Inequality in Alabama

There are a number of ways in which the poverty of some people in the state, contrasted with the resources of others, is a reflection of fundamental inequality within Alabama society. The primary inequalities often are race- and gender-based. First, in terms of income, we saw above that while 307,270 households had less than $15,000 in annual income, another 89,432 had more than $150,000 in annual income in Alabama. Women in the state make only 74.1 cents for every one dollar that men earn. In addition, in 2007, white workers’ median wages were 26% higher than those of black workers. Second, in terms of education, while 23% of the white population has completed college and only 17.6% dropped out before finishing high school, the numbers almost reverse themselves for the black population, where only 14.3% have completed college and 25.2% dropped out before finishing high school. Third, in terms of the very beginning of life, the infant mortality rate for a white person in the state born in the period from 2003 to 2005 was 6.91 per 1,000 live births, while that for black infants was 13.73 per 1,000 births. For Hispanics, it was 7.69 per 1,000 live births. Fourth, unemployment continues to impact minority workers much more acutely than white workers. Currently in Alabama, the unemployment rate is 6.8% for white workers, but for black workers it is 17.4%. By the second quarter of 2010, it is projected to be 7.6% for whites and 19.6% for blacks.

WHO ARE ALABAMA’S POOR?

- 240,518 are children (21.7% of kids)
- 74,185 are elders (12.1% of seniors)
- 398,132 are adults 18 – 64 (14.1% of adults)
- 308,711 are in female-headed families (36.4% of such families)

LOOKED AT ANOTHER WAY:

- 296,934 males are poor (13.6% of males)
- 415,901 females are poor (17.7% of females)
- 354,197 whites are poor (11% of whites)
- 324,219 blacks are poor (27.8% of blacks)
- 37,032 Hispanics are poor (29.1% of Hispanics)
- 27,912 immigrants are poor (21.6% of foreign-born)

WHAT ABOUT HEALTH AND POVERTY?

- 14.1% of people in Alabama are not covered by health insurance; Alabama ranks 30th among the states in health coverage.
- The infant mortality level in the state is 8.96 per 100,000 births, ranking 46th (tie) among the states.
- The life expectancy of a child born in 2005 was 839.000.
- There are a number of ways in which the poverty of some people in the state, contrasted with the resources of others, is a reflection of fundamental inequality within Alabama society.

WHAT ABOUT EDUCATION AND POVERTY?

- 529,049 people did not finish high school—27% are poor.
- 952,461 people finished high school—13.2% are poor.
- 859,230 had some college or associate’s degree—8.9% are poor.
- 673,503 people finished college or more—only 3.4% are poor.
- Median spending per year per elementary and high school aged student: $9,124.
- There are 15,754 Head Start slots in the state.

HOW MANY HOUSEHOLDS GET INCOME ASSISTANCE FROM GOVERNMENT?

- 186,429 received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP)/food stamps last year; this was 10.3% of all households in state.
- 84,922 received Supplemental Security Income for the elderly and disabled.
- 23,307 received Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF, formerly AFDC).

WHAT ABOUT HOUSING AND POVERTY?

Families are considered to be “housing burdened” when they pay more than 30% of their income for rent or mortgages. In Alabama, 294,288 homeowners (23%) are paying more than 30% of their income for housing. 217,509 renters (48.1% of all renters) are paying in excess of 30% of household income for rent. In addition, while not always an indication of poverty, 309,234 families (14.3% of all families) are living in mobile homes in Alabama. Further, 120,887 households (6.7%) have no motor vehicle.

WHAT ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT?

Unemployment is one of the most common causes of poverty. In August 2009, there were 217,306 unemployed workers in Alabama (10.38% of the workforce). This was an increase of 104,748 unemployed workers—a shocking 93% increase—since August 2008. Among women, unemployment was 9.6%; and among blacks it was 17.4%. For eligible unemployed workers, the average weekly unemployment compensation benefit is $208.03.