

The Poor in Appalachia: Yesterday and Today

Larry W. Griffin

January 15, 2010

The Poor in Appalachia: Yesterday and Today

Prior to the Civil War, the area known as Appalachia was self-contained, self-sufficient and no poorer than the rest of rural America; however, as the area moved from a trade-and barter economy and local-based subsistence agriculture to a cash wage lifestyle and an economy linked to production and consumption it seemed that the rich got richer and the poor got poorer with each successive generation (Toney, 2006, p. 204). This was especially true for central Appalachia. In contrast the southern region, the poorest and least educated in 1970 by 2000 had become the most educated and wealthiest area of Appalachia (Baumann, 2006, p. 439). The Federal government has made two major attempts to “fix” the problems of Central Appalachia: the New Deal and the War on Poverty. Scholars continue to question whether or not significant progress has been made. Lifetime Appalachian scholar, Ronald Eller, in his book Uneven Ground (2008), questions whether we have mistakenly defined progress and that could be the reason for the persistent high level of poverty in Appalachia. The purpose of my quest, and this paper, is to examine why central Appalachia continues to be an embarrassment to the United States. In a land of affluence, why do we still have so much poverty in that part of Appalachia? As I did my research, I opened up—to use a hillbilly phrase—a bucket of snakes. Getting a handle on the quest was a little like trying to stuff a rattlesnake into a gunny sack.

Dwight Billings, a scholar on the subject, said “...no region of the United States remains more deeply mired in poverty and economic distress than Appalachia. Central Appalachia in particular, as a region of chronic and persistent low income, is virtually synonymous both with rural poverty and with the difficulty of implementing effective policies of social betterment. Despite decades of sympathetic attention to the economic distress of Appalachia, however, the

social origins of its rural poverty...remain obscure (Billings, 2000, p. 3).” It is impossible to identify any single cause for Appalachian poverty, for it is a result of economics, culture and politics over a period of time and over a wide geographic area, each area with its own peculiar set of causes and effects.

Any study of Appalachia encounters the problem of finding “a handle—an unchanging definition—by which to grasp Appalachia...if there is an Appalachia it is a varied thing, and no single handle will serve very well (Ergood, 1976, p.vii).” The people are both rural and urban, the economy is varied, some are poor and others are poorer, and a few are rich. They came to the area both as settlers and as immigrants, and their regional characteristics differ. Geographically it covers an area from Quebec Canada to the southernmost foothills in Alabama and Mississippi. In the mid-1960s, as part of the War on Poverty effort, the federal Appalachian Regional Commission was formed and charged with delineating the boundaries of Appalachia which included thirteen states. I have chosen to focus on Central Appalachia which includes all of West Virginia, southeastern Kentucky, northeastern Tennessee and a wee bit of southeastern Ohio. Dr. William G. Frost, President of Berea College, once noted that with the exception of West Virginia Appalachia is made up of the back yards of nine states.

Until recently two basic theories have led to two basic approaches taken to “solving” Appalachia’s problems. One is the theory of “internal colonialism,” which sees the poor of Appalachia as victims of ruthless, corporate greed, and lack of social responsibility of the wealthy and powerful both within and outside the region. For example, Ada Haynes, in a scholarly economic study, using empirical evidence concludes that “Central Appalachian poverty is not an enigma, but rather serves the interests of capital within the region. The region has a rate of surplus value well above the national average, reflecting an above average rate of exploitation

within the region. The data presented...suggest that capital within the region is profiting from the misery of labor (Haynes, 1997, p. 143).” Harry Caudill’s book, Night Comes to the Cumberlands (1963) followed basically the same argument in a more readable style. Other approaches to “fixing” poverty in Appalachia have followed the culture-of-poverty theory.

