



## The Reality of Poverty

Throughout the holiday season, people bought hundreds of thousands of gifts for children who were not their own. For children whose parents did not have the financial means to buy gifts for their own children.

We see this every year and believe it to be a sign of our humanity, of our compassion for one another. And it just might be that, if it did not happen every year. But because it does, it is actually a sign of our inhumanity.

Every year, in every state - in your community or communities near you - we watch parents struggle so mightily to get by that they have nothing with which to buy gifts for their kids. Imagine for a few moments what it might feel like to have strangers come into your home to bring gifts to your kids - gifts that you would have liked to have purchased, yourself.

Imagine the feeling of not being able to provide during the holiday season, and then multiply that by all the days of your life. **That is the reality of poverty.**

## A Myth about Poverty

A persistent and dangerous myth about poverty in this country is that it is not really so bad, that people actually have all that they need - indoor plumbing, a cellphone, clothes to wear.

I hear this a lot; in fact just this month I read a piece in a national newspaper that described how poverty in our country is no longer about material deprivation. It is about laziness, addiction, mental health, or lifestyle choices. Pick your preference, it implied, but know that people here in our country have what they need. There is no need to worry about scarcity.

*To say that people have enough in this country is not only to miss the truth; it is to miss the opportunity to exercise our full humanity.*

Having indoor plumbing does not mean you're living well. Having a cell phone does not mean your worries are over. Let's not be fooled into thinking that poverty is not so bad here. The scarcity that defines it in every state - and nearly every region - has devastating and long-lasting impacts on all who experience it.


As I think about that newspaper piece, I wonder if the author had ever lived in poverty or spent time in the homes of people who know all too well what material deprivation feels like. I wonder if the author has ever slept on the floor - year after year - because there were not enough beds in his home, if there were any at all. I wonder if he has to choose between keeping the heat on, paying rent, or getting food. Every winter month, year after year.

## A Different Perspective, A Humane Approach

Having been in thousands of homes of families struggling with poverty, I have a different perspective. I have seen material deprivation. I have spent more hours than I can count listening to hard-working parents tell me of the struggle to provide for their families. Those are some of the conversations that informed our [national plan](#).

It is a season for resolutions, and this coming year, let's take the focus off ourselves. Resolve instead to understand poverty better, especially the poverty in [your own region](#). Resolve in the coming year to remove the obstacles that hold these families in poverty.

Make a resolution this coming year to [take action](#). For humanity's sake.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Bergel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Mark" and "Bergel" being capitalized and prominent.

---

## Support The Shared Humanity Project

---

**The Shared  
Humanity Project**

**Donate Now**

**National Plan to  
End Poverty**

*Copyright © 2022 The Shared Humanity Project, All rights reserved.*

The Shared Humanity Project, 9804 Ashburton Lane, Bethesda, Maryland 20817 United States  
Federal Tax ID: 85-3803944

Want to change how you receive these emails?  
You can [unsubscribe from this list](#).