-teaching at any high school that would accept me, and I chose Washington High School in the inner city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I mainly chose a Milwaukee school because large schools near my home wanted to hire teachers who could handle disruptive students — and where better to learn to handle disruption than the inner city? I also had a naïve vision of the mainly black school populace where I'd be working: downtrodden kids who needed a hand and my help. But in truth, race had little if anything to do with my decision about where to student-teach because I really had no experience with black people or much of a concept of how their lives were different from my own.



Where I grew up in Kimberly, Wisconsin, one almost never saw a black person. The sum of my childhood experience with blacks derived from some white neighbors adopting a little black girl, whom I would see occasionally when I delivered newspapers, and watching Packer football on TV. Since I was raised in a household where I never heard a race-based word, except to hear that all people are created in God's likeness, I really didn't think of blacks as different from whites at all — they were just people with really good tans. My college experience didn't change my outlook much. Two black guys, Andre and Tony, did hang out with the group I associated with, but their differences were mainly in that Andre didn't drink alcohol — an unusual trait in my school — and Tony was from a well-to-do family in Nigeria and had a thick accent.

It seemed to me that almost all other blacks on campus only hung around with other blacks, so I had almost no interaction with them.

In fact, the only reason I thought of blacks as different at all is because I had seen the mini-series *Roots*, a story about slavery.

Needless to say, I was in for a rude awakening during student-teaching. The hate in the Milwaukee school was palpable. Walking down a hallway, I could hear kids I had never met mutter the words "white mother-f\*\*\*er" or "white honkie," and kids would play music with anti-white and anti-police lyrics. If memory serves me correctly, we averaged seven fights a week in school — kids beat each other ruthlessly — and on any given day, more kids might skip classes than attend. A large portion of my students had children of their own, and there was a nursery in the school. If something were left unattended and unlocked, it would probably be stolen. I had never seen anything like it.



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Nevertheless, many of the kids were outwardly friendly, and some were honest to a fault. One huge, muscular kid named Jason wouldn't tell a lie to save his life. Other kids aided charities and were in clubs, but they were the exception, not the rule. I wondered what made the bulk of students so different from the people I had grown up with.

Then a couple of eye-opening experiences happened, causing me to guess that blacks generally acted differently because they saw themselves as different. First, I attended a formal school dance for the students, held at a fancy hotel. Not only did the girls wear gowns and the boys wear suits and tuxedos, every kid there acted like a lady or a gentleman. It was an amazing transformation. Then, another student-teacher, a black man who had grown up in a mainly white section of Madison and didn't understand the behavior of the Milwaukee students any better than I did, ranted one day about how much he hated it when whites asked him if he had been a basketball player. He said that it was racist and insulting to stereotype blacks as liking basketball. I pointed out to him that he didn't mind when they asked him if he had played football — because he *had* played football. I also pointed out that he was well over six feet tall and looked athletic, so it was a natural question. (People frequently used to ask me if I played basketball, too, because I was from Kimberly, where there was a bit of basketball mania. It wasn't because I was white.) If he had been fat, they probably instead would have asked him if he were in the chess club — or in *any activities* at all — regardless of race.

### Different Is as Different Does

Today, most people proclaim outright that there are actual, real differences between the races, caused by factors that are cultural, social, historic, or economic — though physical characteristics and skills are assumed to be equal. Because of the understood differences, there is affirmative action to help blacks succeed in college; there are black-only awards in music and film; black political groups, such as the Congressional Black Caucus and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); and there are many politicians who proclaim that black Americans, more than other groups, need government handouts and other aid.

On the surface, preferential treatment for blacks and the creation of black-oriented groups seems necessary, even right or righteous — despite the racist overtones — because blacks truly do seem downtrodden: Blacks represent over 50 percent of the homicide victims, though they are about 13 percent of the population, and, as Professor Walter E. Williams said, blacks represent “most of the victims of violent personal crimes, such as assault and robbery.”<sup>1</sup> And according to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2011, the overall U.S. poverty rate was 15 percent, while the poverty rate for blacks was 27.6 percent. Real median household income was \$50,054 for all Americans; for blacks it was \$32,229.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> As well, 19.5 percent of blacks didn't have health insurance coverage, as compared to 15.7 percent of the total population.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the black unemployment rate is approximately double the white rate,<sup>4</sup> and the Heritage Foundation determined that only 56 percent of blacks graduate from high school.<sup>5</sup>

All told, it's a gloomy recital of facts — one that screams, as blacks often do, “racial inequality,” meaning race-based social injustice.<sup>6, 7</sup> Such a list of facts indicates to many people that blacks need special help, government help, because without government aid, the situation will likely become worse. But is that what the evidence really shows?

