

Poverty Presentation Jan. 21, 2007

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My name is Catherine Gould and I am here today to talk to you about world poverty, some of the causes and to give some ideas on what we as individuals and as a community can do to help alleviate the poverty of others. These issues are all extremely complex and days could be given to each topic. I will try to give an overview of the situation and I hope you go away with a better understanding.

I am not an expert. I am simply a person who has an interest in this subject and has devoted some time to researching it.

This is a year long program that Belleville Church and others have agreed to host. The meetings should all be under 2 hours, with the dates that show movies longer if you stay for the discussion period. I hope you will come to all the programs.

Poverty is a difficult subject to discuss and listen to and it does not paint a pretty picture about us human beings.

We all must take responsibility for the poverty situation in the world and immediately start doing things to improve the situation. We, here in the modern, "civilized" world need to give money, give aid, write letters, become involved.

We need to because people are dying. When I started doing research for this program last summer, there were 25,000 people who died every day from malnutrition; today the number has increased to 30,000 people who die each day from hunger, malnutrition and malnutrition related illness.

That means that for every breath you take, a person has died. Think about it. Every day, all year long, with every breath you take, a person has died from poverty. Can we, as a world community, continue to allow this to happen?

This should not be a national issue. This should not be a religious issue. This should not be a racial issue.

Twenty one religions in the world have a form of the Golden Rule. Can't we as a world come together and act as one and do unto others as we would have them do unto us?

Let's not continue turning a blind eye to the children of the world and the poor who have no voice.

Think about this fact: The total number of children under 5 living in France, Germany, Greece and Italy is 10.6 million. What would the world have lost if they had all died?

The total worldwide number of children who die every year is 10.5 million, mostly from third world countries and most of these deaths are preventable.

What has the world lost because of these deaths? Maybe the next Einstein, Mother Teresa. How can we stand by and lose these children. We will never know what the world has lost by their not being here to share their unique gifts, the gift and grace of their presence.

We will never know. They are dead.

How many here are over 50? Most of you, had you been, by birth chance, born in Africa, you'd be dead.

What accomplishments would you, your family, friends have lost by your death? What economic value would this country have lost by your death?

An article in Aging Cell states that “the lower your social standing, the faster you are likely to age. The countries with the smallest gap between rich and poor have the best health.”

Of all the developed nations in the world, the United States has the largest gap between rich and poor.

What if your children had been born in Africa?

What are your children’s hopes and dreams? What are their ambitions and accomplishments?

In Africa, there would be no dreams of a future: for most, their dream is simply to survive this very day.

Think of the potential that these deaths have cost the world; the economic and social value that has been lost; the hopes and dreams that, not only were never fulfilled, they never even had the possibility of dreaming these dreams of the future.

Can we stand by and let this continue? The United Nations has set Millennium Goals for the year 2025. Back in 1970, the rich nations of the world pledged .7% of GNP to help the poor countries combat poverty. Few have actually done so but why is the .7% so important today?

Jeffrey Sachs states: “we are the first generation that can afford to eradicate poverty”. Think of that - the first generation that can afford to eradicate poverty - what a privilege ... and what a responsibility.

In 1975, the world economy was half the size it is today and would have required a greater commitment - over 1% of GNP - whereas today the goal of .7% is affordable.

Today .7% would provide enough resources to cover all of the Millennium Goals and cut in half extreme poverty by the year 2015 and by 2025 we could end world poverty. I truly believe that this is an attainable goal.

How amazing to think that we, you and I, have the chance to end world hunger and poverty!

However, we, as a world, are failing and despite making progress, have an enormous amount of work that needs to be done.

Jeffrey Sachs in *The End of Poverty* asks: “Will we have the good judgment to use our wealth wisely, to heal a divided planet, to end the suffering of those trapped in poverty and to forge a common bond of humanity, security, and shared purpose across countries and regions?”

Ever wonder what Third World means? The First World is the rich, developed countries; the second world is the socialist countries; the Third World are the post-colonial countries that the colonizing countries abandoned to poverty

Non poor in the Third World means having enough food to not be malnourished; being able to afford \$5 for a bed net to prevent malaria; having some kind of roof over your head; maybe going to school; maybe having access to medical care; maybe having access to sanitation and clean water; having a parent.

Basic needs are met but just barely on \$2 a day.

