

# Children of All Classes Hit By Bad Economy

“I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.” This passage from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s acceptance speech for the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize is part of the Inscription Wall of the new memorial honoring Dr. King on the National Mall. But as we honor Dr. King’s legacy in our nation’s capital, the audacious belief that every family should be able to afford simple necessities like enough to eat is at risk in Washington, D.C. and across the country. The poor are getting poorer.

The Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio, through the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, just released the Ohio’s KIDS COUNT: 2010 Data Book, an annual report that provides snapshots of the well-being of Ohio’s children. With unemployment in Ohio reaching 10.6 percent last year, we found thousands of Ohio children and their families pushed to the front lines of economic suffering. The overall poverty rate for Ohio’s children was 21.6 percent in 2009, jumping 16.8 percent in a single year and increasing



## CHILD WATCH

Marian Wright Edelman

45.9 percent since 2001. The number of Ohio counties with at least 25 percent of children living in poverty more than doubled from 15 in 2008 to 31 in 2009.

Rural child poverty was the most common in Ohio followed by urban child poverty. But in these tough times, children in suburbs and communities that haven’t experienced significant rates of child poverty in the past are struggling too, and help and solutions are urgently needed from Ohio’s state and congressional leaders.

Ohio is far from alone. The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 22nd annual national KIDS COUNT Data Book shows a significant decline in economic well-being for low income children and families across the country over the last ten years. The official child poverty rate, which they note is actually “a conservative measure of economic hardship,”

increased 18 percent between 2000 and 2009. And they say, “Although the recession is technically over, it is clear that a large portion of America’s families continue to confront daunting challenges . . . Unemployment remains high, median household income is down, and many families have depleted their savings and other assets. As they struggle to recover, families face the reality that intergenerational economic mobility in the United States has not changed much over the past 40

years. If anything, it has declined.” This is not what Dr. King urged. Throughout his life he spoke out against injustice in all of its forms and believed economic injustice was one of our nation’s and world’s greatest sins. He also believed we could and must work urgently to right that wrong. “Somehow the preacher

must have a kind of fire shut up in his bones, and whenever injustice is around he must tell it . . . Somehow the preacher must say with Jesus, ‘The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me, and he has anointed me to deal with the problems of the poor.’ . . . It’s all right to talk about long white robes over yonder, in all of its symbolism, but ultimately people want some suits and dresses and shoes to wear down here. It’s all right to talk about streets flowing with milk to do.”

Dr. King delivered those words in Memphis on April 3, 1968—the night before he was assassinated. In the months leading up to his death, he was mounting a Poor People’s Campaign urging America to hear and see and “deal with the problems of the poor.” Dr. King’s vision of a new America has not yet come to pass, indeed is vanishing for the 43.6 million poor Americans including 15.5 million poor children, but he believed that as a people we would get there.

But that depends on our leaders and the demands citizens place on them. Addressing increasing child poverty and parental joblessness is the very first step the Administration and Congress must take as they return to Washington and get back to business. And it must be the top priority of governors in every state—too many of whom are eager to give tax cuts to the non-needy and impose budget cuts on the neediest including our children.

*Marian Wright Edelman is a lifelong advocate for disadvantaged Americans and is the President of the Children’s Defense Fund.*

Children in suburbs and communities that haven’t experienced significant rates of child poverty in the past are struggling too

and honey, but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here and his children who can’t eat three square meals a day. It’s all right to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day God’s preacher must talk about the new New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, Tennessee. This is what we have

# Hurricane Can’t Stop MLK

Hurricane Irene hit the East Coast with a vengeance, causing inconvenience, interruption, and postponements. Perhaps the most notable postponement was that of the Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration, which was to take place on Aug. 28, 48 years after Dr. King gave his historic “I Have A Dream” speech. Thus, activities that were to span the week were, instead, concluded with an interfaith prayer service that drew more than a thousand people.

If one adheres to the scripture (Romans 8:28) that “all things work together for good,” it is possible to ruminate about any greater meaning in the postponement of the King celebration. It is interesting that one definition of postpone is, “to put off some-



## BENNETT COLLEGE

Julianne Malveaux

television because they had no means to travel to Washington. Maybe they’d watch on television. With a rise in the number of people who are homeless, there might be no television to watch. While Dr. King chose to identify with the poor, the homeless, the unemployed, many of the African Americans involved in public policy have chosen to ignore them.

Former Congressman and Ambassador Andrew Young spoke at the Interfaith Service and invoked Dr. King’s line that “out of a mountain of despair, a stone of hope.” Indeed, the memorial is being described as “a stone of hope.” “You and I must become stones of hope in this world of despair,” said Ambassador Young. In the face of an economic downturn and the marginalization of the poor, stones of hope would organize, mobilize, and lobby for laws that promote economic fairness. Instead, we have meekly accepted the extension of Bush tax cuts, meekly accepted rising poverty and high unemployment. I am perplexed that those who are affected by this

I am perplexed that those who are affected by this economy, and those who claim to advocate for them, have not been more effective in protest

economy, and those who claim to advocate for them, have not been more effective in protest. Our failures may have the most impact on the next generation, as increased child poverty has a negative impact on a young person’s later life chances. If we claim to be stones of hope for the next generation, then it is incumbent on us to make greater investments in children and their parents.

thing until a later time, to defer”. Similarly, the definition of interruption is “to stop or hinder by breaking in”. Hurricane Irene just busted in to stop, to hinder, to defer. And while the beloved Rev. Joseph Lowery said, “With all the things Black folk have been through, no little hurricane can come to stop us,” the fact is that Irene did exactly that, if only in the short run.

To postpone is to defer. Isn’t that exactly what has happened to Dr. King’s dream? In so many ways it has been deferred, especially for the poorest of Americans, those who would have watched the celebration on

Read the rest of this story online at [www.theskanner.com](http://www.theskanner.com)



MOBILE



is also available on mobile phones at [theskannermobile.com](http://theskannermobile.com)

ENTERTAINMENT  
MUSIC REVIEWS  
BULLETIN BOARD  
RSS FEEDS



theskannermobile.com

LOCAL NEWS  
NATIONAL NEWS  
KIDS