The answer is no! In fact, the preponderance of the proof demonstrates that preferential treatment and, especially, government aid have harmed blacks, not helped them.



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Let's look at blacks and schools.

As indicated earlier, blacks as a group do atrociously in school. Not only are black high-school graduation rates tragically low, when blacks do graduate, they often still aren't competent for higher education. (In truth, 75 percent of all college students must take remedial classes in college.)<sup>8</sup> According to the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, black students have a 42-percent graduation rate from college, as opposed to a 62-percent rate for whites.<sup>9</sup> The question is why, and what should be done about it.

Interestingly, it's immediately evident that the kids are not failing because of a lack of liberal, "progressive" policy. In fact, liberal or "progressive" ideology dominates in education. Liberal policies that have been put in place to aid blacks in schools include — in elementary and high schools — not kicking out of school extremely disruptive or violent kids, or even effectively disciplining them;<sup>10</sup> lessening rigorous expectations and assigning little homework;<sup>11</sup> desegregating schools via forced bussing arrangements; ensuring the availability of public schools for all, paid for with tax money; hiring black teachers for black students; instituting the No Child Left Behind Act and the Head Start program; passing kids to the next grade who do not get passing scores, called social promotions;<sup>12</sup> spending loads of money on teachers and teacher training to obtain quality educators;<sup>13</sup> and creating small class sizes.<sup>14, 15</sup>

In colleges, an emphasis has been placed on minority inclusion campaigns,<sup>16</sup> lowered requirements for entry — lower than for whites and Asians<sup>17</sup> — and an abundance of grants and scholarships for minority and impoverished students,<sup>18</sup> all under the label of "affirmative action." But even with the near ubiquitousness of such policies, blacks haven't fared well, as noted above, especially poor blacks whom the aid is purportedly meant to help most.

As *Forbes* noted in an article entitled "Poor Students Are the Real Victims of College Discrimination," out of *all students* in the United States who received bachelor's degrees, only "9.4 percent of those degrees went to students with family income below \$33,000" — only a part of them black. At more selective schools, the problem is worse: "At elite law schools like Yale and Harvard Law, 60% of the incoming students tend to come from the top 10% of the socioeconomic spectrum ... while only 5% come from the *bottom half*. Similar studies of competitive undergraduate schools have shown that three-quarters of students come from the top economic quartile, while less than 10% come from the *bottom half*." (Emphasis added.)<sup>19</sup>

Ironically, before all the programs to help blacks, the numbers of blacks graduating from colleges was climbing rapidly. According to the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, "At the time of the Harlem renaissance in the 1920s, about 10,000 blacks — one in 1,000 — were college educated [about one-tenth of one percent]."<sup>20</sup> By 1940, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 80,342 blacks who were more than 24 years old had four or more years of college, which equaled 1.2 percent of blacks versus 5.3 percent of whites with an equivalent education.<sup>21</sup> By 1965, 4.7 percent of blacks had such educational attainments, versus 9.8 percent of whites — blacks had nearly half as many college graduates percent-wise as whites.<sup>21</sup>



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In 2008, after more than 40 years of “progressive” dominance in public schools, the college-degree attainment rate stood at 19.6 percent for African-Americans and 32.6 percent for whites. This still sounds like improvement from 1965 (albeit slow improvement) — more than half as many American blacks had degrees as whites.<sup>21</sup> But let’s not rush to congratulate public schools and progressive policy.

As was pointed out by the website Real Clear Politics, “Black immigrants from Africa average the highest educational attainment of any population group in the country, including whites and Asians.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, educated blacks from Africa skew the numbers of black degree holders way up.

In fact, as of 2007, of Harvard’s black graduates — about eight percent of students altogether — “somewhere between one-half and two-thirds of black undergraduates were ‘West Indian and African immigrants or their children, or to a lesser extent, children of biracial couples,’” according to black professors at Harvard.<sup>22</sup> This is not unusual. A study of 28 selective universities found that more than a quarter of the black students were immigrants.<sup>22</sup>

Then too, we can’t forget the influence of private schools on black college success. A study by the leftist Brookings Institution found that “using a voucher to attend private school increased the overall college enrollment rate among African Americans by 24 percent.”<sup>23</sup> And this was no average study; it was the gold standard. The students chosen to receive the vouchers were chosen at random from a pool of candidates, and they were compared against the students who wanted a voucher but didn’t get one — as close to statistically identical groups as possible. Nearly 12 percent of all ACT test takers in 2012 came from private schools and blacks make up six percent of private-school enrollment.<sup>24</sup>