I’m going to show you a series of maps to explain the complexity and extent of poverty in the Third World. I will be focusing primarily on Africa as Africa has by far the worst statistics for every issue.

Notice the areas that are in general the opposite of the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe.

Wikipedia states: The Human Development Index (HDI) is a comparative measure of life expectancy, literacy, education and standards of living . It is a way to measure the welfare of a nation, especially child welfare .

As you can see, most of Africa is in red.

These people can not meet basic needs for survival; they have chronic hunger; are unable to access health care; do not have access to safe drinking water, nor sanitation; they can't afford education for their children; they may not have shelter. One in 5 children live on less than \$1 a day and half of all Africans live in extreme poverty.

Number of children in the world 2.2 billion; number living in poverty 1 billion - 3 times the population of the United States.

To put it in perspective, 30,000 people die every day from poverty and hunger - that's more than the entire population of Newburyport dying each and every day!

The world population is about 6 ½ billion. The United States has a population of approx. 300 million. Half the world - 3 billion people - live on less than \$2 a day. 1 billion are illiterate - again more than the population of the US, 270 million children don't have access to health care, 1.6 billion don't have electricity, 1.1 billion people of which 400 million are children don't have access to clean drinking water.

If we had these problems here, the result would be we'd ALL be poor - living on \$2 a day, illiterate, thirsty, dirty, no medical care, no electricity, no bathrooms.

Not some of us - the entire country.

Imagine a disaster of this magnitude striking the United States - not to some of us but all of us. How can you overcome obstacles of such magnitude?

That's what the people and children of the third world are facing every day.

640 million children - over twice the entire population of the United States, live in inadequate shelter.

Hunger kills more people than AIDS, malaria and TB combined. There are 850 million chronically hungry people in the world while there is more than enough food in the world to feed everyone. How many people are going hungry?

Can you visualize 850 million starving, malnourished people, dying from lack of food? 850 million is the combined population of the US, Canada and the entire EU.

17 million children are born underweight every year. One in seven children do not get enough food to be healthy.

Hunger is an inherited problem. Malnourished mothers give birth to malnourished babies.

Third world hunger is not having enough food to eat for one meal - it is not having enough food for days, not for a week or two but indefinitely.

William Esterly, former economist at the World Bank states that: "while the free market managed to deliver 9 million copies of ..Harry Potter..in a single day...It is heart breaking that global society has evolved a highly efficient way to get entertainment to rich adults and children, while it can't get 12 cent medicine to dying poor children."

The blue areas survive on less than 1000 cal. a day. 400 million children are malnourished.

This is not just going hungry. These children are physically affected - stunting, brain development, unable to fight infections, wounds don't heal, being unable to learn.

A recent study in Chile found that there is a direct correlation between brain volume and IQ. 70 % of brain growth occurs before the age of 2 and malnutrition reduces brain growth and lowers IQ.

Childhood malnutrition has a devastating effect on a child's ability to learn and their future ability to work their way out of poverty.

Lack of food means lack of nutrients..

Unicef reports: "Vitamin and mineral deficiencies impair intellectual development, compromise immune systems, provoke birth defects and consign millions to living below their full physical and mental potential."

It is estimated that vitamin and mineral deficiencies are costing sub-Saharan economies more than \$2.3 billion in lost productivity."

And people with HIV/AIDS are 6 times more likely to die if they are malnourished.

Improved nutrition cuts child mortality by 25%. The UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, Louise Arbour, states that "

freedom from want is a right, not merely a matter of compassion."

For many children living in Africa, their mothers give them tea made from boiled tree bark, three or four days out of the week. Tree bark tea and nothing else. As a parent, can you imagine the despair and desperation of giving babies tree bark tea so that your child will have something in their stomach?

In Africa 17% of children will not reach the age of 5 and childhood mortality rates are increasing.

As the rest of the world's under 5 death rate has decreased, Sub-Saharan Africa has increased from 14% in 1960 to 43% in 2000.

Again sub-Saharan Africa and parts of India. In Africa only 1 in 3 has access to sanitation. The lack of clean water and sanitation increases infection and is a major contributor to child mortality.

More than 300 million in Africa risk drinking dirty water on a daily basis. In many parts of Africa, women and children risk rape in simply going to get water or fire wood.

