

Rank, Mark Robert; *One Nation, Underprivileged: Why American Poverty Affects Us All*; Oxford University Press; 2004.

The author writes that poverty impacts a majority of Americans at some point in their lives. He further believes that the country's economic system and our social structures contribute to the extent of poverty. He argues that we should not just look at poverty as an individual problem but rather that it is a result of our entire social system. Poverty creates further issues for our country such as higher rates of illness and thus higher rates to run a health care system. Further, individuals in poverty often do not have an adequate diet which can compromise their health. The author discussed how we measure poverty in this country and that we really need to look at the hardship that is created when someone is in poverty. One thing that is frequently overlooked is the stress for the individual/family when confronted by poverty. He also talked about the high numbers of children in poverty.

The author reviewed studies about poverty and found that people in this country tend to move in and out of poverty. Poverty is influenced by the ability of persons to find employment as well as family structures. The author believes that if one looks at our society we can find that there just are never enough good paying jobs for all working aged people to be employed. Thus, our current system generates a group of persons who will be in poverty. Further, there are always those persons who would fall into poverty if they miss just one paycheck. What then can be done to eliminate poverty? One thing that could be helpful is if everyone had equal access to a quality education. Too often one's social class can contribute to the ability to succeed.

The author also looked at race and believes that race does matter. Studies show that a person's race, gender, and level of education influence their ability to be in poverty. Of the three, race is the most significant variable.

We can work to make changes and understand that we are all part of a larger community and that by helping everyone get out of poverty contributes to an overall better society. We can look at statistics and see how health costs and even costs associated with criminal activity would be reduced if there was more done to prevent episodes of poverty. The United States is a wealthy country yet too many people are gripped in poverty and the author believes that this is not really an example of a country that believes in justice for all. He believes that every citizen should be concerned about poverty and actively do something to help resolve the problem. Individuals can advocate improving livable wages; finding more jobs; improving our educational system so that everyone has access to quality education; supporting measures so that there is more affordable housing; and support affordable and high quality child care. The author reported that several surveys conducted in this country have shown that a large percentage of persons are willing to pay higher taxes if they were assured that this money would be used to reduce poverty.