Though a couple of progressive notions about education have shown signs of success — i.e., smaller class sizes in elementary school — most have been dismal failures. Not one of 114 tests administered to first graders showed a statistically significant positive effect of child enrollment in Head Start.<sup>25</sup> All told, 35 percent of U.S. adults either cannot read or read below a fifth-grade level.<sup>26</sup> College affirmative action programs have led to high college dropout rates for blacks in many colleges<sup>27</sup> (see “[Affirmative Action Assumptions](#)”). Homeschooled kids and private-school kids do better than public-school kids on SATs,<sup>24, 28, 29</sup> meaning the argument that more public-school spending is the solution to education problems is nonsense, as both groups generally spend far less on education than public schools. (Also, Detroit’s public schools — the land of “progressive” policies for over 50 years — have some of the highest paid teachers and worst-performing students, along with those in Washington, D.C.)<sup>30, 31, 32, 33</sup> And so on.

Again, the likelihood that these “progressive” plans would fail to fix schools should have been self-evident by looking at history: Prior to the 1950s and ’60s — prior to government “help” for blacks and desegregation in schools — while it was true that some black, segregated schools produced poor results, other black schools, facing many deficiencies such as a lack of funds and using hand-me-down books from white schools, often produced student bodies with high average IQs and graduated scholars of note, such as the first black Supreme Court justice, Thurgood Marshall; the first black general, Benjamin O. Davis, Sr.; the discoverer of blood plasma, Charles R. Drew; etc.<sup>34</sup> And these schools had common traits: They were generally highly disciplined and academically demanding, had the support of parents (as opposed to the interference of parents), grouped kids by ability, did not spend much time or



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energy on “blackness” or black culture, and often had white teachers and large class sizes and were private religious schools. Neither the race of the students or teachers nor the amount of educational spending or black/white integration were key factors in student success.<sup>34</sup>

Black economics professor Thomas Sowell, who has studied school statistics and written several books on education, noted, “In short, no stringent ‘elitism’ is necessary to achieve high-quality education. It is only necessary to ... exclude the tiny fraction [of students] who are troublemakers.”<sup>34</sup> (For more info on the state of black schools and students before affirmative action, read Sowell’s book entitled *Education: Assumptions Versus History*.)

As Professor Walter Williams once noted, if racial oppression and a legacy of slavery are truly to blame for the problems of blacks in schools — as progressives claim routinely — the consequences obviously skipped a couple of generations.

Though liberal plans to “fix” schools repeatedly fail before being set aside for a while and then recycled under a new name, commendable conservative recommendations to fix the schools — vouchers for private schools,<sup>23</sup> increased school discipline,<sup>35</sup> strengthening families and marriage, etc. — have been ridiculed by liberals.

### **In the Workplace**

Outside the realm of school, blacks also fare poorly when compared with other racial groups. As was mentioned earlier, black unemployment and income statistics show a negative disparity toward blacks: Both black adults and black teens have higher unemployment rates than whites and Asians, and lower family incomes. This is true even though, here too, liberal policies said to aid the potential of blacks as regards unemployment rates and wages have been in place for many years: prevailing wage rates, the minimum wage, union bargaining power, occupational and business licensing laws, and affirmative action laws to comply with federal and state contracting requirements.

The policies have not worked to open up job opportunities and end black poverty. Almost unbelievably, in the name of fighting racism and racial inequality, the policies resulted in fewer black workers, fewer blacks in the skilled trades, fewer black business owners, and more poverty for blacks. That’s quite a track record, one documented by economist Walter Williams in his short but excellent book *Race and Economics: How Much Can Be Blamed on Discrimination?*<sup>36</sup>

Professor Williams can hardly be accused of being a racist defending the status quo: He is a black man who grew up in the Philadelphia housing projects without a father; while in the U.S. Army fought institutionalized discrimination to the point of being court martialed; was an admirer of Malcolm X; and was a believer in minimum-wage laws. Then he did research.

He discovered not only that “progressive” policies weren’t beneficial to blacks, but that at the time they were initially instituted, it was almost universally understood that the laws were meant to keep blacks down, protecting white jobs from black workers.<sup>36</sup>

The first federal law to mandate that a prevailing wage be paid was the Davis-Bacon Act of 1931. Prevailing wage laws require that the prevailing local wage — usually the union wage in the area — be paid to laborers working on government building contracts so that itinerant workers can’t work for less money than local workers. The Davis-Bacon Act was passed because out-of-state contractors were low-bidding building contracts in New York through the use of black laborers from the South — the same





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reason the first of these type laws was passed at the state level in Kansas in 1891.<sup>36</sup>

Many representatives were very open about the reason for the new law. Representative Clayton Allgood said, "Reference has been made to a contractor from Alabama who went to New York with bootleg labor. This is a fact. That contractor has cheap colored labor that he transports ... and it is labor of that sort that is in competition with white labor throughout the country."<sup>36</sup>