Worldwide, one in every three women will be sexually or physically abused during her lifetime; one in 5 will survive rape; 3 million women die each year from gender related violence.

Women daily risk their lives simply to get water -DIRTY, UNSAFE WATER.

Diarrhea kills 2.5 million caused mainly from unsafe water, water that women and children have risked their lives to get.

But what do you do when you don't have a choice - when you can't turn on the faucet? You risk your life and children's to prevent dehydration. There isn't a choice.

Many are lucky to have even dirty water - dehydration is another killer in the third world.

Kevin Watkins, of the United Nations Development Office, states:

"Unclean water is the second biggest killer of children, claiming more than two million lives annually. Diseases caused by water keep countless millions more children out of school, reinforce poverty.... (water borne diseases) cost African countries about 5 percent of their gross domestic product - equivalent to what the region receives in aid."

And an article in the Guardian on Jan. 15, 2007 states that for "every \$1 invested in water and sanitation generates about \$6 in economic returns, even apart from the lives it saves".

“According to Global Exchange.org 240,000 children have been sold as slaves in West Africa to work on coffee, cocoa, and cotton plantations, and according to a US State Department Report 15,000 of those children are aged between 9-12. “ The UN estimates that almost 6 million children were in forced and bonded labor. 300,000 in armed conflict. Almost 2 million in prostitution and pornography. 600,000 drug trafficking. And over 1 million in slavery.

From porno movies, prostitution to making gravel, bricks, working in stone quarries, these children have had their childhood stolen from them.

Not only are these children slaves but by far the majority of them are abused, physically if not sexually.

In countries that don't have any safety nets for children without parents, or who don't have a wage earner in the family, these children - at very young ages - work to support themselves and their families.

There are 50 million unregistered children in the world - children who have no birth certificates! The result is that they are not in school, and they do not qualify for food programs or social services.

An identity protects a child from early forced marriage, from child labor; from being sold into slavery; from being forced to be a child soldier; from being forced into prostitution.

In sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East it's easier to list the countries not in conflict! Look at Africa at where there's conflicts, where does one go to leave the area of conflict? Where does one find refuge? With only 50 phones per 1000 people, you can't even call for help or call to tell anyone what is happening to you.

28 July 2006 The Independent writes:

One picture sums it up. It shows a man named Nsala sitting on the porch of a missionary's house in the Congo. His face is a portrait of impenetrable sorrow.

Before him lie a small hand and foot. It is all that remains of his five-year-old daughter who has - together with his wife and son - been killed, dismembered, cooked and eaten by soldiers.

This map shows where there are countries that use children to wage their wars. Many of these children are stolen during the night when their villages are raided. Some are as young as 6 years old and they are forced to kill or be killed themselves.

Every minute a person dies from armed conflict, in that same minute 15 new weapons are made.

These pictures were drawn by children in Africa.

I can't tell you all of the atrocities that I have read about that these children have endured and the extreme, vicious violence that they have seen . I will tell you that we **MUST** do something to end the senseless violence here, there and everywhere.

Children, worldwide, should be safe from physical harm. No excuses; no tolerance for violence being directed at children. What has happened to a lot of children is beyond living through a war, which is bad enough; but the horrors they have experienced are beyond belief. For more information go to Human Rights Watch and please take action on this.

In many places, the women and children are targeted for torture and rape as a way to terrorize the populace into doing what the soldiers, guerrilla groups want, whether it's to provide food or safe haven or simply man power to resupply their soldiers.

Over 200,000 children die each year as direct result of armed conflict, an additional 600,000 are injured or disabled, 10,000 alone are annually injured from land mines.

Atrocities during wars are all too common and as we know, American soldiers have been guilty of violating human rights and our government having what amounts to torture camps is an outrage that should shock and awe all of us.

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.' --Martin Luther King, Jr., "Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam" in New York City at Riverside Church, April 4, 1967

Martin Luther King once said that "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death".

We all must ask ourselves what our nation's wars are doing to us as individuals; to us as a nation; to the social fiber of our country and to our moral standing in the world.

And we must ask ourselves how the wars are affecting the poor. The families of soldiers injured or killed - will they fall into poverty? The families in Iraq - what of them? Displaced, no wage earner, injured, places of employment and education destroyed. What of them? How has our nation contributed to the poverty in the world? How has our nation used our military and for what purpose?

