



The Council for Health &
Human Service Ministries
United Church of Christ

“Combating Myths of Poverty and Homelessness”

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What is your definition of homelessness?



What is your definition of poverty?

Myths & Facts About Homelessness





1. Myth: People who are homeless should just get a job and then they would not be homeless.



Fact:

Many people who are homeless do have jobs, sometimes two or even three. The National Coalition for the Homeless estimates as many as 40%–60% of people experiencing homelessness nationwide are employed. However, a paycheck does not necessarily solve their homelessness or other challenges.

2. Myth: People choose to be homeless.



The background image shows the interior of a shelter or temporary housing facility. In the foreground, there is a white table with a water bottle and some food items. In the background, there are several beds with blue bedding, and the room has a high ceiling with exposed pipes and structural beams.

Fact:

This myth is dangerous and allows us to ignore the trauma of homelessness & neurobiological effects trauma has on humans. Being homeless is stressful, humiliating, exhausting, dangerous. It is a hard day-to-day existence for men, women, and children.

A photograph of the entrance to the Mississippi State Penitentiary. A large, tan-colored archway spans the top of the frame, with the words "MISSISSIPPI STATE PENITENTIARY" in large, white, three-dimensional block letters. Below the arch, there is a small, single-story brick guardhouse with several windows. To the right of the guardhouse, there are several tall, thin signs on wooden posts, including one with a red "STOP" sign. In the background, there are bare trees and a cloudy sky. A few cars and a person are visible near the entrance.

MISSISSIPPI STATE PENITENTIARY

3. Myth: People who are homeless are dangerous, violent, and/or criminals.

The background of the image shows a blurred outdoor scene. On the left, there are bare trees. In the center and right, a light-colored building with vertical siding is visible. The ground at the bottom appears to be a grassy area with some dry leaves.

Fact:

A person who is homeless is no more likely to be a criminal than a person who is housed, with one legal exception: camping ordinances.

People who are homeless break that law merely by being unhoused. The reality is that most spend their time and resources trying to survive and improve their situation.

4. Myth: Housing should come with conditions like being clean and sober.





Fact:

Evidence tells us that people who are homeless can find stability and healing when provided empowering support focused on housing & services. Known as Housing First, this approach acknowledges the complexities of addiction, trauma, and the challenges that come with experiencing homelessness.

5. Myth: There is nothing I can do about homelessness.

Together we
can END
homelessness!



Fact:
Effectively reducing
homelessness will
take the entire
community working
together around this
common goal.

Together we
can END
homelessness!



6. Myth: "Bad choices" led to their homelessness



Fact:

Everyone makes mistakes, but the descent into homelessness is not necessarily the direct result of “choices.” Far more often a sudden illness or an accident, losing one’s job, or falling into debt leads to eviction—or doubling up with family or friends becomes untenable.



FORECLOSURE

A photograph of a man in a yellow shirt and dark pants standing on a paved road. In the background, there is a house with a white garage door and a chain-link fence. A large, white sign with the word 'FORECLOSURE' in red capital letters is in the foreground, partially obscuring the view. The ground in the foreground is covered with rocks. The sky is clear and blue.

7. Myth: If people experiencing homelessness wanted to, they could pull themselves out of it.



FORECLOSURE

Fact:

Once an individual or family loses their home, getting back into housing can feel nearly impossible.

Most people lose housing because of financial situations. Imagine trying to get a job when you have no address to put on a resume, no phone number, no shower, and no clean-pressed clothes.



8. Myth: People experiencing homelessness are lazy.

Fact:

Surviving on the street takes more work than we realize. Unsheltered men & women are often sleep deprived, cold, wet, and sick. They spend all day getting to food and maybe an appointment before they need to search for a safe place to sleep, all while trying to keep their personal possessions safe. And navigating the maze of social service agencies and bureaucracy – CHALLENGING!

9. Myth: The homeless are not part of “our community.”



Fact:

Surveys have shown 70 to 80 percent of homeless persons are from the local area or lived there for a year or longer before becoming unsheltered.





