

MARCH LWV MEETING, POVERTY IN CACHE VALLEY

Kris Hult introduced our guests for the meeting, Jess Lucero and Chantelle Griffin. She gave a brief introduction of the topic and why the Cache Valley league was interested in it.

Poverty in Cache Valley, Jess Lucero

- Lucero works at USU in social work and has studied a lot of issues related to both housing and homelessness. Her presentation looked at the topics through an academic and professional angle.
 - o Defining poverty federal guidelines:
 - Area median income or AMI is the average household income. Federally, that number is \$59,000 annually.
- Poverty in cache valley
 - o The highest poverty rate is in Logan City. Richmond has a near nonexistent senior poverty. Hyde Park has a high child poverty rate.
- Ratio of income to poverty
 - o Lucero stated that factors of poverty include where you live, type of housing, and access to resources/amenities matters.
 - The opportunities available also matter.
- Unpacking it...
 - o 18,616 people in Cache valley were below the poverty level in 2019.
- USU students...
 - o Lucero stated that many residents are students, who can influence the poverty levels and the low-income piece of Logan could be explained by that.
 - o Students are also living in poverty but are often discounted by government entities.
 - o However, it doesn't explain the whole big picture of over a 100,000 in the area.
- Intersection between class and race
 - o In 2019 the median white family had almost eight times more wealth than the median black family and five times more than the median Hispanic family.
 - o The 400 richest people in the U.S. hold more wealth than every black household plus a quarter of Hispanic households combined.
 - o Lucero explained that one of the biggest issues for neighborhoods of color included a hesitancy to give out loans, generational spillover for wealth and poverty, and environmental hazards.
 - Race is a really important factor in there and there are a lot of studies that show this.
 - o Comparing black and white men between class... rich and poor
 - 39% of white men who grew up rich remained rich as adults.
 - 17% of black individuals remain the same out of the same category.
 - Growing up poor...
 - 10% of white individuals can rise up to being in a rich category, only 2% of black individuals. This statistic is proportional.

- In both of these categories, races really matters. It's both shaping declines in mobility and preventing upward mobility in the United States.
- America's longest war — the war on poverty
 - The poor people's campaign
 - Moved by what was shared.
 - Part of MLK Jr.'s vision.
 - Disparities have grown wildly over the decades. Poor people's campaign is a multi-group and coalition dedicated to ending poverty.
- Poverty Is a policy choice
 - 12 solutions to cut poverty in the United States
 - Lucero suggested that child tax credits and earned income tax credits that were paid out in advance during the pandemic lifted many families out of poverty and suggested that was a policy area that could be further examined.
 - She added that there was a lot of scrutiny over lifting someone out of poverty compared to extreme tax cuts for the wealthy.
 - Lucero said this connects to core narrative and worthiness of people. In society, if you're poor it's your fault, you're immoral, etc.
 - She then asked the question: What can we do in the United States to solve these issues?

Chantelle Griffin, member of 4 Helping Hearts

- Griffin started noticing poverty and people who were needing a hand up in a few things, so her and three others founded 4 Helping Hearts to help.
- Griffin added that there are stipulations to using government provided programs such as EBT, which can be really hard for people who perhaps can't use those programs or cannot access them.
 - 4 Helping Hearts is a charity organization run through public donations. Griffin called the charity a gap in between to help with temporary housing until BRAG, the Bear River Associations of Government, including the homeless council, can help.
- Griffin explained that they have only been a charity for a year and their main goal is to help with housing. Most of the funding is going to hotel rooms and there are a large number of people currently needing help.
 - Part of the issue, said Griffin, was that affordable housing was hard to come by.
- The charity applied for a grant in early December and received \$71,000. That money is now gone due to the extreme number of people needing temporary housing.
- 29% of individuals helped are male, 16% are female, 25% are single with children and 19% are two parent families.

PIT count numbers

- A PIT Count is a count of homeless throughout the Bear River region (Cache, Rich, and Box Elder counties) done a few times a year. The most recent count found"
 - 15 unsheltered homeless and 77 people in motels. Those staying in temporary housing individuals are being funded by charities.

- 277 homeless people were identified in the count. 197 were in Cache County.