On Nov. 19, 2006, the Sunday Times headline was:

Darfur children dragged from mothers and shot.

The news report began:

WHEN the fighters came, the mothers could not protect their children. Screaming toddlers were ripped from their grasp and shot; older children who tried to save their brothers and sisters were hunted down.

In 1948, the world came together at the UN and signed the Declaration of Human Rights and said never again will the world stand by for another holocaust.

Since then we have had the Cambodia killing fields, Rwanda, Bosnia and now Darfur, which has spread to the surrounding countries. Darfur has been going on for almost 8 years. Unknown thousands have been slaughtered, over 4 million displaced.

As the world stands by.

In order to save yourself and your family, you flee to an area you hope will be safe. Unfortunately the refugee camps and AID workers themselves are often targeted by the militia gangs and Oxfam states that "conflicts are the cause of more than half of Africa's food crises".

The International Red Cross states:

"They are obliged to travel long distances, often on foot, to seek safe refuge away from the fighting. Families are dispersed, children lose contact with their parents in the chaos of flight, elderly relatives too weak to undertake such an arduous journey are left behind to fend for themselves"

According to Refugees International, women and children comprise 90% of all fatalities in armed conflicts.

AND THE FASTEST GROWING POPULATION OF REFUGEES IS IN IRAQ with over 3 million people displaced.

In Darfur alone, almost 4 million have been displaced. Notice how many are pregnant - how many were probably raped.

Once again, Sub-Saharan Africa, India, Asia.

Africa has the highest child mortality rate in the world.. sub-Saharan Africa is the most dangerous place in the world for a baby to be born. Over 1 million babies die in the first month of life, more than half these deaths are preventable.

Malaria kills about a million people a year, 90% of them in sub-Saharan Africa where malaria kills 3,000 children every day. An article in the Guardian (1/16/07) reads:

“A doctor in Uganda states "We have not many health facilities. Parents carry their sick children for miles and when they get to a clinic, the child may be close to death and because of their immature immune systems, children succumb very easily to malaria and can die within 24 hours of the onset of symptoms if they are not treated.”

Malaria kills primarily children under 5 and pregnant women and is a preventable and treatable disease and a recent study shows a dangerous connection between malaria and HIV:

People with HIV who get malaria have a 6-8 week spike of HIV in their blood, simply put, the HIV virus is more contagious to the point of doubling the chance of infecting a sexual partner.

Every 30 seconds, a child dies from malaria. Malaria nets cost \$5, covers two children and can last up to 5 years but in places like Burundi it is not affordable as the average income is under a \$1 a week. Malaria treatment costs \$1.

TB is one of the three main killer diseases. Every year almost 9 million people get TB, of whom 2 million will die. 80% of the victims are between 15 and 49 - the most productive years of a persons' life.

The areas that have high TB are also the areas with high rates of HIV/AIDS and TB one of the causes of death for AIDS patients.

Kenya had it's first case in 22 years in Oct. 06, making it the 26th country to have a resurgence of the disease. Let me give an example of how a group of people decided to improve the world situation:

Back in the 1980's there were about 300,000 cases of polio every year. The International Rotary Club decided to not only reduce the number of polio cases per year but to eradicate the disease entirely. Other organizations joined the cause and today the new number of polio cases has been reduced to 3,000

That's 297,000 children per year that did not get polio. Over 25 years that's 7 and a half million children saved from a devastating disease because an organization, not a government, decided to do something!

This is a map of DPT. This is an area that has also greatly improved from only 20% coverage in 1980 to 80% today. However, that still means that over 2 million children die each year because they weren't immunized with DPT3.

27 countries with 18 being in Africa, account for 90% of the neonatal tetanus deaths. It is largely caused by using unsanitary tools to cut the umbilical cord. It appears on about the third day after birth in an apparently healthy newborn. The baby stops nursing, starts aching all over, and has painful convulsions.

Fatality rate is 70%. Maternal tetanus is responsible for 5% of maternal deaths. About 90,000 women die annually from unsanitary delivery practices.

The cost for tetanus immunizations is \$1.20 per mother and would protect the mother for 10 years and each and every child born to her during those 10 years.

Measles is pretty much unheard of in the west, but in the Third World it is a killer disease.

Half a million children died in 2003 from measles - measles vaccines costs 30 cents. However, the good news is that with increased inoculations, by 2010, measles cases are expected to have decreased by 90% since 2000 and by 2015, measles may be eliminated in the same way that small pox has been.

Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest number of people with AIDS/HIV - 50 million. Sub-Saharan Africa has 10% of the world's population but it has 70% of the world's HIV/AIDS cases, 80% of the AIDS deaths and 90% of the AIDS orphans.

AIDS has killed so many teachers that in some countries in Africa, there are more current teachers dying of AIDS than there are replacements graduating.

95% OF AIDS ORPHANS LIVE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA - MORE THAN 34 MILLION CHILDREN. Think of this, every 15 seconds, another child becomes an AIDS orphan. These children are at high risk for malnutrition, not being educated, being recruited as child soldiers; being forced into prostitution; sold into slavery.

Families who take in related orphans earn 31% less than other households simply due to caring for more children.

Many children end up raising their siblings and many are on their own raising themselves with no one to protect them.

This chart shows the economic impact of AIDS - the higher the number of people with AIDS, the lower the economic growth of a country. The number of AIDS patients gets high enough, not only is a country' not growing economically, it's actually losing ground.

In Zimbabwe, a nation of 11 million, the HIV rate is 20%. they have the 2d highest number of AIDS orphans in the world; 4 digit inflation; 80% unemployment rate and average income is a little over \$2,000 a year. HIV/AIDS has had an enormous impact on Zimbabwe's economy.

However, in Zimbabwe, government policies have also had a devastating impact on the poor.

The government of Zimbabwe is deliberately destroying entire poor shanty towns and "relocating" the people to the desert - without food or water.

The Sunday Times on Jan 7, 07, in an article entitled Zimbabwe, The land of the dying children state:

"A vast human cull is under way in Zimbabwe and the great majority of deaths are a direct result of deliberate government policies. Ignored by the United Nations, it is a genocide perhaps 10 times greater than Darfur's and more than twice as large as Rwanda's."

Jeffery Sachs describes an Aids ward in Africa: "450 people are dying in a 150 bed ward - sleeping 2 to a bed and one on the floor..." the doctor "knows that each of these patients could rise from their death bed but for the want of a dollar a day... He knows that the problem is simply that the world has seen fit to look away as hundreds of impoverished Malawians die this day as a result of their poverty."

What we expect from a hospital is a far cry from what is available to most of the third world. In the third world you are lucky to have a medical professional whether it's a health technician, nurse, midwife or doctor, some medical supplies. No fancy hospital beds - you get an army cot and you're lucky if you're not sharing it. No running to the pharmacy for medicine - no pharmacy and no money to pay for it anyway.

In Africa a pregnant women only has a 40% chance of having a skilled health professional attending the birth of her children.

Over half a million women die in childbirth in the Third World compared to 1,500 in Europe.

In the west women have a 1 in 14,000 chance of dying in childbirth, in the third world 1 in 13.

In the third world, 2 million newborn babies die each year within the first 24 hours. There just isn't the money for medical supplies, doctors, and combined with poor sanitation, lack of maternal nutrition, newborns aren't able to survive.

There are two things that do make an enormous difference in how long a child will live and that's nutrition and education. This chart shows that the higher the literacy level of a mother, the lower the chance of her child dying. Less education, higher death rate..

Women and girls in the third world must be educated and currently only 60% of girls are in school. Simply by educating these girls, their future children will have a greater chance of staying alive. Africa has the youngest population in the world and as of 2005, 46 million African children had never even stepped into a classroom. Investing in education is crucial for their survival.

Again, same areas. Drastically fewer girls in school than boys. There are many reasons for this disparity. One reason is that in some cultures it is felt that women don't need to be educated. In large families without enough income to send all the children to school, boys are chosen over girls.

Another reason is that it can be dangerous for girls to go to school. These areas are also the highest areas for rape and violence against females - even very young girls. Let's look at the infant mortality map again side by side with this map.

Education is an important part in stopping not only the cycle of poverty but in reducing child mortality.

Education clearly plays a crucial role for future generations of children not only in lowering child mortality rates but in simply keeping children alive long enough to realize their potential.

Can you imagine how a country survives with that many people living below poverty - and poverty means 1-2 dollars per day? Zambia 86% poverty? With this level of poverty a country can not afford to help it's citizens. The economy of this nation is based on only 14% of the population.