The culture-of-poverty approach is to see the poor of Appalachia as in need of behavior modification. That is, if they will only allow themselves to be led by the hand into a middle class mode of thinking, then they will be incorporated into mainstream America’s way of life and poverty will be eradicated except for the lumpenproletariat. Critics have claimed that the culture-of-poverty approach to explaining the social ills of Appalachia is flawed because it does not take into account the diversity of the region and it blames the victim. It relies too much on the stereotypes of Daniel Boone, Li’l Abner and Dogpatch, the Hatfields and the McCoys, Ma and Pa Kettle, and in recent years the Beverly Hillbillies and the Dukes of Hazard. Yet when I interviewed two Fort Wayne residents who volunteer regularly at Henderson Settlement in Kentucky, it appears there may be some truth to the stereotypes. The non-working poor, living in the hollows have been burned so often by the power elite throughout several generations that there is a lack of trust of government, professionals and businessmen. In such instances social programs, run by religious organizations such as Henderson Settlement, fare better at relief and recovery efforts than do government programs. Cynthia Duncan, a scholar on rural poverty confirms this distrust in her study of why rural poverty persists in America (1999).

The two basic approaches then are that of (1) fixing a region that has been treated as an internal colony rich in resources to be exploited by the wealthy and powerful both inside and outside of the region, and (2) fixing a culture of poverty. Both provide insights, but not the answer (Billings, 2000, p. 8). In recent years some have said that it isn’t a matter of fixing the

regional economy but of re-thinking the economic structure of America; that is, these individuals question if progress in terms of ever-increasing consumption is sustainable. Regardless of whether one approaches poverty in Appalachia, or any where else for that matter, from the economic or the cultural point of view, there is another complex variable which is perhaps the most important, most complex and varying one: politics and the political structure. It has been said about Kentucky that, “Capitalist markets, state coercion, and cultural strategies worked together to set and keep Appalachian Kentucky on a distinct pathway that might be called Appalachia’s road to rural poverty (Billings, 2000, p.16).”

Why did Appalachia become so poor after the Civil War? The social ills of the region were primarily, a result of economic changes, influenced, exacerbated, or aided and abetted by the politics and culture of the people of the region. The most significant economic change was industrialization. Coal mining, lumber trade and cotton mills brought to the area a cash-wage economy that led to a gradual abandonment of the small farm. Some left the farm to become coal miners or mill hands and others left for the cities in the Midwest. Those remaining did well in boom economies and suffered in bust economies, which was no different from the rest of America’s poor.

Following the Civil War modern corporate capitalism began to flourish and became the *modus operandi* by the end of the nineteenth century. Richard Drake states that “The Appalachian region fit into corporate America’s plans mainly as a producer of fossil fuels (Drake, 2001, p. 117). “ Harry Caudill’s book, Night Comes to the Cumberlands, popularized the degree to which the coal barons with their industrial paternalism and corporate feudalism dominated the fortunes and misfortunes of eastern Kentucky. The industrialists “believed that the poor and authority should be in the hands of those who demonstrated their ability by

accumulation of great material wealth. They valued harmony, order and stability in the workplace, which meant they were bitterly anti-union, ...committed to achieving the highest profits for their companies, and when coal mining was no longer profitable, most left, with little or no concern about the future economic wellbeing of the region and its residents (Toney, 2006, p.12).” Harry Caudill took a hard stand against the industrialists; he was a native son and spoke from first-hand experience. In the early sixties his book brought attention to the plight of the poor in eastern Kentucky and the surrounding region. Politics has always been a major factor in that the wealthy industrialists (in the case of eastern Kentucky the coal barons) and local politicians have worked together to keep people in poverty so long as their labor was needed to mine coal, cut lumber, or work in the cotton mills. When federal projects came to the area, local politicians and the wealthy and powerful also worked together to milk the government cash cow. Essentially, when times were good, everyone, including the miners, did well, and when times were bad, all suffered economically, but as always those at the bottom of the downward trickle bore the brunt of bad times. Post-World War II economic history of Appalachia has been a series of boom and bust cycles. As America began to turn to natural gas and other forms of energy (along with the Great Depression which bankrupted most of the companies) some local miners set up small operations and began mining themselves. Many did well...for a while. Unfortunately, they assumed the good times would last forever, did not make good choices, and when the next bust cycle came along, they were left out in the cold once again. Some argue that isolation from the rest of the U.S. contributed to this. For example, when the small miners were getting rich between 1945-1950, they were not following national economic trends or the stock market. They were simply making money and spending it, oblivious to what was happening elsewhere in the national and world economy.

