

# Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

## National Youth Summit Leaders Say Poverty War Has Been Lost

Leaders call for renewed focus on income inequality, but differ on possible solutions and tactics

By *Dinkinish O'Connor*  
Special to the NNPA from  
The Miami Times

America has 99 problems, and poverty is one.

At the National Youth Summit's war on poverty discussion in April, experts rapped about poverty's causes and solutions in a numbers battle. At the discussion's center was President Lyndon Johnson 1964 declaration "to not only relieve the symptoms of poverty, but to cure it and, above all, to prevent it." Many of President Johnson's

programs including food stamps, job corps, Medicaid, Medicare and Head Start still exist today. 51 years later, the question is: Do we need a new war on poverty? The panelists at this summit said yes, but differed how to execute the war and what it would entail.

Carmack Waterhouse, professor of law and public policy at Georgetown University Law Center Peter Edelman said that President Johnson wasn't just interested in poverty but civil rights. He referenced how the anti-discrimination act of 1964 improved employment

opportunities for African Americans, citing that in the 1960s, Black poverty went down from 55 percent to 32 percent.

The summit, facilitated by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, allows American middle and high school students nationwide to be among audience members and participants in national conversations about indelible events in America's history that shape the present.

HistoryMiami, a Smithsonian Institution affiliate, hosted students in the Stephen P. Clark Miami-Dade County Commission Chamber, in addition to an online audience of 33 states, Yemen and Ireland.

### POVERTY BY THE NUMBERS

The Census Bureau defines poverty for a family of four as living with an annual income below \$23,050 and adjusted according to household size.

The youngest are the poorest in the county. Bloomberg News in 2014 reported that some Miami-Dade live on \$11 per day.

Almost one fifth of Mi-



Students who gathered at the National Youth Summit in April discussed the War on Poverty launched in the 1960s and agreed many, particularly African Americans, have fallen behind.

ami-Dade County's 2.7 million residents live in poverty. In Miami-Dade zip code 33127, almost 80 percent of the residents are deeply poor, according to City-Data.com. In October 2013, the Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources

steadily decreased with no matching fall in the poverty rate," the report said.

"One of the things we need to look at is how big the war on poverty has gotten," said Michael Tanner, senior fellow at the Cato Institute. "The

poverty rates are about the same level as they were in 1965."

Poverty and Prosperity Program vice president at the Center for American Progress Melissa Bo-teach countered: "One of the issues is that a lot of times when people talk

**“To go back to 1965 from \$22 trillion fighting poverty, the standard poverty rates are about the same level as they were in 1965**

es Planning Research Section reported that poverty in Miami-Dade hovered at around 20 percent and was not improving even as the Great Recession ended and unemployment fell.

"... since 2010 the unemployment rate has

fact is the federal government has 126 separate anti-poverty programs today. We spent about \$688 billion last year on those programs, about \$300 billion at the state level. To go back to 1965 from \$22 trillion fighting poverty, the standard

about poverty, they use a poverty rate that doesn't take into account the interventions that are made from the war on poverty. I'd say the war on poverty has been a success. If you look at the outcomes, a lot more people are a lot better off."

## Poverty Still Major Affliction for Blacks

By *Stacy M. Brown*  
Special to the NNPA  
from the Washington Informer

Black America is in a state of emergency, and what's happened in Baltimore, Ferguson, Missouri, and other places isn't solely about police misconduct, according to members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

The demonstrations and civil unrest are mostly about poverty, unemployment, a lack of opportunity, hopelessness and despair, the organization said. CBC Chair G.K. Butterfield said Democratic proposals to fix these problems stand in stark contrast to the Republican budget, which he considers a recipe for national decline.

Federal government statistics revealed that the median income of African American households stands at \$34,600, or nearly \$24,000 less than the median income of White households.

Also, the median net worth of white households is 13 times the level for Black households, and Blacks are almost three times more likely to live in poverty than White Americans.

Further, at 10.1 percent, the current unemployment rate for Black Americans is double the rate for White Americans, and blacks currently face an unemployment rate higher than the national unemployment rate during the peak of the recession.

"In my home state of North Carolina, the unemployment rate for African Americans is 9.9 percent while the unemployment rate of whites is 3.2 percent," Butterfield said.

Also, the poverty rate for African Americans currently stands at 27.5 percent, while its just 12.6 percent for Whites.

For District residents, the median household income for African Americans is \$38,300, while it stands at a whopping \$115,900 for Whites.

"Yes, that's right; that is a gap of \$77,600, and the poverty rate here in the nation's capital is 27.4 percent for African Americans compared to 7.6 percent for Whites," Butterfield said.

And while, on the surface, there's a smaller gender pay gaps within the Black community, it's really not all that rosy, based on an analysis this month by The Philadelphia Tribune.

"The problem is that a smaller Black gender wage gap is an advanced indicator of much more serious economic and financial hemorrhaging within the larger Black community. Baltimore just snapped the entire nation back into that conversation," the newspaper wrote.

African American females, when compared with other populations, are almost level with their male counterparts in average income, but this comes amid significant economic decline for Black men, their traditional community partners.

**"We refuse to believe there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation."**

**-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

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