And of the 86% how many have AIDS, how many are sick? How can a country with this high a poverty level care for it's greatest resource, the children? How can it provide education? Health services?

Imagine that our country had a devastating disaster and we now had 86% of the population in dire poverty. Could we handle it with all our money and resources? To answer that question, all we have to do is look back and remember what happened with Hurricane Katrina.

In the Third World the majority of a countries available assets are used to pay back debt. Of the 32 countries classified as severely indebted, 25 are in sub-Saharan Africa - the area that as we have seen on the maps is the worst area for every single issue we have looked at.

It is crucial to the survival of the people of the Third World that ALL debt is forgiven so that the countries can start investing in their people.

In countries where there has been debt cancellation, social services have risen 75%.

Debt slavery is foreign aid in reverse- for every dollar sent to the poorest countries in aid, \$1.30 flows back to lenders in debt service It just doesn't make sense.

These numbers that we've looked at, don't even account for the "normal" - children with disabilities, elderly, mental health, cancer deaths, accident deaths, etc.

These are the problems that are unique to the third world. The extent of the poverty issues - with the “normal” issues and problems of health and life that you and I face on top of these - is overwhelming. I can’t even conceive of living under these circumstances and having any hope for the future.

I can’t imagine the heartache of being a parent in the Third World. We worry about our children but our worries seem so minor and trivial when put next to the worries of a parent in the Third World.

We don’t have to worry about our children being stolen during the night and forced to be a soldier; we don’t have to worry about our children being raped on the way to school; we don’t have to worry about our children dying of starvation.

How do these parents make it through each and every day with the horrendous obstacles facing their children’s futures and their children’s very lives?

Let’s briefly look at American statistics which we will look at more closely in the Feb. program.

USA has \$44 trillion in reported liabilities - we are the largest debtor in the world, net operating deficit of 296 billion, 77 billion in interest to foreign creditors, including interest on the \$300 billion we borrowed from China.

As we all know, our debt has increased since 2002 and our social services paid for by the federal government has decreased, placing the burden on state and local governments, and on local agencies, and the number living in poverty is steadily increasing.

We are running a trade deficit. We have large debt. We have had to cut social service. Our debt and its effect on us is small compared to the third world but should give us an understanding of the consequences of large government debt, including how it may influence foreign policy. Let’s look at American statistics:

Since 2000, the number of people below the poverty line has increased by 5 million. We have 37 MILLION in America living below the poverty line.

Sound like a lot? Not when you compare it to the world: Congo has 80% of its people living below poverty versus almost 13% in the USA.

We also have 269 billionaires, the highest number of billionaires in the world.

That the District of Columbia has the highest number of people living in poverty just doesn’t seem right considering they have all those senators and representatives sharing the state with them.

With 40% of the single male homeless population being veterans, will that number in the next few years be increasing due to the wars?

Another note on homelessness, foster children are 8 times more likely to be homeless at some point in their life.

8.6% whites in poverty with 25% of blacks living in poverty. Poverty clearly has a racial profile. The poorest countries of the world are not white; whites are not dying by the hundreds of thousands from starvation; whites are not in Darfur; whites were not in New Orleans.

Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. What can I say? How is it that anywhere in America there would be an area with the same sad numbers as Africa? 85% poverty rate, life expectancy of 50 - 30 years less to live than you or I here in America. Teenage suicide rate is 4 times the national average. Infant mortality is 5 times the US average. Many families don’t have electricity, phone, running water or sewer. Here in America --This a national disgrace.

Our life expectancy while higher than poor countries, is actually lower than most of the European Union by about a year and a half.

We actually spend more on healthcare than the EU which has free medical care. Total health care per capita in the US is 6,100 versus a 2,550 average in the EU. Our government pays 43% of health care costs while EU pays 73%.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report on health care in 2006 states the following in regards to American healthcare:

- Americans are the least satisfied with their health care;
- America has the most privatized health care of any member;
- we spend 14% of our GDP on health care compared to 9% in Canada;
- \$911 is spent annually per person on administrative costs vs. \$270 in Canada;
- Canada's infant mortality is 1/3 lower than here in the US;
- Canadians live 2 years longer.
- Canada is ranked #1 by the UN for quality of life.

We clearly need to advocate for a free health care system here in the United States.

Wikipedia states: "The Gini coefficient is often used to measure inequality.