The first “outside” speculators to arrive in Appalachia bought timber and later land *in toto*. The broad form deed spelled disaster for the small Appalachian farmer. It sounded great when a smooth-talking representative from a coal company came along and bought the mineral rights to what was underground but left the land to the farmer. But as always there was small print, which allowed the company to use any method it wished to extract the minerals. The amount paid for this right was nothing compared to the profit made from it. A right to an acre could be as little as fifty cents. The speculators knew that it would be some years before railroads would make it feasible to bring a market for the minerals underground, so why buy the land itself and pay taxes on it. It was around 1885 when investors from the east and north sent men into the mountains to buy minerals on a grand scale as cheaply as possible, granting to the purchaser every desirable right to extract minerals, thus leaving the illusion of ownership along with responsibility for almost all the taxes which might thereafter be levied against the land. Later when the company decided it was more cost-effective to resort to strip mining and most recently mountain-top removal, landowners took a closer look at the broad form deed they or their ancestors had signed. Since state legislators were working with the coal barons, they were reluctant to consider any changes in the law. When strip or surface mining became the best option for extracting coal from the land, it destroyed the property and created major problems for the owner to say nothing of the effects on the environment.

The broad-form deeds gave the coal companies title to not only coal but oil, gas and mineral and metallic substances and all combinations of the same. They could use the surface for any purpose convenient or necessary to the company. They could use timber growing on the land for mining props, and they could pollute the water and cover the surface with toxic mining refuse. “The landowner’s estate was made perpetually ‘servient’ to the superior or ‘dominant’

rights of the owner of the minerals (Caudill, 1963, p. 74).” To add salt to the wounds a final clause freed the company from any liability for any damages caused directly or indirectly by mining operations on his land (Caudill, 1963, p.74). How could this happen? A majority of the small landowners could not read and even signed their land over using an “X” witnessed, of course, by a local politician or someone with an interest in the mining company. Broad form deeds continue to be contested and politicians continue to fight them. It has been said that the coal mining areas of Appalachia were and remain a lawyer’s paradise. Corporations, of course, have the money to fight cases; the poor land owners do not. Although attempts over the years were made to outlaw broad form deeds, they were not outlawed in Kentucky until 1988 with a Constitutional Amendment. Why did it take so long? Politicians were in the pockets of the corporations.

Wages for coal miners—if one had a job and was working—were not low by national standards. From 1880 until 1930 there were coal towns, textile mill towns, railroad towns, chemical towns and paper mill towns throughout the region, and most of the corporations took good care of the people, at a hidden high price—i.e., until the business collapsed. “At the height of the coal boom in the early years of the twentieth century, 78 percent of all coal miners and their families in Appalachia lived in a company-owned community (Toney, 2006, p.13).” When the economy was going well, many saw no reason to go to school, get an education and prepare for other work. Until, that is, the jobs began to disappear due to the boom and bust cycles and eventually technology which made it possible to mine more coal more efficiently with machines instead of people. People moved to Akron, Detroit, Cincinnati to find work, or remained in the hollows and went on the dole. Some who had saved money were able to become mining

operators on their own and do quite well, for a while, but eventually as other forms of energy (oil that is) came into the picture that changed.

The result of industrialization in Appalachia was sporadic economic growth with no long-term economic development; there was no spin-off economic development during the boom years (Toney2006, p.13). Moreover, infrastructure, unless it benefited the industries, was neglected. Infrastructure and education has, and continues, to suffer from tax policy of the states. Tax subsidies to industry, low taxes in general, and the wide extent of unemployment and poverty all mean that not much comes in, so schools, roads and infrastructure continue to deteriorate.

All of this is a gross over-simplification of the role of coal in the economy and poverty in central Appalachia, but it indicates the enormity and complexity of the problem. Similar issues surrounded the lumber industry and the textile industry as well. Poverty in different parts of Appalachia had different causes and effects, but basically the old agrarian, small farm economy had shifted to a cash economy based on extraction of natural resources and labor. Too, as jobs disappeared, many younger people left, leaving a high percentage of elderly, the mentally and physically handicapped, those suffering from black or brown lung disease, and those who simply gave up and decide to just “draw” as they said, meaning to draw welfare benefits. As one volunteer worker said, some have given up and just want to be alone and resent any interference in their lives, thus reinforcing the mountaineer stereotype.

