



Response to Welfare

Keegan Robbins

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I was disappointed, but not surprised, to see a litany of falsehoods, judgment, and outright scorn for the poor in a recent letter to the editor. I would like to counter those falsehoods with some facts.

First, the perception that most welfare recipients are just lazy is a myth that has been repeatedly disproved. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Proposals, “two-thirds of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs) participants are children, elderly, and people with disabilities, who are not expected to work,” (March 2018). These are vital benefits for the most vulnerable members of our society. The author tries to mask his judgmental view of able-bodied welfare recipients by proposing vocational training and suggesting that, “once educated” people on welfare could positively contribute to society. This, of course, implies that the only people who need financial assistance are uneducated and lack initiative, not people who have suffered from external circumstances.

Second, it is important to clarify what you’re counting when you say “welfare,” which the author failed to do. Much of what is counted under federal welfare spending includes Medicaid and children’s healthcare. Another significant portion is comprised of tax rebates, tuition aid, school lunches, and housing assistance. You will note that these programs have nothing to do with throwing free money at lazy, poor people.

Finally, the claim that illegal immigrants are stealing money that should be going to red-blooded (read: white) Americans. Per the conservative Cato Institute, “immigrants use 39 percent fewer welfare and entitlements benefits per person than native-born Americans.” Furthermore, “Legal immigrants cannot get welfare for their first five years of residency... Illegal immigrants are not eligible for welfare except for rare circumstances like emergency Medicaid,” (May 2018). Meanwhile, the author has the nerve to say that US citizens on welfare should lose their right (yes, right) to vote for having the audacity to need financial assistance.

What is the point of an organized society if not to enhance the well-being of all its members? That concept is at the foundation of the social contract, and of democratic societies. If you disagree with the fundamental concept that a government should support all its citizens, just admit it. If you think a person’s worth is tied to how hard they work, just admit it. If you think only an elite few should have a say in our country’s government, just admit it. But don’t mask your biases behind false claims. Own them, and stop pretending otherwise.