10. Myth: Providing food and shelter only enables people to remain homeless.

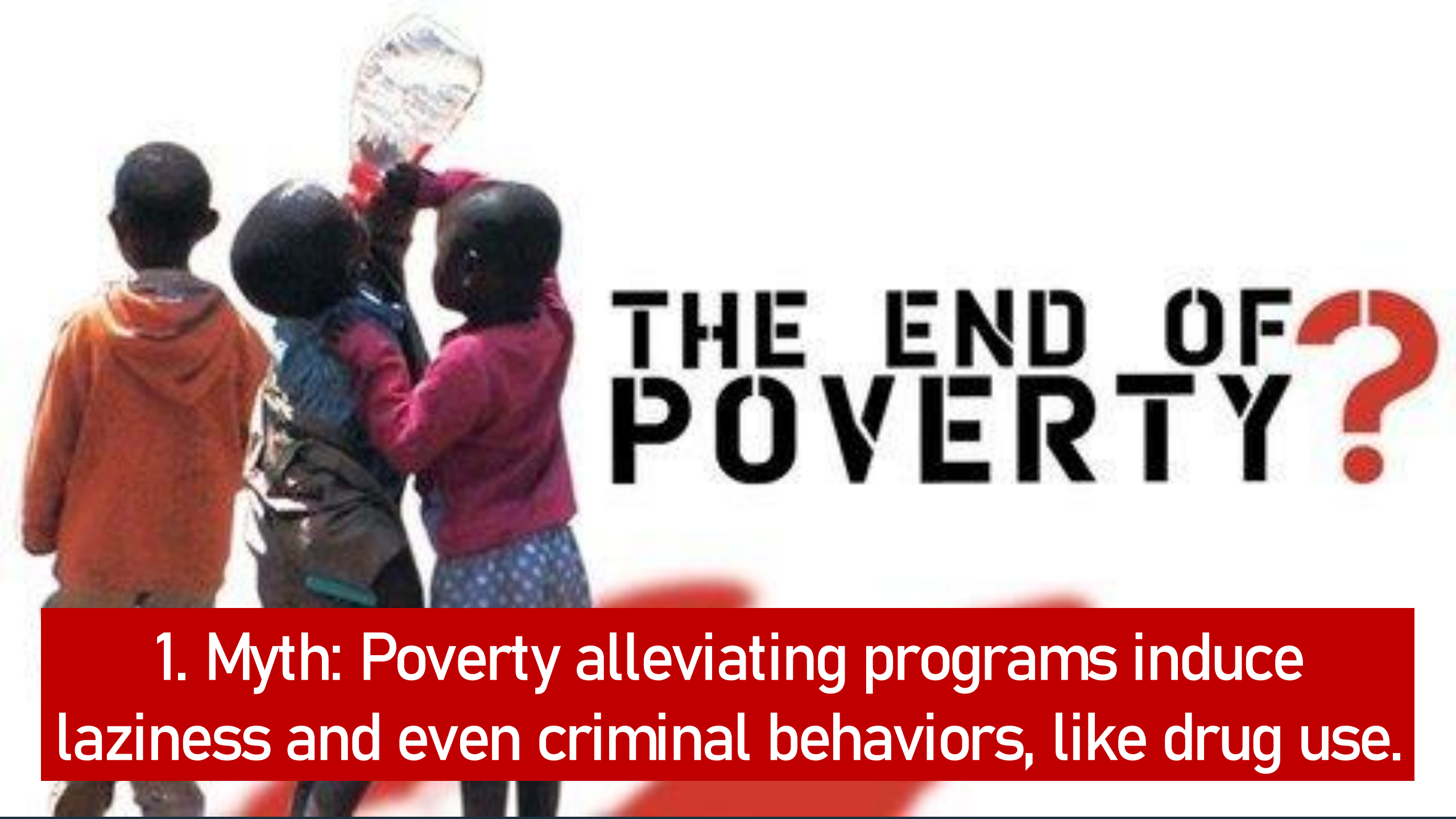
The background of the image shows an outdoor community space. On the left, a person is sitting at a table. In the center, there's a black text box with white text. On the right, a blue truck is parked. The background is a bright, sunny day with trees and buildings in the distance.