Poverty in Appalachia was at its worst, again as it was everywhere in the U.S., during the Great Depression. Just as boom and bust economic cycles affected the rest of the U.S., so did the economic depression of the thirties, but once again it seemed to affect Appalachia to a greater

degree. It has been estimated that 75% of the Mountain population were on some kind of government assistance (Toney, 2006, p.15).

During the depression the company towns shut down and the people were left on their own. Company towns, at least some, worked well for the people even though as Tennessee Ernie sang, they “owed their soul to the company store.” A few company towns even provided hospitals and minimal medical care, but as companies failed the hospitals and stores disappeared.

New Deal programs were based on the three “r’s”: relief to care for immediate needs; recovery to get the economy back on its feet again, and reform to change certain things that were wrong with the economic system that had let us into the Great Depression (Drake, 2001, p.165). The first two seemed to work, and were intended to be only temporary, but as always “reform,” the most important “r” is the problem. Reform seldom happens and we are condemned to repeat history in yet another iteration of the same problems.

The program most often associated with the New Deal is the Tennessee Valley Authority. Like many government programs TVA morphed from a combination of broad-based community development, flood control, land management and the provision of electricity into something else. As more electricity was produced more was needed that could not be met with the hydroelectric dams alone, and around 1949 the TVA began building coal-powered electrical generating plants along the Tennessee River. In the meantime it was discovered that surface or strip mining was more cost effective and productive. Thus, the agency designed to restore and improve the land in the 1930s was by the 1950s and 1960s most responsible for the destruction of the Appalachian landscape through strip mining (Toney, 1006, p.17). In an attempt to make progress it seemed that we had merely exchanged one problem for another. “...The expansion of surface mining, and later mountaintop removal, leveled thousands of acres of mountaintops,

filling in the valleys between ridges and covering the heads of creeks with rubble. Blasts from these massive operations polluted or destroyed the well water of nearby homes, cracked foundations, and raised clouds of dust that settled everywhere (Eller, 2008, p. 227).” Although the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 was passed, a loophole allowed mountaintop removal to continue. The land did not need to be restored if the shaved-off mountaintop could be used for other economic uses. Coal companies quickly realized they could play upon the movement for economic development on the mountaintop and thus got exemptions; in many cases, however, the promised economic developments never materialized, “due to lack of enforcement, and communities were left with miles of deserted, treeless plateaus, poisoned water tables, and a permanently altered landscape (Eller, 2008, p. 227).” Most of these are remote and out of sight, but it is in the back country hollows where many of Appalachia’s poor live, surviving on the dole. As one drives down I-75 on his way to Naples, Florida, he doesn’t see these pockets of poverty an hour off the interstate. One sees outlet malls, recreational area signs, Wal-Mart’s, Burger Kings and other signs that Appalachia has been brought into the mainstream of the American economy.

What did Tennessee Valley Authority do for the poor? It gave them electricity. In 1933, 3.5 percent of the farms had electricity. By 1955, 90 percent of the farms were electrified. During that time industrial and residential use of electricity increased considerably (Whisnant, 1994, p.47). The farmers also benefited from flood control, reforestation, and the phosphate fertilizer program. Except for electricity TVA did little to help those who had “sold their souls to the company store.” They relied on the first of the New Deal “r’s”: Relief. Some scholars have argued that the relief “R” in the hands of local politicians contributed to a culture of poverty in that as the poor lost hope in their future and the possibility for change they became increasingly

reliant on the dole. A vote for a prominent politician at election time kept food on the table, the electricity on and the fire ablaze. Moreover, it isn't just the politicians who are the power elite. A family who lives "on the hill" may own a variety of different businesses in the area and in the job-scarce environment of a small community, the wealthy control employment, so that who one knows and how one relates to the new power elite (no longer the coal barons) means the difference between a low-paying job and no job at all.

