

American Exceptionalism's Dark Side: Poverty and Despair in America

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America's endless wars on humanity at home and abroad expose its imperial rage for unchallenged global dominance, no matter the human toll, exploiting its own people like others abroad.

Vast destruction and millions of casualties attest to its brutality, revealing its contempt for human and civil rights, world peace and rule of law principles.

Poverty, homelessness, hunger, unemployment, underemployment, and overall deprivation in America increase under either wing of its duopoly governance – while Wall Street, other corporate predators, and its privileged class never had things better.

UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights Philip Alston published a [report](#) on poverty, deprivation, and despair in America – a damning indictment of what he learned firsthand.

He visited California, Alabama, Georgia, Puerto Rico, West Virginia, and Washington DC, meeting with experts, civil society groups, federal and state officials, along with impoverished and homeless Americans.

For countless millions of poor and neglected people, the nation is a wasteland of dystopian harshness, deprivation and despair – the Constitution's general welfare clause forgot, Alston saying:

"My visit coincide(d) with a dramatic change of direction in US policies relating to inequality and extreme poverty."

"The proposed tax reform package stakes out America's bid to become the most unequal society in the world, and will greatly increase the already high levels of wealth and income inequality between the richest 1% and the poorest 50% of Americans."

"The dramatic cuts in welfare, foreshadowed by the President and Speaker

Ryan, and already beginning to be implemented by the administration, will essentially shred crucial dimensions of a safety net that is already full of holes.”

“It is against this background that my report is presented.”

The world’s richest country increasingly doesn’t give a damn about its poor and disadvantaged.

Alston witnessed deprivation and despair firsthand, meeting with “people barely surviving on Skid Row in Los Angeles.”

In San Francisco, he encountered a police officer “telling a group of homeless people to move on but having no answer when asked where they could move to.”

He discovered how “thousands of poor people get minor infraction notices which seem to be intentionally designed to quickly explode into unpayable debt, incarceration, and the replenishment of municipal coffers.”

He saw sewage-filled areas where state authorities don’t consider sanitation important in impoverished areas.

He saw toothless adults unable to afford proper dental care. He learned about deaths and diseases from “prescription and other drug addiction.”

He saw human despair in Puerto Rico, impoverished people without electricity, running water, and other essentials in normal times, greatly exacerbated by Hurricane Maria over three months ago, many without enough food and other essentials for their families.

He saw positive and negative things, the latter outweighing the former. America’s wealth is enjoyed by its privileged class. Ordinary people struggle to get by.

US healthcare expenditures are double the average of other developed countries – its availability based on the ability to pay, notably to treat expensive illnesses and injuries.

US infant mortality is the highest among industrialized nations.

“Americans can expect to live shorter and sicker lives, compared to people living in any other rich (country), and the ‘health gap between the US and its peer countries continues to grow,” Alston explained.

US inequality way exceeds the level in other developed nations. Its obesity is highest among rich countries.

It ranks 36th worldwide in access to clean water and sanitation. It has the world’s highest incarceration rate by far, exceeding China’s and India’s, both countries with four-times the US population.

Its youth poverty exceeds other developed nations. America ranks last among the world’s most well-off countries in terms of labor rights, poverty, safety net protections, wealth, inequality and economic mobility.

Among 37 OECD nations, it ranks 35th in terms of poverty and inequality. The Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality calls America “a clear and constant outlier in the child poverty league.”

Registered voters are lower than in other OECD countries as a percent of its eligible population. Participation in US elections is low – the farcical process failing to serve ordinary people equitably.

Enfranchisement affords no rights in America – money, power and privilege alone served, ordinary people with no say over how they’re governed.

Alston: Republicans and Dems “reject the idea that economic and social rights are full-fledged human rights, despite their clear recognition...in key treaties that the US has ratified” – including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“(T)he United States is alone among developed countries in insisting that while human rights are of fundamental importance, they do not include rights that guard against dying of hunger, dying from a lack of access to affordable healthcare, or growing up in a context of total deprivation,” Alston added.

Poverty and deprivation in America are deep and growing. Michael Harrington’s “The Other America” (1962) got Jack Kennedy to investigate the problem.

Lyndon Johnson addressed it, saying his administration “here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America.”

It was little more than a skirmish, way short of what was needed, yet a step in the right direction – long since abandoned since the neoliberal 90s, and post-9/11 war OF terror priorities, along with serving privileged US interests exclusively.

Undemocratic Dems under the Clintons and Obama, along with Bush/Cheney and Trump administrations declared war on social justice in America.

It’s been eroding toward elimination altogether – Washington’s bipartisan criminal class at war on its poor and disadvantaged citizens.

Growing millions are grievously harmed. Imperial and corporate priorities take precedence.

America’s deplorable state is unfit and unsafe to live in for most of its people – because of deep-seated corruption, rampant human and civil rights abuses, governance for its privileged class exclusively, and imperial madness.

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My newest book as editor and contributor is titled “Flashpoint in Ukraine: How the US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III.”

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