Fact:

Food and shelter are essentials for life. We build relationships with people in need by offering these and other outreach services, like restrooms and mail service. Then we're able to offer them something more through recovery programs, like counseling, addiction recovery, emotional healing, spiritual guidance, education, life skills, and job training.



POVERTY
MYTHBUSTERS

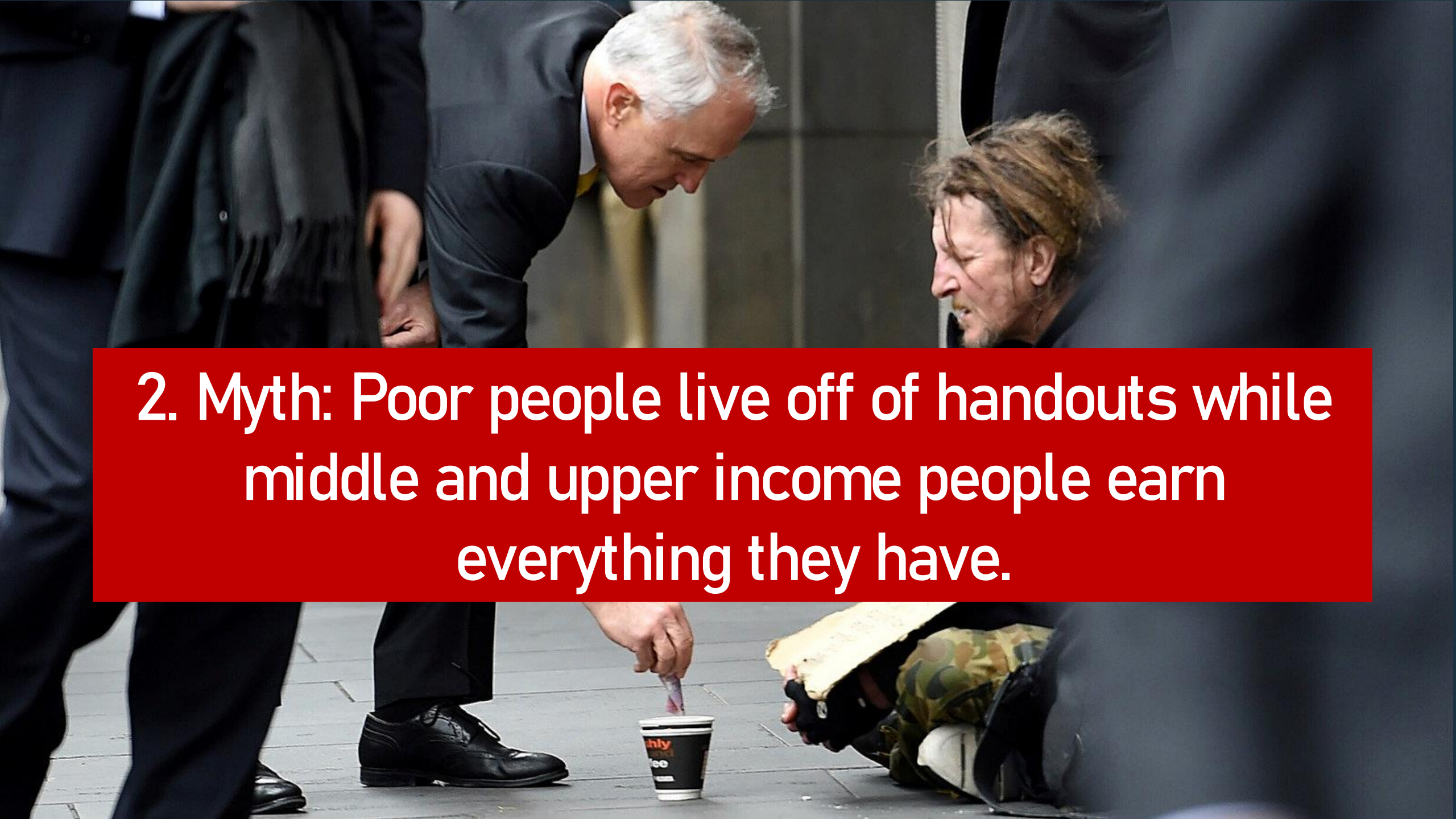


THE END OF POVERTY?