During the fifties and sixties Appalachia had its ups and downs—for the rich, but not the poor. The "dirt poor," those at the bottom of the economic ladder, lost all hope and either left the area or settled into living on the dole. Generational poverty set in. A people who were historically independent and adaptive gave up. This is the situation that John F. Kennedy found when he visited Appalachia in 1960 on a campaign tour and pledged to do something for the poor in the region. Lyndon Johnson picked up where Kennedy left off and pledged to fulfill Kennedy's programs. After a well-publicized trip to Inez, Kentucky, Johnson pushed the Appalachian Regional Development Act through Congress. The bill called for federal funding for secondary and vocational education programs, highway construction, timber management programs, and widespread promotion of tourism...The bill also set up the Appalachian Regional Commission and ushered in the War on Poverty....[and] other programs were included like VISTA, the Office of Economic Opportunity, Job Corps and Head Start (Toney, 2006, p.19)."

Although the War on Poverty was not limited to Appalachia, the region once again became the poster child of federal programs. "Most historians who have studied the War on Poverty think that while it had some successes, generally it failed in Appalachia (Toney, 2006, p.20)," but as so often is the case it depends upon one's vantage point. Two views most often expressed are summarized by Richard Drake in his history of Appalachia:

The region's poverty level was higher than average, so a very high percentage of the people qualified for programs. There was a flurry of programs initially and a lot of activity. After that, funding was steadily reduced and by the early 1970s the war on poverty was essentially over. It left in its wake changes that increased levels of government support for the poor. States increased the availability of Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the Food Stamp Program, Medicaid for some, Head Start and Women's and Infants Nutrition. (Drake, 2001, p.165)

The more negative view is that the economic disasters in Appalachia's coal mining and agricultural industries meant large numbers were able to qualify for welfare benefits. Many who were drawn in never got out and in a few communities in the region welfare has effectively become a major "employer." Some feel that the welfare system has corrupted the Appalachian soul and it has undermined the mountaineer's traditional independence, and further corrupted mountain politics. (Drake, 2001, p.169)

Much was accomplished in the region by the War on Poverty, yet there is the fact that the programs were milked by local politicians which helped create the dependence on the dole. For example, when a block grant was given, it was given to the local region to use as it best saw fit. Immediately the local politicians began using it for patronage. First of all, the county leaders would appoint a relative as administrator of the program. Then as people lined up for aid they were told that Mr. X would take care of them and hoped they would remember him at election time. In addition Mr. X might do some creative accounting to skim off a little for home improvements, a paved road in front of his house, and other little things likely to go unnoticed by those reviewing funding, for after all the programs were many and the auditors were too busy to worry about micro-managing and nit-picking given the enormous sums of money dispensed by

the War on Poverty. Mr. X might even find ways to subsidize or help out industry with some tax breaks along the way or a new road to a mine, something to promote economic development. Contracts could be given to Uncle Joe or cousin Billy with impunity. It was the chronic problem of many laws and regulations but little or no enforcement of any of them, for too often we create a new law instead of enforcing an existing one that would do the job. And of course the people remembered Mr. X at election time, thus perpetuating the problem and reinforcing among the poor that the best way to get along is to go along. Nevertheless, people did get much-needed aid even though the rich got richer off the system as well.

There are three quite different classes in Appalachia: 1. the commercial town-oriented elite (doctors, lawyers, politicians, business people); 2. a few prosperous farmers in areas suitable to agriculture (parts of Virginia, e.g.); and 3. the “Branchwater Mountaineers,” who made up the labor force and accounted for the poverty. Thus there is a classic case of the haves and the have-nots. The haves hold the power and therefore control the have-nots. During the War on Poverty young, idealistic people along with VISTA volunteers recruited from colleges to serve in a domestic Peace Corps became known as “poverty warriors.” The inevitable occurred. The idealistic poverty warriors ran head-on against the region’s political/economic establishment that wanted to maintain the *status quo*. Political leaders welcomed the new programs and funds initially, but when the poverty warriors began to take seriously the provision that the programs were to include “maximum feasible participation of the poor,” they were thought of as troublemakers. The poverty warriors tried to organize the people through community action groups and fierce battles occurred between the haves and the poverty warriors fighting for the have nots. The political/economic leaders, of course, had strong ties to Washington; the poverty warriors were reliant on continued funding; and the poor for whom the poverty warriors were

fighting were manipulated by both sides. If one wanted a job and did not want to be black-balled by employers in the county, he steered clear of community action groups and their leaders.

