

The Line Essay Number Three

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James says that if you're not living in poverty, you don't see it, and you don't think about it. How do we shield ourselves from having to think about poverty?

Growing up in a wealthy family and then becoming homeless and poor, I can entirely agree with James for sure. If you are not living in poverty, you don't see it. There are two big reasons to how Americans shield themselves from thinking about poverty. The culture of poverty and desensitization is how we end up shielding ourselves. I am not saying that it is right or moral. It is a problem that if it continues, then it will make the problem of poverty much worse.

The culture of poverty is an assumption among many Americans that there are certain attitudes and behaviors of the poor people that keep them poor. That it is their fault that they are in that situation and continue to be in that situation. Perhaps they aren't trying enough.

The proponents of this argument have a theory as to why this happens. The idea that when poverty spans across generations, it is coming from a passed down value and moral system. The children that grow up in it are often repeating the same mistakes; they assume that is the way of life. Not much is done to change the situation because they are told that they are stuck. That is the cards they were dealt with. Sheila stated in the video that kids don't plan for college. Because that indicates a future, and kids don't have futures where she is from. They have this assumption that it's not just they are unwilling to change their situation, but they just simply can't or don't know how. They believe that these people are just dependent, they feel unworthy and inferior, and that no one can or is willing to help.

Those who argue against the culture of poverty debate say that it serves the rich to keep the poor, poor. Politicians often debate that raising wages to living wages and increasing funding into various government programs that offer aid will only funnel more money into a bottomless pit of poverty and not actually suit the needs of the poor and impoverished. Anthropologist Carol Stack calls this point of view "fatalistic." Most scholars have now rejected this one-sided view, refusing to believe that through hard work, perseverance, and determination that the poor and impoverished cannot change their situation, just because they were born into the culture ("Culture of poverty," 2018).

The other main reason that we shield ourselves from having to think about poverty is simple. We as a society have become desensitized to the needs of the poor and impoverished. How often do you walk past a homeless person and not even stop to say an honest hello or have a conversation? How often have you seen fundraisers, runs, dinners, etc.? For various charities and you bypassed them without even bothering to look at its mission. How frequently have you been asked to donate to a charity, say a canned food drive and only donate the stuff that's expired or that no one even likes?

We continue to ignore what is right in front of us. We see it, but we don't want to feel guilty that we could have contributed to the problem. We have become a selfish society and only caring about ourselves. Often it is the "us or them" mentality. We have a monovision way of looking at things as a society. We also tend to look at the poor and impoverished as this could also be us. There are more people in suburban poverty than there is in urban poverty. We often feel guilty that our neighbors are working twice as hard and living in poverty. However, we are the lucky ones with a steady income and secure jobs.

References

Culture of poverty. (2018). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved from

[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Culture\\_of\\_poverty&oldid=859860891](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Culture_of_poverty&oldid=859860891)