

# SHADOW REPORT OF THE UNITED STATES PERIODIC REPORT

Contributions by the Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights

## TO THE U.N. COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Section 4 Paragraph 256 – 257: The right to social security

1. Minorities in Illinois are experiencing poverty at significantly higher rates and in need of income support programs to move from poverty to economic stability and independence; however, the unavailability and inadequacy of the current programs only serve to perpetuate the racial disparities in the United States.

78.5% of eligible Illinoisans are not receiving TANF. The 21.6% fortunate enough to receive income support from TANF do not receive enough cash assistance to pull them above the poverty line<sup>1</sup>. A family of three receiving the average monthly benefit from Illinois TANF receives cash assistance of only \$3,036 a year. This is well below half the poverty line and insufficient in stabilizing a family as they work toward economic independence<sup>2</sup>.

A decrease in the number of TANF recipients moving to the work force leads to an increase in food insecure households because the lack of living wage jobs for low skilled workers. Unfortunately, not all eligible for the Food Stamps program are receiving them. 40.3% of eligible Illinoisans are not receiving food stamps<sup>3</sup>.

2. The inequity gap among American seniors has grown over the past two decades. The gap in median net worth (the difference between household assets and household liabilities) between minority seniors and white seniors is \$93,590. In Illinois 20.1% of black and 17.3% of Hispanic seniors are living in poverty compared to 6.8% of white non-Hispanic<sup>4</sup>. The disparity in the median net worth reflects the vulnerability of minorities to survive economic downturns and personal crisis.

3. Every Illinoisan should have an equal opportunity to establish economic security for their families through asset building. Yet the vast majority of housing and saving tax subsidies, which encourage and reward asset building, accrue to households making over \$50,000 annually<sup>5</sup>. 14% of white Illinoisans are living in asset poverty compared to 38% of minority Illinoisans<sup>6</sup>.

4. In Illinois is 44.3% of black and 43.5% of Hispanic single female headed households with children are living in poverty compared to 28.9% of white non-Hispanic single female headed household with children. The poverty rate for children is equally as disparate. 8.6% of white non-Hispanic children

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2006. calculation conducted by Mid-America Institute on Poverty of Heartland Alliance.

<sup>2</sup> Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights. (2007). 2007 Report on Illinois Poverty. Chicago: Author.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2006. calculation conducted by Mid-America Institute on Poverty of Heartland Alliance.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2006. calculation conducted by Mid-America Institute on Poverty of Heartland Alliance.

<sup>5</sup> Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights. (2007). 2007 Report on Illinois Poverty. Chicago: Author.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2006. calculation conducted by Mid-America Institute on Poverty of Heartland Alliance.

live in poverty compared to 38.8% of black and 23.0% of Hispanic children in Illinois<sup>7</sup>. Of the 37,895 families on TANF in Illinois 74.1% are black and 17.8% are white non-Hispanic<sup>8</sup>. The increased work requirements for TANF participants combined with the general increase in demand for affordable child care among low-wage workers currently exceeds existing resources<sup>9</sup>.

5. Illinois poverty rate for people with disabilities varies depending on race. African Americans with disabilities experience poverty at a rate of 44.8% and Hispanics 32.7%, compared to white non-Hispanics 14.3%. Supplemental Security Income is the main government program for people with disabilities with little or no income to meet basic needs. However, Illinois' average annual SSI income is \$7,294 –less than the poverty line for one person and not enough to meet basic needs<sup>10</sup>. Minorities with disabilities are disproportionately affected by poverty and SSI is not providing enough assistance to keep these individuals out of poverty and is therefore contributing to prolonged racial disparities.

6. Policy recommendation: Benefits, whether cash or in-kind, must be adequate in amount and duration in order that everyone can realize their rights to family protection and an adequate standard of living. Protect more families from living in poverty by increasing the level of the monthly cash assistance grant to equal 100% of the poverty line<sup>11</sup>.

7. Policy recommendation: Strengthen national food programs to address hunger. Food Stamp benefits should be increased to address rising costs of food and outreach should be expanded to improve access for those eligible for the programs<sup>12</sup>

8. Policy recommendation: Increased funding for child care is needed to provide critical supports for working parents and their children<sup>13</sup>

9. Policy recommendation: Increase family asset building by developing a state plan for universal children's savings accounts, ensuring every child born in Illinois can save for a more secure financial future<sup>14</sup>. Incentives are also needed to encourage low-income workers, those eligible for the EITC as well as childless workers, to save a portion of their tax refund combined with public matching funds. This will help increase the financial stability of vulnerable populations who are working hard to make ends meet and get ahead<sup>15</sup>

*\* Access to reports referenced herein and others can be found at <http://www.heartlandalliance.org/maip/research.html>.*

---

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2006. calculation conducted by Mid-America Institute on Poverty of Heartland Alliance

<sup>8</sup> Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. (2003). TANF Seventh Annual Report to Congress. Washington, DC: Author.

<sup>9</sup> Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights. (2007). Freedom from Poverty in America: A National Agenda. Chicago: Author.

<sup>10</sup> Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights. (2007). 2007 Report on Illinois Poverty. Chicago: Author.

<sup>11</sup> Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights. (2007). 2007 Report on Illinois Poverty. Chicago: Author.

<sup>12</sup> Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights. (2007). Freedom from Poverty in America: A National Agenda. Chicago: Author.

<sup>13</sup> Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights. (2007). Freedom from Poverty in America: A National Agenda. Chicago: Author.

<sup>14</sup> Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights. (2007). 2007 Report on Illinois Poverty. Chicago: Author.

<sup>15</sup> Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights. (2007). Freedom from Poverty in America: A National Agenda. Chicago: Author