With the election of President Nixon the “government focus shifted from fighting the causes of poverty, whatever they might be, to managing the growing welfare system. Under Donald Rumsfeld, Nixon’s nominee to head the OEO, most of the operating programs of the agency (including Head Start, Job Corps, and neighborhood health centers) were spun off to other departments. Funds for the Community Action division were gutted, and the OEO itself was abolished in 1973. For Nixon and for subsequent presidents, the problem in Appalachia and other poor places was how to reduce the tax burden from growing transfer payments to the poor rather than how to reform the economic and social system that had produced the region’s distress. From the government’s perspective, the War on Poverty was dead (Eller, 2008, pp. 155-156).”

The War on Poverty did increase the number of professionals in health care, education and legal services in the county seats despite the fact that they were controlled by the power elite. Some helped the poor; others simply prospered on the “growing buffet of government assistance programs.” Some banks, often owned by politicians, for example, got richer through construction projects of the programs. (Eller, 2008, p.156). Peter Schrag said, “the economic and political interests of Appalachia have a highly developed knack for using outside help to perpetuate the existing structure and the condition of dependency (1968, p.16).”

Statistical studies generally tend to point out that although there has been a decline in Appalachian poverty since the War on Poverty, pockets such as Central Appalachia continue to remain much poorer than the rest of America. Moreover, large numbers of people living just a hair above the poverty level, are not among the statistical poor, yet they likely suffer even more

from economic downturns than those on the dole who have a small but certain relief income. The so-called “working poor” often are not among the poverty statistics. A news report in Bluefield, West Virginia states that “Appalachia is now home to 13.3 million people living in poverty, according to U.S. Census Bureau figures released in August 2008.” (“Poverty Report,” 2008).

In Ronald Eller’s 2008 book, Uneven Ground, this scholar who has spent his entire career studying the region, explores the idea that “the assumptions that guided policy toward Appalachia were based on a limited range of alternatives and visions of the good life. Appalachia was not different from America; it was in fact a mirror of what the nation was becoming (p. 4).”

Along the interstates and major highways, built during the sixties and seventies the economy has prospered. We have brought Appalachia into the mainstream of America. It has now become “like us.” We have exchanged one set of problems for another. In lieu of grinding poverty for a majority of the people we now have a majority of working poor or marginal poor in a consumer-driven economy. We now have excellent medical facilities serving Appalachia, for those who can afford the high cost of insurance. Instead of black and brown lung disease we are fighting diabetes, heart disease, mental illness and obesity like the rest of America. The poor living in resort areas can now find low-paying, minimum wage, seasonal jobs with no benefits in the recreational areas that are playgrounds for those who “have.” Coal miners can find short-term employment moving a mountaintop in a month providing a quick profit for the operator, and then return to their homes in the hollow along a creek bank polluted and destroyed by the debris from the mountaintop. If one knows the right person and has not been blackballed in the community by the power elite, he might get a job driving a truck on a temporary basis.

A volunteer mission worker in one Appalachian state sums up the current situation in 2006:

“...[The people] need more job opportunities and improvement in those jobs that are already available. [They] need more people who are appalled at mountaintop removal, the successor to strip mining..., rather than people who seem to feel they are helpless to do anything about it. Some have called [it] the Third World of the United States, and in many ways it is. [It] is rich in natural resources that are being removed and are benefiting others, not the local people. The people here are given meager government aid to keep them quiet, and they, like people we have seen in poor countries, believe that they can do nothing to change their situation.” (Fuchs, 2006).

Ronald Eller in Uneven Ground sums up the current situation as follows:

The new highways, shopping centers, consolidated schools, and industrial parks had reduced the perceived otherness of Appalachia, but the new economy failed to provide security, hope, and meaning for the lives of many of the region’s residents. Persistent disparities in income, education and health status limited the life possibilities of young and old alike and hastened the disintegration of the once strong Appalachian family and culture. As the region entered a new century, communities throughout Appalachia again confronted the dilemmas of modernization: how to define progress, how to grow with equity and fairness, and how to change without losing the strengths of identity and tradition (2008, p.243).

