How Government Creates Poverty as We Know It

Guest post by Charles Johnson.

Governments—local, state, and federal—spend a lot of time wringing their hands about the plight of the urban poor. Look around any government agency and you'll never fail to find some know-it-all with a suit and a nameplate on his desk who has just the right government program to eliminate or ameliorate, or at least contain, the worst aspects of grinding poverty in American cities—especially as experienced by black people, immigrants, people with disabilities, and everyone else marked for the special observation and solicitude of the state bureaucracy. Depending on the bureaucrat's frame of mind, his pet programs might focus on doling out conditional charity to "deserving" poor people, or putting more "at-risk" poor people under the surveillance of social workers and medical experts, or beating up recalcitrant poor people and locking them in cages for several years.

But the one thing that the government and its managerial aid workers will never do is just get out of the way and let poor people do the things that poor people naturally do, and always have done, to scratch by.

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