"While most developed European nations tend to have Gini coefficients between 0.24 and 0.36, the United States Gini coefficient is above 0.4, indicating that the United States has greater inequality...extreme inequality also diminishes growth potential by eroding social cohesion, and increases social unrest and social conflict"

And of the developed nations in the world, the US ranks 21 on the human poverty list. Poverty is a not only a social and moral crisis but it is one that challenges the very fiber of our nation and our nations well-being.

Improving the lives of the poor not only helps them, but it improves the welfare of the entire nation. Attacking and defeating poverty is a national crisis that needs the attention and collective will of the entire country.

But according to our government, we do not have anyone going hungry in America - we only have people with "food insecurity".

1.3 million homeless children, 17.6 % of children under 18 live in poverty and the highest population of poor are children under the age of 6 where one in five lives below poverty.

Poverty, by the government's outdated standard is below \$20,000 for a family of 4.

If you raise the poverty to a more reasonable amount - say \$40,000 for a family of four - the number would translate into having 39% of American children living in poverty with 18% living in extreme poverty.

These numbers are concerning in regards to their education and their future of breaking out of poverty.

Most low-income families are employed but with minimum wage not yet increasing and the cost of living going up, poor families can not keep up. A livable min. wage is around \$10 an hour.

MA is doing better than the national averages.

This chart clearly shows that the level of education a parent has is indicative of a child's prospects for living in poverty. The higher the education level, the less chance for a child to be living in poverty and not graduating high school raises the level to 49% in poverty!

Again, MA is doing slightly better -

41 % without high school versus national 49% which may account for our slightly better poverty levels.

As with the third world, education is crucial.

Single parent households make up 60% of the poor families and here in MA single parent households make up 76% of poor families.

Being a single female parent without a high school education is the single most important indicator of whether a child will be living in poverty. How many young single parents do we have here in Newburyport? They must be encouraged and helped with finishing high school. Without a minimum of a high school diploma, these young mother's have little chance of breaking out of poverty and going to college or post high school technical school would be the single most important means of breaking the cycle of poverty.

Let's take a minute and look at what happened in New Orleans in regards to Katrina.

Prior to Katrina, 38% of children lived in poverty, overall 23% of the population lived in poverty; 21% did not own a car; 53% were renters; 74% of parents had a high school degree or less; 40% of parents were unemployed.

The poor in New Orleans are primarily black.

Post Katrina, add to the already bad poverty situation in New Orleans 10 months after Katrina = 60% of homes did not have electricity; 112,000 low - income homes were damaged and rent now has gone up 39%; only 66% of the schools have reopened.

We would like to think that a natural disaster, a national crisis would not affect us here as it would in the Third World. We only need to remember what happened after Katrina to know that it - much to our shame - could and did happen.

Let's go back and talk a bit more about education because it is so important to ending poverty.

Education at a Glance, a report done annually for OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development) should concern us all here in the States.

The report states "Richer nations, especially in Europe, face a growing lack of ambition among their children, fed partly by social inequality that schools have failed to redress"... The report continues:

"More than a quarter of 15-year-olds in the United States.... performed at or below the lowest levels on math and problem solving--and students from poor families were 3.5 times more likely to do badly. .. Adults who do not finish high school in the United States earn 65 percent of what people make if they do finish high school. No other country had such a severe income gap.."

When my dad started work in the 1950's, he was probably competing with a total job pool of, perhaps, 50 million men – and they were mostly men back then.

When my grandchildren start work, because of globalization, they will be in a job pool of several billion. Education will make the difference. Can we afford a mediocre education for our children?

69 % of our college graduates can not read, think and analyze a complex book? What does this say about the future of this country as far as evaluating information; evaluating politics:

evaluating moral, ethical decisions? What does it say about our future poverty levels and our future as a nation, as a member of a world community?

The U.S. spends more per student from elementary school through college--*U.S.\$12,023*--than all countries except Switzerland. We must ask ourselves, if we spend so much why are our students doing so poorly? Since there is a direct correlation between education and poverty, we should all be concerned about more people falling into poverty; more generations and what we can do to stop this trend.

37 Million people are living below poverty - that's the entire population of California. 3.5 million homeless - that's the entire state of OR.

Of the 21 richest nations in the world, the US has the highest percentage of poor children - twice the rate of the next country.