The movement to pass laws against black labor was moved ahead through the efforts of a labor union, the American Federation of Labor, as Williams pointed out:

William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, made clear the unions' interests:

"[C]olored labor is being sought to demoralize wage rates [in Tennessee]."<sup>36</sup>

At the same time "blacks were excluded from most major construction unions."<sup>36</sup> And the prevailing wage laws did what their backers wanted them to do: They kept blacks from getting jobs and skills to advance in the job market. In practice,

*the act's wage and work jurisdiction requirements make it costly for non-union shops to hire and train unskilled workers, because they had to pay workers wages and benefits that exceed worker productivity.* Initially, the act's regulations did not make a distinction between unskilled and skilled workers unless the former were members of a union apprenticeship program. As a result, contractors were forced to pay a worker who was not a member of such a program the same wage as a skilled worker. [Emphasis added.]<sup>36</sup>

Still today, this ensures, said Williams, quoting Ralph C. Thomas, the executive director of the National Association of Minority Contractors, "that a contractor has 'no choice but to hire skilled tradesmen, the majority of which are majority [white].... Davis-Bacon ... closes the door in such an activity in an industry most capable of employing the largest numbers of minorities.'"<sup>36</sup>

The repercussions of such laws are real and tragic, as, again, pointed out by Williams. The director of one

Chicago-based social service organization ... found that Davis-Bacon adds as much as 25 percent to her housing renovation costs. It frequently prevents her from hiring the low-income, low-skills residents to do rehabilitation work in the housing project in which they live.

Elsie Higginbottom [who] builds low-income housing in Chicago ... says, "I've got to start out a guy at \$16 an hour to find out if he knows how to dig a hole. I can't do that." As a result he is prevented from hiring unskilled local blacks.

Ralph L. Jones ... manages housing projects for HUD. [In 1990,] when Jones decided to repair 200 dilapidated units, he planned to employ unskilled residents, at \$5 an hour, to pull out unsalvageable parts of the building and later to assist skilled craftsmen in restoring the property. However the Davis-Bacon Act required that he pay laborers \$14 an hour. He was forced to hire only skilled laborers, very few of whom were blacks or residents of the project.<sup>36</sup>

Davis-Bacon also has hefty government paperwork requirements, which give advantages to large union shops that can afford lawyers over small non-union shops that can't, penalizing black small businesses.

Not surprisingly, the minimum wage has the same type of effect on blacks' employment opportunities.



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Though state and federal governments can mandate a minimum wage, they cannot use a magic wand to imbue workers with the “productivity that make the worker’s output worth the higher wage,”<sup>36</sup> so unless an employer is willing to lose money while he trains a new prospective worker, he will find ways around the law. He may refuse to hire unskilled workers — such as poor blacks — who are not worth the minimum wage; he may find a way to mechanize a position or make present workers accomplish more tasks or simply lay off workers or close a company. The law *does* put more money in the pockets of *some workers*, helping them, but it also surely means that a large cohort of workers cannot find jobs at all, to their very great detriment.

To conceptualize the damage that such laws do to the unskilled, imagine a proposal wherein the minimum wage jumped to \$100 an hour. Yes, some businesses will be able to raise the prices on their goods and services in order to compensate for the additional labor costs and will continue with business as usual, but many will not be able to sell enough goods at the new higher labor prices and will modify their business practices accordingly. If fast-food places paid their employees such a wage, it is likely that the costs of their food would go so high that no one would eat out anymore. Also, because companies try to pass along these minimum-wage increases to their customers by raising their prices, minimum-wage workers would have to pay more for the products they buy, thus minimizing any benefit.

When smaller increases in the minimum wage are made, all of the same factors apply, only to a lesser extent.

Critics of such a conclusion — who claim that raising the minimum wage does not negatively affect unemployment levels and hurt the unskilled poor — often use as their proof a study by Princeton professors David Card and Alan B. Krueger examining the effect of New Jersey’s 1992 minimum-wage increase, from \$4.25 to \$5.05 per hour. (Interestingly, a liberal group advocating for a higher minimum wage recently sent me a brochure using this study as proof that they are right.) The professors phoned New Jersey businesses and asked about the businesses’ hiring intentions once the new minimum wage went into effect. The businesses reportedly told interviewers that the minimum wage wouldn’t affect their hiring, thus supposedly proving that increasing the minimum wage didn’t affect job creation and availability.<sup>36</sup>

