



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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Job Growth? Some Just Want a Job

The January jobs report from the U.S. Department of Labor was good news for the 243,000 people who found jobs. And good news for the American economy as the unemployment rate fell to 8.3 percent, the lowest level in nearly three years. This is the 16th straight month of jobs growth, but the recovery can't come soon enough for the millions of long-term unemployed like Tiffany Hanebuth from Middletown, Ohio. She says, "I just want a job, any kind of job."

As with other families barely afloat on minimum wage jobs, the Hanebuths never had steady smooth sailing, but they were self-supporting until two years ago when Tiffany was laid off as a carhop at a Sonic drive-in and could not find another job. "I remember before, you could just go anywhere and get an application and get hired that day. It's not like that now," she said.

Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Julia Cass recently met Tiffany Hanebuth on assignment for the Children's Defense Fund, and Cass says by anybody's definition Tiffany is a survivor and a worker. Tiffany was raised by her father who she said was a biker and bar owner. "He started bringing friends home and it was too much for me," Tiffany said. By the time she was 12 she left home to stay with friends and eventually found a job, got her own apartment, and finished high school. Tiffany didn't meet her mother until she was 17. "My father told me she didn't want to take care of me because she was a drug addict," Tiffany said. "I wanted to find her and I did. She was a drug addict."

Despite the fact that her own childhood was so chaotic and cut



CHILD WATCH
Marian Wright Edelman

short, Tiffany wants to provide a better life for her own children, Aaron, 10, Ayden, 7, Daniel, 6, and Serenity, 5. Aaron said he

ment for almost a year but fell behind on her rent and the family was evicted. She lost \$150 when a landlord kept her deposit and didn't give her the apartment. "He said, 'Take me to court if you want to.' I think he knew I couldn't afford to do that." That's when the family lived for a while in a motel and a homeless shelter. The shelter staff helped her get public housing at a sprawling complex named Freedom Court where Tiffany pays \$180 a month rent. She also signed up for food stamps and in

are required to go to a job readiness site for a month to get training in resume writing and interview skills and use the computers and fax machines to apply for jobs. The big problem is that when there aren't many jobs, the system doesn't work as designed. So Tiffany was assigned to community service in exchange for receiving cash assistance (about \$650 a month for her and the children). Her assignment was at the local Salvation Army where she put donated clothing on racks and did whatever else she was asked to do. After several months, she was hired there and went off cash assistance. "But I only worked there a month and a half before they had to let the new people go," she said.

Tiffany got back on cash assistance after the three months passed. She now does 86 hours a month of community service at the food pantry of Family Services of Middletown and likes it there. The people are nice and she can sometimes take home extra produce. She usually takes the bus but at the end of the month she sometimes walks—a two-hour trip. The director gave her a bicycle, but it was stolen at the housing project. Recently she missed a day when Ayden was sick. "I'm a stress ball that I won't be able to make up the hours and be sanctioned again," she said.

Tiffany's children sometimes get backpacks of food at school on Fridays to take home for the weekend. But cuts in federal and school district funding have put this school year's backpack program in jeopardy.

Tiffany has always been the breadwinner for her children although their father, who doesn't live with them, helps out with child care and other occasional needs

wants to go to college, get a job at NASA, live with his mom, and pay the bills for her. Tiffany has

June 2010, for cash assistance from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Tiffany managed on unemployment for almost a year but fell behind on her rent and the family was evicted

always been the breadwinner for her children although their father, who doesn't live with them, helps out with child care and other occasional needs. She's worked at gas stations, fast food restaurants, grocery stores, a Bob Evans restaurant, and various factories through temporary agencies before she lost her job two years ago.

Tiffany managed on unemploy-

Anyone who thinks welfare recipients do nothing but sit around and cash their checks isn't familiar with the schedules of Tiffany and many others like her. The welfare reform of the late 1990s put the emphasis on moving recipients from welfare to work and set a lifetime limit on federally-assisted cash payments for many families. Initially recipients

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Gov. Christie Distorts Civil Rights History

"No minority should have their rights subject to the passions and sentiments of the majority. This is the fundamental bedrock of what our nation stands for."

—Newark Mayor, Cory Booker

In recent weeks, outrageous statements targeted at minority citizens have come out of the mouths of a number of conservative politicians — everything from the assertion that African Americans prefer food stamps over pay checks to the claim that "black people" are using "other people's money" to get ahead.

But last week, Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey may have topped them all when he declared, "People would have been happy to have a referendum on civil rights rather than fighting and dying in the streets in the South." The Governor's statement was made in the context of his proposal that the issue of same-sex marriage in New Jersey be settled by a voter referendum. But his words amounted to an insult to generations of men and women who put their lives on the line for equal rights. They also ignore the fact that the sole purpose of any civil rights struggle is to gain rights for minority citizens that the majority has historically

TO BE EQUAL

Marc Morial



and consistently denied.

The nonsense of Christie's statement was made all the more appar-

His words amounted to an insult to generations of men and women who put their lives on the line for equal rights

ent by the fact that during the heyday of lynchings, poll taxes and "separate but equal schools", any referendum on voting rights and civil rights for African Americans would have excluded many of the very people seeking those rights. In fact it was only because the majority for centuries had first enslaved and then discriminated against African Americans that it

became necessary for people of conscience to organize in protest against such treatment. Christie should remember that in the 18th century, it was not a referendum but a revolution that formed the United States of America. In the 19th century, it was not a referendum, but a civil war that ended slavery and unified our nation. And in the 20th century, it was not a referendum, but a series of non-violent civil rights struggles that

women's suffrage and civil rights were rightly decided legislatively. We are elected by the people of New Jersey to protect civil rights. We do not pass on such tough decisions." Oliver also took issue with Christie's characterization of the civil rights struggle, adding, "Governor, people were fighting and dying in the streets of the South because the majority refused to grant minorities equal rights by any method. It took legislative action to bring justice to all Americans, just as legislative action is the right way to bring marriage equality to all New Jerseyans."

It is almost unthinkable that a sitting governor would either be so uninformed, so callous to suggest that civil rights movements have not played a necessary and positive role in ensuring that the promise of freedom, equality and democracy is made real for every citizen. We think the Governor owes the people of New Jersey and all Americans a clear explanation.

Marc H. Morial is the president and CEO of the National Urban League.