Cynthia Duncan in a PBS interview concludes: “the poor of Appalachia have three choices: loyalty, exit or voice; accepting things as they are, loyalty to the *status quo* and the powers that be or get up and go. “...deep, fundamental change probably will only come when those in these poor regions raise their voice and work for change, and when those of us who do not live in poor communities see our own best long-term interest realized in making these investments that will open up opportunities for mobility(2009).”

I am sympathetic with Eller's view that "...public policies...based on the assumptions that poverty can be seriously addressed without structural change, that growth is good for everyone, that urban lifestyles and institutions are to be emulated, and that local regional markets are not important in a global economy (2008) "are unlikely to succeed in mitigating the poverty in central Appalachia. Relief and recovery efforts only buy time; reform is what must occur, and history as well as current events, indicates that reform is hard to come by. Often society can bear neither its ills nor the cure for them.

Appalachia is economically and politically a mirror of America. Cynthia Duncan studied poverty in three areas: one in New England, one in the Mississippi Delta and one in Central Appalachia. She concluded that fundamentally Appalachian poverty was not uniquely different from the other two. The sources of chronic poverty and the ways in which it is perpetuated are the same (PBS Interview, 2009). In an interview with two Fort Wayne volunteer workers at Henderson Settlement in Bell County, Kentucky, it was clear that the truly poor people in the hollows have fallen into generational poverty. Among these poor there is a sense of hopelessness that is a hard shell to break out of and statistically few do. The cost of generational poverty increases for the haves as the number of have-nots increases.

As a result of my quest I have come to the conclusion that only by a better understanding of the nature of generational poverty and trying to rescue from it (despite the statistical odds against doing so) will the U.S. be able to reduce the numbers of those living in poverty, rural or urban.

List of Works Consulted / Cited

- Baumann, R. (2006). Changes in the Appalachian Wage Gap, 1970 to 2000. *Growth and Change: A Journal of Urban and Regional Policy*, 37 (3), 416-443.
- Billings, D., Blee, K. (2000). *The Road to Poverty: the Making of Wealth and Hardship in Appalachia*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Bradshaw, M. *The Appalachian Regional Commission: Twenty-Five Years of Government Policy*. (1992). Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.
- Caudill, H. (1963). *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: a Biography of a Depressed Area*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Compton, G. (2000). The Many Faces of Appalachia.
www.kentuckyexplorer.com/nonmembers/0011032.html
Retrieved on November 14, 2009
- Drake, R. *A History of Appalachia*. (2001). Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.
- Duncan, C. (1999). *Worlds Apart: Why Poverty Persists in Rural America*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Eller, R. (2008). *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.
- Encyclopedia of Appalachia*.
Utp <http://utpress.org/Appalachia/?pg=about.php>
Retrieved on November 14, 2009.
- Ergood, B. & Kuhre, B. (Eds.). (1976). *Appalachia: Social Context Past and Present*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt.
- Fuchs, L. (2006, June 2). Do Helping Hands in Appalachia Do More Harm Than Good? *National Catholic Reporter*.
http://findarticles.com/P/articles/mi_m1141/15_31_42/ai_in16545991
Retrieved on November 14, 2009.
- Haynes, A. (1997). *Poverty in Central Appalachia: Underdevelopment and Exploitation*. New York: Garland.
- Payne, R., DeVol, P. & Smith, T. (2001). *Bridges out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities*. Highlands, Texas: Aha! Process, Inc.

Poverty Report—Appalachian Statistics Are Still Appalling. (2008, August 27). *Bluefield Daily Telegraph (West Virginia)*.

www.bdtonline.com/editorials/local_story_240161153.html

Retrieved on November 14, 2009

Schrag, P. (1968, January 27). Appalachia: Again the Forgotten Land. *Saturday Review*, p. 14+.

Toney, G., Ashbury, J. & Cox, R. (Eds.). (2006). *A Handbook to Appalachia: An Introduction to the Region*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press.

Van Gilder, L., & Roe, D. (2009). [Interview with two volunteers at Henderson Settlement in Kentucky, November 5, 2009)

Whisnant, D. (1994). *Modernizing the Mountaineer: People, Power, and Planning in Appalachia*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press.

Why Poverty Persists in Appalachia: An Interview With Cynthia M. Duncan. *Frontline*.

www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/countryboys/readings/duncan.html

Retrieved on November 14, 2009