But later studies completely discredited Card and Krueger. A study by professors David Neumark and William Wascher obtained payroll data from the businesses Card and Krueger had surveyed and subsequently learned that unemployment did rise with the increase in minimum wage, just as predicted by general economic theory. Williams added: Not only were similar effects of unemployment documented by numerous economic studies and the government’s “General Accounting Office, Congressional Budget Office, and the Council of Economic Advisors,”<sup>36</sup>

a presidential commission reported in 1980 that teenage employment fell 1 to 3 percent for every 10 percent hike in minimum wage.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, the Employment Policies Institute reported on a study by Florida State economist David A. Macpherson that showed that few poor families benefit from a minimum-wage increase anyway; most of the increase goes to young people from families well above the poverty level.<sup>37</sup>

Poor minorities suffer most from the minimum wage, as they tend to be most lacking in skills. “Black youth unemployment, nationally for more than a half century, has ranged from two to three times the corresponding rate for whites,” pointed out Williams. “Historically, in some metropolitan areas, black



youth unemployment has been higher than 60 percent!”<sup>36</sup> And the problem is getting progressively worse. Youth employment altogether has plummeted, with poor, unskilled blacks faring the worst. This point was made in an article earlier this year entitled “Teen employment hits record lows, suggesting lost generation,” about unemployment findings by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University:

In 2000, 61.28 percent of white teens 16 to 19 held a job, a number that fell to 39.25 percent this summer. For African Americans, a number that was dismal in 2000, 33.91 percent of 16 to 19 year olds holding a job, fell to a staggering low of 19.25 percent this June and July.<sup>38</sup>

And as Macpherson claimed, it was the well-to-do who got jobs: “Some 46 percent of white male teens whose parents earned between \$100,000 and \$149,000 held a job this summer, compared with just 9.1 percent of black male teens whose family income was below \$20,000.”<sup>37</sup>

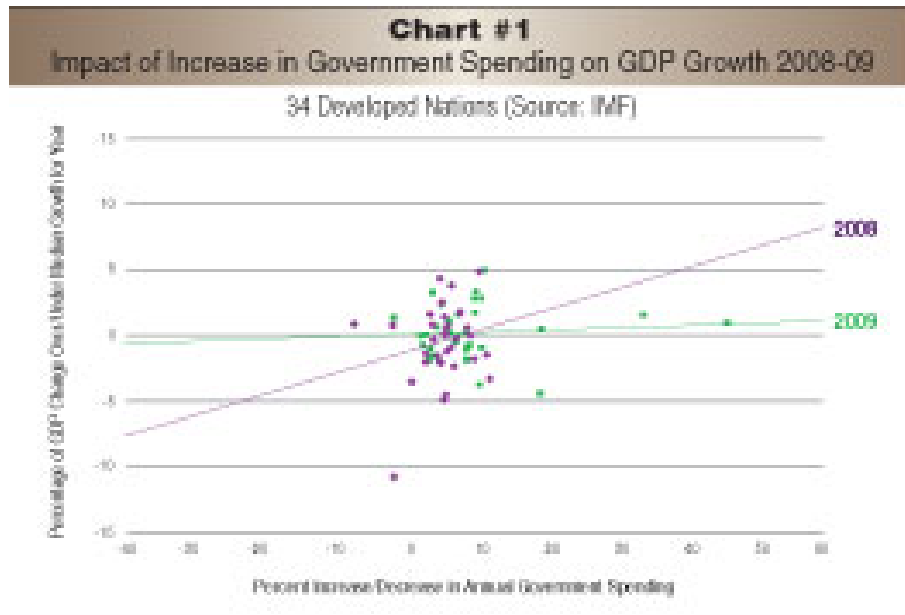
Notably, as Williams demonstrates, prior to the implementation of “progressive” policies and during times of far more blatant racial discrimination in this country, “black unemployment was *lower* and blacks were *more active* in the labor market than they are today. In 1910, for example, 71 percent of blacks over nine years of age were employed, compared to 51 percent for whites. Earlier periods display the same pattern.”<sup>39</sup> (And as late as 1960, “black male labor force participation in every age group was equal to or greater than that of whites.”) Unemployment for blacks at that time also lasted for a shorter duration than for whites. Moreover, “the black wage rate for agricultural employment was nearly identical to that of whites.” After 1930 and the beginnings of laws to control labor, wages, and employment contracts, however, “the nonwhite employment-population ratio fell significantly.”<sup>39</sup>

And just as minimum-wage and prevailing-wage laws penalize unskilled workers and minorities — in order to benefit others who manage to retain jobs — pro-union legislation and occupational licensing do the same. As the power of unions in the skilled trades grew, black opportunities declined. Prior to expanded union power, in the South, blacks made up a significant portion of the skilled trades, as explained by Isaac Weld in the 18th century: “Among their slaves are found tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, smiths, turners, wheelwrights, weavers, tanners, etc.” It was a commonly held perception that blacks predominated in both skilled and unskilled labor in the South.<sup>36</sup>





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But unions helped put an end to that by not admitting blacks: “The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters unions long excluded blacks from membership by tacit agreement among their members. As of 1920, the Electrical Workers Union 142,000 members included no blacks.”<sup>36</sup> Other unions did the same. Even as late as 2004, the *Chicago Tribune* pointed out indications of anti-black racism in Chicago’s construction unions:

Despite government efforts and court orders to diversify unions dating back to the 1960s, blacks have made only halting progress in Chicago’s trade unions and in some cases have lost ground.