1. Myth: Poverty alleviating programs induce laziness and even criminal behaviors, like drug use.

Fact :

More than half of the families on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are currently employed and 80 percent of those families using SNAP were employed at some point in the year before and after they received benefits. States that require their safety net recipients to undergo drug testing report lower levels of use amongst recipients than the general public.

A photograph showing a man in a dark suit and white shirt bending over to place a coin into a small cup on the ground. The cup has the word 'only' and 'free' visible. A homeless man with long, unkempt hair and a beard is looking up at him. The homeless man is sitting on the ground with a cardboard box and a camouflage bag next to him. The background is a blurred city street.

2. Myth: Poor people live off of handouts while middle and upper income people earn everything they have.

Fact:

The government spends billions on subsidies that help everyone from first time homebuyers, to farmers with bad crop yields, as well as companies looking for the next source of clean energy. Many of these subsidies are less visible, although just as expensive to the government, because people receive them through tax breaks as opposed to cash payments.



3. Myth: Living in poverty means making less than \$21,960 for a family of three.



Fact :

Being poor cannot be summed up in one number, especially one that doesn't change depending on where you live. The formula that determines a family's poverty status has not been updated since the 1960s and does not take into account regional differences. Mississippi VS California?



FEDERAL BUDGET

4. Myth: Welfare spending is the single largest item in the federal budget, even bigger than defense spending.

Fact :

In 2021, the United States spent nearly \$700 billion on defense. Compare that to the nearly \$400 billion spent on the Earned Income Tax Credit, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Section 8 housing assistance, and other poverty relief programs combined.



**APPLY
INSIDE**

**FoodShare
Health
Care
Child Care**

5. Myth: The poor could earn a better life for themselves but are content living on government benefits.

Fact:

Millions of Americans receiving government benefits work hard but still cannot make ends meet. More than 10 million of those living in poverty are “working poor,” they either have jobs or have been looking for work for at least half a year. The average length of time a family is on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is 8 to 10 months.



6. Myth: Education alone is a magic remedy for solving poverty.

A woman with dark hair in a ponytail is looking down at a group of children in a classroom. The background shows bookshelves and framed pictures on the wall.

Fact:

Your parent's wealth is a much better indicator for success than where you went to school. Studies have shown that rich high school dropouts maintain their wealth at the same rate that poor college graduates remain in poverty.



7. Myth: The minimum wage is meant for teenagers working their first job in high school.

Truth: About half of those making the federal minimum are 25 years of age or older and 72 percent of the total federal minimum wage workforce has at least a high school degree.

Lift families out
of **POVERTY**~
RAISE the
Minimum **WAGE!**

WAGE
NOW!



