

“Though the split with her husband touched off Hall’s economic plunge, the broad outlines of her financial crisis are now shared by millions — more each month as figures tracking home foreclosures, food stamp use and unemployment continue to hover at rates not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

“Since 2008, about 44 percent of American families have experienced a job loss, reduction in hours or pay cut. Nearly 15 million adults are currently unemployed, and even without the most recent data from 2009, 14 million children, like Hall’s, were growing up in poverty. Rather than being publicly labeled as ‘reduced-lunch kids’ in front of their friends, many prefer to leave school hungry.

“Simply put, poverty is not good for the economy,’ said John S. Irons, research and policy director at the Economic Policy Institute. When children grow up poor, they have higher drop-out rates, less education overall and vastly diminished job prospects. Some economists estimate that childhood poverty costs Americans about \$500 billion per year in lost productivity and increased spending on health care and criminal justice.”

(From “The New Poverty” by Claudia Rowe. Reprinted from *Facing South: The Online Magazine of the Institute of Southern Studies*.)

## **Poverty Hurts Children**

More than 14 million children in America are now living in poverty. Most live in working families and more than 6 million of them live in extreme poverty. The current poverty line for a family of four is \$22,050 and the extreme poverty line for a family of four is \$11,025.

A disproportionate number of children living in poverty are Black and Latino. Poor children lag behind their peers in many ways beyond income: They are less healthy, trail in emotional and intellectual development, and are less likely to graduate from high school. Poor children also are likely to become the poor parents of the future. Every year that we keep children in poverty costs our nation half a trillion dollars in lost productivity, poorer health and increased crime. The moral cost to allowing child poverty to exist in a wealthy nation is incalculable.

## **We Can Help Children**

Poverty hurts children, but it doesn’t have to be this way. We can help end child poverty in our rich nation and ensure that all children have the opportunity to fulfill their God-given potential. Our vision is to end child poverty. We must invest in high quality education for every child, livable wages for families, income safety nets like job training and job creation, the Earned Income and Child Tax Credits, and work supports like child care and health coverage. We also work with partners to educate families about benefits for which they are eligible.

## Moments in America for All Children

Every second a public school student is suspended.\*  
Every 11 seconds a high school student drops out.\*  
Every 19 seconds a child is arrested.  
Every 19 seconds a baby is born to an unmarried mother.  
Every 20 seconds a public school student is corporally punished.\*  
Every 32 seconds a baby is born into poverty.  
Every 41 seconds a child is confirmed as abused or neglected.  
Every 42 seconds a baby is born without health insurance.  
Every minute a baby is born to a teen mother.  
Every minute a baby is born at low birthweight.  
Every 4 minutes a child is arrested for a drug offense.  
Every 7 minutes a child is arrested for a violent crime.  
Every 18 minutes a baby dies before his or her first birthday.  
Every 45 minutes a child or teen dies from an accident.  
Every 3 hours a child or teen is killed by a firearm.  
Every 5 hours a child or teen commits suicide.  
Every 6 hours a child is killed by abuse or neglect.  
Every 15 hours a mother dies from complications of childbirth or pregnancy.

\* Based on calculations per school day (180 days of seven hours each)

### Prayer

O God, help us to recover our hope for our children's sake.  
Help us to recover our courage for our children's sake.  
Help us to recover our discipline for our children's sake.  
Help us to recover our ability to work together for our children's sake.  
Help us to recover our values for our children's sake.  
Help us to recover our faith in Thee for our children's sake. Amen.

(By Marian Wright Edelman)

*To connect with the faith community resources and other work of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), the non-profit, non-partisan organization sponsoring the multi-faith National Observance of Children's Sabbaths celebration, visit [www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths](http://www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths) or contact CDF's Religious Action staff at [sjacobson@childrensdefense.org](mailto:sjacobson@childrensdefense.org).*

*Data calculated by the Children's Defense Fund.*

## Each Day in America

2 mothers die in childbirth.  
4 children are killed by abuse or neglect.  
5 children or teens commit suicide.  
9 children or teens are killed by firearms.  
32 children or teens die from accidents.  
78 babies die before their first birthdays.  
202 children are arrested for violent crime.  
377 children are arrested for drug offenses.  
964 babies are born at low birthweight.  
1,210 babies are born to teen mothers.  
1,240 public school students are corporally punished.\*  
2,060 babies are born without health insurance.  
2,175 children are confirmed as abused or neglected.  
2,222 high school students drop out.\*  
2,692 babies are born into poverty.  
4,435 children are arrested.  
4,498 babies are born to unmarried mothers.  
18,493 public school students are suspended.

\* Based on 180 school days a year

### Prayer of Commitment by Marian Wright Edelman

God did not call us to succeed,  
God called us to serve.  
God did not call us to win,  
God called us to work.  
God did not call us to live long,  
God called us to live for [God.]  
God did not call us to be happy,  
God called us to be hopeful.  
God did not call us to fame,  
God called us to faith.  
God did not call us to seek power,  
God called us to seek peace.  
God did not call us to loot the earth and each other,  
God called us to love our earth and each other. Amen.

*Data calculated by the Children's Defense Fund.*

## What Can You Do to Be a Blessing to a Child Living in Poverty?

### Be a Blessing by Speaking Out

- Communicate regularly with your legislators and urge them to lead on behalf of poor children and families. Sign up for the Children's Defense Fund's legislative updates so you will be informed and equipped to act.  
[www.childrensdefense.org/signup](http://www.childrensdefense.org/signup)

### Be a Blessing by Reaching Out

- Volunteer as a tutor or mentor to a child in a low-income family.
- Make sure families know about the benefits for which they are eligible, like the Earned Income Tax Credit. Work with a community agency to spread the word.
- Talk with families experiencing financial difficulties or with staff of organizations and agencies serving them. Listen for ways you can help.
- Give even more generously than you already are of your time, talents, goods, and money to benefit children living in poverty.

### Be a Blessing by Praying

- Pray for families in difficult financial circumstances. Pray that each of us will find ways to use our resources of time, skills, money, and political influence to end child poverty. Pray that our leaders will show courage and compassion and make ending child poverty a priority.



Children's Defense Fund

## Blessed to Be a Blessing: Lifting Up the Next Generation

“For much of her adult life, Tinsa Hall felt like she had it made, at least relative to where she'd been. She lived in a six-bedroom home on a wide, tree-lined street in a solidly middle-class neighborhood. Her husband fixed computers for a living. They had three healthy children, and Hall, who'd had some difficulty with her own academic career, attended every school board meeting she could, vowing that her kids would get a better start in life than she. Until last year, that appeared to be the case.

“But things have changed. Hall, 36, now lives in a squat, dark rental on the other side of town, where the sidewalk is jagged and the streets are pocked with holes. Her grand old home was gutted by fire last spring, and her marriage was in tatters months before that. She supports her family on \$19,080 a year — poverty-level wages, according to the federal government — earned training local youth in alternatives to violence. Often, the job keeps her late into the evening, meaning that her teenage son and two daughters are on their own for dinner.

“Hall, however, is glad to have the work. Unemployment in her home state, Mississippi, is over 14 percent for African Americans, and with no college degree, she sees little opportunity to earn more. Rent eats up a third of her monthly income, and after utility bills, food, her car payment and gas, there is nothing left to save. ‘I feel like I'm starting all over again,’ she said.”