In one of Chicago’s largest trade unions — the electricians — the percentage of black apprentices has plunged from 20 percent between 1996 and 1999 to 10 percent between 2000 and the present. [Blacks are one-third of Chicago’s populace.]

The only union in which African-Americans made significant gains is in the laborer’s union, which is the least skilled and pays less than most other trades.<sup>38</sup>

But even as blacks were pushed out of jobs and marginalized through these “progressive” laws, “progressive” legislation was there to get blacks back on their feet — or was it?

## Welfare

In the area of government welfare, again, it cannot be realistically claimed that progressive policies have not been tried to aid black families, to lift blacks from poverty. The government provides food assistance, low-income loans, housing, healthcare, phones, day care, and job training — and it has been in the poverty business in a big way since 1964 and in a smaller way since the 1930s.

The results of such government intervention depend on how one views “success.” Liberals usually determine the relative success of welfare programs by how many “needy people” receive benefits. Taken as whole, progressives usually consider welfare to be a great success, though not nearly as successful as it could be because conservatives are too stingy, uncaring, and heartless. Liberal blogger Terrance Heath recently commented on the 1996 welfare reform law named the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, which was meant to allow states to reform their welfare laws and coerce so-called welfare queens into getting jobs (using this law, between 1996 and 2000, Idaho reduced its welfare caseload by 94 percent). He said about this “conservative” success story, “The



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‘success’ [of welfare reform] was getting people off welfare rolls, not necessarily improving their condition. It was about reducing the number of people receiving government assistance, not reducing need for assistance.”<sup>40</sup>

Such a typical liberal line, of course, creates a paradox: Either conservatives as a group, most of whom are undoubtedly professing Christians, are heartless and cruel because they don’t support unlimited government giveaways that are obvious, visible “good,” or conservative assertions are true about liberals being willfully ignorant both about the harmful repercussions of the programs they support and about the other more-efficacious ways that the poor could be helped. (See article “[Real Solutions for Black Americans](#)”)

Which seems more likely?

As with minimum-wage requirements, welfare definitely helps some people; the question, therefore, becomes, “Does welfare do more harm than good?” If it does more harm than good, its existence should not be justified by anyone who cares about the poor.

If the main goal of welfare is to reduce poverty, as President Lyndon Johnson proclaimed in his January 8, 1964 “War on Poverty” State of the Union address<sup>41</sup> that prompted welfare as we know it today, one would have to conclude that welfare has failed.

Johnson said in setting the goal of the welfare state,

Our joint Federal-local effort must pursue poverty, pursue it wherever it exists — in city slums and small towns, in sharecropper shacks or in migrant worker camps, on Indian Reservations, among whites as well as Negroes, among the young as well as the aged, in the boom towns and in the depressed areas. Our aim is not only to relieve the symptom of poverty, but to cure it and, above all, to prevent it.<sup>41</sup>

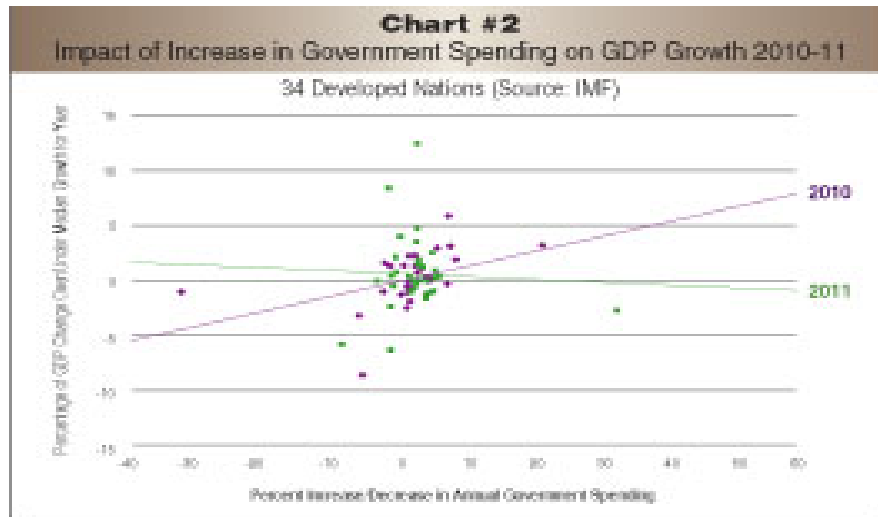
How short have we fallen from the initial stated goal of ending poverty through welfare? Prior to the start of the War on Poverty, black poverty was decreasing steadily, despite the job handicaps placed in the way of blacks by biased white unions, anti-black minimum-wage and prevailing-wage schemes, and occupational licensing laws.