Some things are just wrong and this is one of them. We must do better than this for our own people. If we won't take care of the poor at home, does the world - or anyone - believe that we will take care of the world's poor?

All children should have the right to food, education, medical care, shelter, clean water and sanitation.

But also, these children must also be given the right to hope and dream with the knowledge that their dreams are within the realms of possibility.

For millions of children, they can't dream as there is no hope of any possibilities of a better future.

We have a responsibility to change the world for these children and give them the rights that we want for our own children – a right to a future.

Let's look at the cost of some of the UN's Global Priorities:

Ethicist, Peter Singer wrote an article in the NY Times titled "What should a millionaire give". He calculated that if the top 10% income earners in the US, who earn over 200,000 a year, donated 10% of their income, the amount donated would be 171 billion dollars, more than enough to cover the UN Millennium Goals.

Here, at home, our government chose to give 57 billion a year in tax cuts to the wealthy 1%; our government spends 8 billion a month on the war in Iraq instead of choosing to provide health care to our uninsured children.

It's all about choice. Our country needs to start making better choices. We need to consider the effect of our own choices not only to the poor in our own country but how our nations' policies effect the poor in the rest of the world.

A statement made by the film, *The Silent Killer* sums it up:

"The United States could help reduce world hunger by 50% by the year 2015, and eliminate it by 2025, at a cost of as little as two cents per American per day."

Can we afford not to give our two cents?

and John Berger, author, said:

"The poverty of our century is unlike that of any other. It is not, as poverty was before, the result of natural scarcity, but of a set of priorities imposed upon the rest of the world by the rich."

and Africa Action states that it is a

“system of inequality that dictates that wealth, power and basic human rights is based on race and place. The elite in the rich and powerful countries control the major global decision making bodies - world bank and world trade organization - and preserve this system which works in their favor. They ensure that the privileged citizens of rich countries have more resources and access to human rights than people of poor countries.”

With 8.8 MILLION people dying every year from lack of food, we CAN NOT allow this figure to continue. We all must work to end world poverty, not for us, but for the children of the world.

What can be done about poverty? Whether poverty is here or there, the solutions are the same: Advocate, write letters. Contribute to food programs to ensure that no child, no where on this planet, dies from lack of food. Knit hats or blankets for children in the Third World - they don't have incubators. Advocate for better education for all, volunteer in the schools. Be a big brother or sister.. Volunteer at any one of the numerous organizations here in town. Buy fair trade products. Educate yourself about poverty issues and then educate others.

There are any number of ways in which we, as individuals, can each make a global difference. Some things are time-consuming; some are expensive. Do what you have the time for, but make the time each day. Do what you can afford to, but donate to charities that benefit the poor here at home or overseas.

Issues of morality and compassion have been raised by the stunning numbers on hunger, disease, death, and poverty we have just heard about.

The US Army's "Urban Operations Manual," issued just last September, states:

“The world is undergoing massive urbanization. Although exceptions exist, an overall trend of migration from rural to urban areas is occurring throughout the globe. ... This trend is especially evident in developing nations. Combined with the exponential growth of the global population in the last quarter century, this migration has created massive urban areas In many cases, rapid urbanization has overburdened already weak infrastructures, scarce resources, and a fragile economic base. ... potential enemies recognize the inherent danger and complexity of this environment to the attacker, and may view it as their best chance to negate the technological and firepower advantages of modernized opponents.

Given the global population trends and the likely strategies and tactics of future threats, Army forces will likely conduct operations in, around, and over urban areas—not as a matter of fate, but as *a deliberate choice linked to national security objectives and strategy...*”

The people who wrote this are not ideologues. They are hard-headed analysts attempting to prepare for the future – and they are probably right.

But there is something unsettling about the underlying assumption that the United States and the world's poor are natural enemies.

That is not how we like to think of ourselves. We Americans like to think of ourselves as helping those in need – and we often do – not battling them door to door in slums half way around the world. We have been seeing this and will most likely be seeing more of it in the coming months.

The Army report mentions “weak infrastructures, scarce resources and a fragile economic base” as dangers to our security.

Perhaps addressing those sources of despair and resentment would help alleviate the danger.

The world will not be perfect in our time. We will not make it perfect. But we can make it better. Perhaps it is a dream to eliminate poverty. But we can try.

As Gandhi once said “The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world’s problems”.