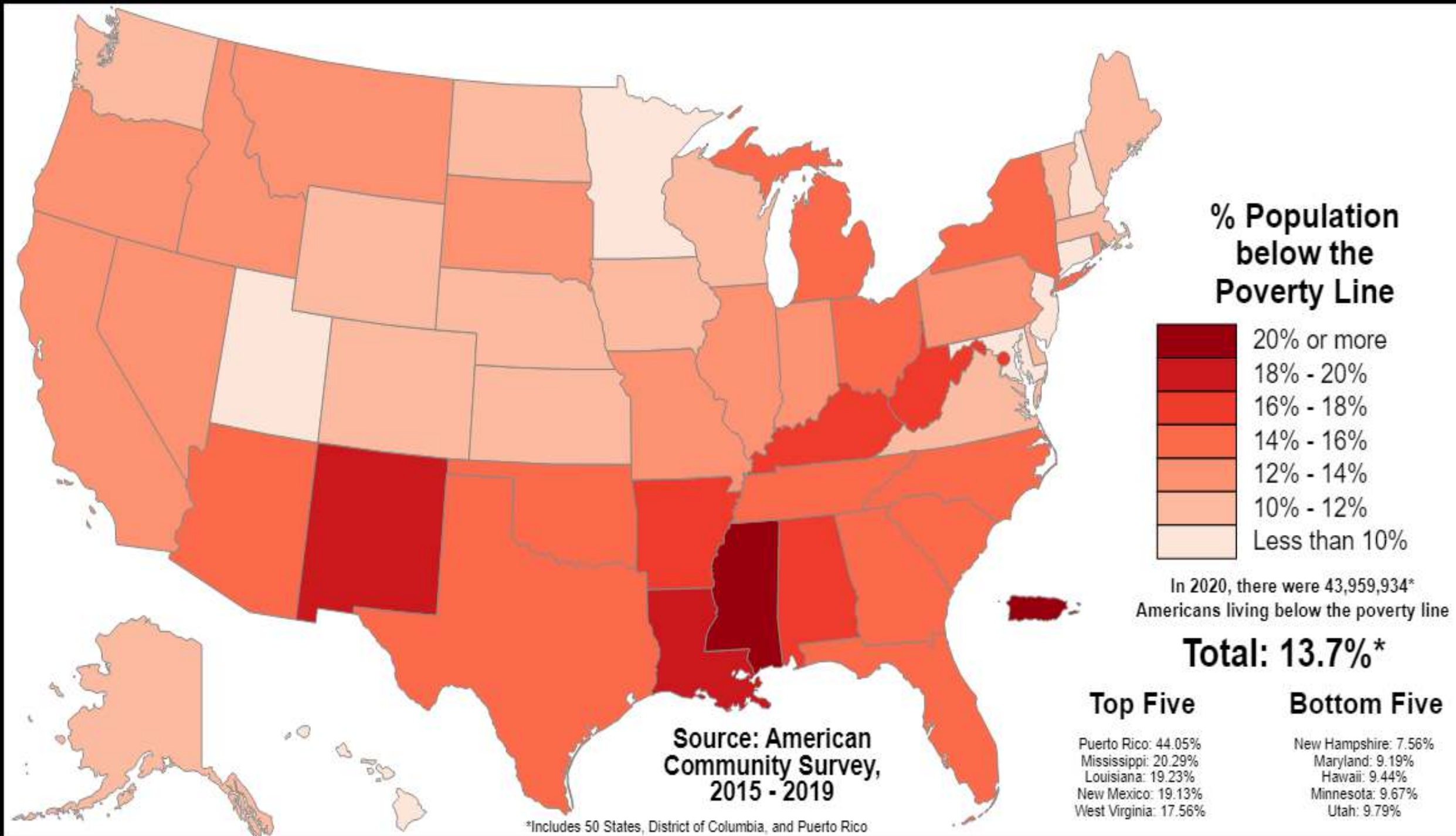
8 Myth: We won the “War on Poverty.”



Truth:

President Johnson's "War on Poverty," a series of government programs enacted in the 1960s with the express goal of reducing poverty, resulted in a significant drop of the poverty rate from 26 percent to 16 percent between 1967 to 2012.

However, more than 48 million Americans still live below the poverty line, including 15.6 million children.





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Micah Day Center: Drop-In & Service Center for our Unsheltered guests

Provides: Showers, Case Management, Clothing, laundry, basic necessities, mail, computers, & a warm or cool place out of the elements for the day.

Case Management





Out of the Elements



Clothing Closet







Unsheltered Veterans Housing



B

288

A



We love our UCC
volunteers at BBM –
Over 1000 annually!



**Mission House for
Campers (Taj Mahal)**



BACK BAY MISSION

Housing Recovery

To Volunteer or Donate:
Call- 228-432-0301
www.thebackbaymission.org



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MISSION**

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Gulf Coast Housing Initiative (GCHI) – Gaston Point Neighborhood





Homeless Prevention: Energy Assistance
& "Client Choice" Food Pantry





Collaborating with
Loaves and Fishes:
Feeding the Hungry