The black poverty rate was cut dramatically between 1940 (then between 71 and 87 percent in poverty, depending on which statistics are used) and 1966 (41 percent).<sup>42, 43</sup>

Once the War on Poverty began, however, progress stalled, though by the year 2012, welfare spending at the local, state, and federal levels totaled nearly \$1 trillion per year.<sup>44</sup> As the Cato Institute reported last year: “Combined with state and local spending, government spends \$20,610 for every poor person in America, or \$61,830 per poor family of three. Given that the poverty line for that family is just \$18,530, we should have theoretically wiped out poverty in America many times over.” Cato also reported: “More than 46 million Americans continue to live in poverty. Despite nearly \$15 trillion in total welfare spending since Lyndon Johnson declared war on poverty in 1964, the poverty rate is perilously close to where we began more than 40 years ago.”<sup>45</sup> (See chart #1) Of course, it’s a general truism that whatever government subsidizes — in this case single motherhood — it gets more of.



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From the outset of Johnson’s “War,” welfare spending contributed to overall black poverty by encouraging single-parent, female-headed households, which are not only the most reliable predictor of poverty in the United States but which lead to violence against and by children, cause anti-social behavior in kids, and lead to declining school scholastics, etc.<sup>46, 47</sup> Sound familiar?

Welfare programs had an insidious effect on black culture — more so than white culture — because of the way they were designed. With dramatically more blacks than whites being in poverty and with less future prospects when the War on Poverty got started, young black women often had children out of wedlock, beginning a cycle of enduring poverty and welfare wherein they relied on welfare as a main source of income, as did their children. Welfare provided more money for young women with *fatherless children*, on average, than the same young women could have made if they were employed. If a woman became married, she would lose benefits, making it beneficial for her to either just hook up with men or cohabitate, rather than marry.<sup>48, 49, 50</sup> The consequences of the law influenced U.S. culture, and not for the better.

Higher black poverty rates than white poverty rates would account for the fact that the percentage of births to unmarried black teens far outstripped the percentage of births to unmarried white teens — though the white rate began climbing when the War on Poverty began as well.<sup>51</sup> (See chart #2) Also, white girls who put off having a child would eventually make far more money than would black girls who put off having a child: “The gain from not giving birth as a teen is far greater for whites (\$47,732) than for African Americans (\$15,575).”<sup>49</sup>

In the 1950s, approximately 20 percent of black children lived in mother-headed families. In 1965, the rate was about 22 percent. By the early ’90s, more than 50 percent did.<sup>49, 52</sup> In 2012, the rate was 51 percent.<sup>53</sup> Another 15 percent of black children live only with their father or with neither parent (often with a grandparent). And 73 percent of black babies are now born to unwed mothers.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, between 1965 and 1973, the percentage of black families on welfare increased from 10 to over 30 percent.<sup>49</sup> In 2009, the rate was 37.6 percent.<sup>55</sup>

A lack of spending on poverty cannot be credibly used to explain the persistence of poverty and problems in the black culture, but welfare can be — to a large extent. More accurately, a perfect storm of “progressive” initiatives came together in the mid-1960s: Blacks for years had been largely relegated



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to menial, unskilled labor because of union and political efforts to enact rules and regulations meant to have just such an effect, and then, at a time when young adults were being encouraged by liberal hippies to shed traditional sexual mores and embrace free sex and feminism — telling women that they didn't need males (and saying worse about men) — welfare provided an incentive for young black women to raise fatherless children and collect welfare, leading to the epidemic problems with black crime, black schooling, black unemployment, and black poverty.

Nowadays, though true to a lesser extent than in the past because of reduced welfare benefits, in many states welfare recipients can still make more by milking the welfare system and not working than by working for a living, as was illustrated by the Cato Institute: "In 33 states and the District of Columbia, welfare pays more than an \$8-an-hour job. In 12 states, including California, as well as the District of Columbia, the welfare package is more generous than a \$15-an-hour job."<sup>56, 57</sup> The system also disincentivizes working one's way up if one does have a low-paying job. The American Enterprise Institute showed that a single mom is better off earning a gross income of \$29,000 — because with benefits she would take in \$57,327 in net income — than to earn a gross income of \$69,000, because she would end up with net income and benefits of \$57,045.<sup>56, 58, 59</sup>

Against these failures, what has welfare accomplished? According to the leftist *Washington Post*, unofficial government estimates show that government "welfare" programs, including Medicaid, food stamps, the Earned Income Tax Credit, etc., lower the number of people in poverty by less than three percent.<sup>44</sup> Considering the relatively small gain from welfare and the horrific social and economic costs, it's safe to say that welfare has done more harm than good.

Brewed into the toxic mixture of '60s ideology and government action that spawned welfare was the racially divisive and sometimes hate-filled rhetoric of such people as Jesse Jackson,<sup>60, 61, 62</sup> Al Sharpton,<sup>63</sup> Louis Farrakhan,<sup>64</sup> and Malcolm X,<sup>65</sup> as well as a long list of black and white politicians, prompting blacks to lash out at "racist whites" — whites as a group — blaming them for all blacks' problems. And the revolving door of black poverty, illegitimacy, and crime has kept turning ever since — with no end in sight.

Ironically, most blacks have now been convinced by their so-called leaders — really just blacks whom liberal mainstream media constantly turn to for soundbites to back "progressive" initiatives — to support the very causes designed to keep blacks poor.

Despite what most blacks have been led to believe, liberal propositions almost uniformly single out blacks for harsh consequences. For instance, it is now generally acknowledged that government mandates that required banks to give home loans to unqualified borrowers led to the horrific housing bubble that burst, forcing people out of their homes. Of people who took out loans in recent years, nearly 8 percent of blacks and Hispanics were foreclosed upon, as compared to about 4.5 percent of whites.<sup>66</sup> And when the bubble burst, black wealth quickly evaporated, meaning blacks had to rely on unsecured debt with high interest rates, versus secured debt.<sup>67</sup> Though some liberals, such as the ACLU, still deny the government's primary role in the bursting bubble, even Henry Cisneros, the secretary of housing and urban development under Bill Clinton, admitted to the *New York Times* his and the government's role in causing the calamity.<sup>68</sup>

Maybe even worse in terms of painful consequences for blacks are liberals' gun control laws that



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restrict the ability of law-abiding citizens to obtain and use guns to protect themselves. Since blacks are more likely than other races to be victims of violent crimes, they stand to benefit the most from being able to protect themselves. Democratic strongholds with strict gun control laws become killing fields.

Detroit, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. are among the places in the country with the stiffest gun control laws — and the worst violence. Chicago, the place Obama has been calling home since before he became a senator, makes national and even world news because of its homicide rate — at 359 murders this year, as of the end of October. Liberals insist that gun control laws will make citizens more safe, though major studies done by the Centers for Disease Control<sup>69</sup> and the National Academies of Science<sup>70</sup> — both pro-gun control entities — failed to find one gun control law that reduced murder. On the contrary, other major studies show very definitively that guns reduce crime,<sup>71</sup> as do facts on the ground. Contrary to the liberal meme, when Florida became the first state to allow concealed carry of firearms, its murder rate dropped,<sup>72</sup> not rose, as have the murder rates in other states that passed concealed carry legislation.

As well, gun researcher Don Kates pointed out:

The general pattern since WWII is that, decade-by-decade, the number of guns owned by civilians has risen steadily and dramatically — but murder rates nevertheless remained stable or even declined.... As for the latter part of the 20th Century, a study comparing the number of guns to murder rates found that over the 25 year period 1973-97 the number of handguns owned by Americans had increased by 163%, and the number of all firearms by 103%. Yet over that period the murder rate declined by 27.7%.<sup>73</sup>

And if one looks to areas of the United States that have the most lenient gun control laws, we find the least gun violence — comparable to the European countries that liberals always want to compare to America.<sup>74, 75</sup> In fact, if murders by blacks in the United States — predominantly in cities with strict gun control — were eliminated from U.S. crime statistics, U.S. murder rates would rival some countries with strict gun control in Europe.<sup>75</sup>

The drawbacks of liberal policies for blacks go on and on, seemingly without end, from tax policy to energy policy to social policy. Yet every time a liberal policy fails to fix growing societal problems that typically affect blacks, such as poverty, liberals always propagate more of the same solutions that exacerbated the problems in the first place. The correlation is so certain that it would be safe to say, “If one wanted to destroy black Americans economically, socially, and even physically, one could do no better than to think and act ‘progressively.’”

*Author's note: Since the time that this article was first put online, a couple of the hyperlinks have become inactive, causing the links to be erased, so I entered a works cited list to enable readers to find source documents.*

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