

CAS 30 Brave Minutes Podcast 35: Poverty

Richard Gay, Narrator and Editor: Welcome to 30 Brave Minutes, a podcast of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. In 30 Brave Minutes we'll give you something interesting to think about. Our program is now available on iTunes and PodBean, making it even easier to find us. Joining Jeff Frederick, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences is Dr. Bryan Robinson, the UNCP Vice Chancellor for Advancement. With them is Dr. Tamara Savage, Assistant Professor of Social Work. The topic for today is Poverty. Get ready for 30 Brave Minutes.

Jeff Frederick: By many metrics the US economy is performing well. Various unemployment rates are at historically low levels. Interest rates remain quite low making it possible for first-time homeowners to borrow money to get started on a picket fence, shade trees, and a flower garden. In fact, respondents to surveys still often correlate their vision of the American dream with home ownership. The stock market is robust and even nominal wage growth is on the rise, though it is barely outpacing inflation. Given how stark the Great Recession was and how methodical the recovery has been, what's not to like? Looking deeper, the tentacles of poverty remain firmly entrenched in many aspects of American life. Many particularly acute issues are proliferating in rural communities including right here in Southeastern North Carolina. If we start with metrics like the current population survey annual social and economic supplement, which is part of the US Census, it appears as many as 40 million Americans or 12 to 13 percent of Americans in general are living below the poverty line. As the UC Davis Center for Poverty Research reminds us, the official poverty measure triples the inflation adjusted cost of minimum food diet and creates thresholds based on family size, composition, and the age of the householder. And anyone living in a household with an income below their relative poverty threshold is considered to be in poverty. Deep poverty is a separate gradation with the US Census Bureau using the term to signify someone living in a household with total cash income below fifty percent of the poverty threshold. American dream notions of social mobility notwithstanding, in every century rural folk have dealt with a myriad of difficulties which make it hard to climb out of poverty. Across the South late 19th century Southerners, white, black, and American Indian were often poor sharecroppers who struggled to ever

own their own land. Recently here in North Carolina the end of the tobacco subsidy and post NAFTA textile mill relocation has imprinted a new economic normal. Throw in a couple of devastating hurricanes over the last three years and you have a recipe for serious problems for people who may even fall short of the living from paycheck to paycheck standard. Many rural Americans struggle with access to medical care and despite relatively cheap land prices find themselves unable to afford adequate housing or even stay afloat with a residence that does not meet basic needs. In the digital age the broadband divide makes it hard for the poor to use the internet to look for jobs, or for their children to complete homework assignments if the work has to be downloaded and then submitted digitally. Every day people choose between medical care and food. Seniors without much margin for error make decisions and choices about the best way to use limited funds to solve multiple problems. If your glass of water is half empty, the disparity of income and the concentration of wealth is eerily similar to the 1920's, a period of unbridled economic expansion and deregulation, which eventually broke apart in the desperation of the Great Depression. If your glass of water is half full you take comfort in the fact that global poverty, world hunger, and child labor are all trending in a positive direction. Worldwide child mortality is thankfully down and life expectancy is increasing. Our topic for today is poverty with a special emphasis on those living in rural areas. Joining me are Tamara Savage and Dr. Brian Robinson, both PhD's, both of whom have studied these problems from the inside out and both will shed some light for our listeners today. Welcome.

Savage and Robinson: Thank you.

Frederick: So at the basic level, how do you both, as experts, study poverty? How does that work?

Savage: Well, I'm a social worker and so I'm interested in people that are in poverty and how they're living day to day especially at the intersection of race and gender and class. Specifically, I'm interested in the most impoverished - homelessness and people who are experiencing homelessness. So that's one area. I'm also interested in the neurobiology of poverty. How does that affect children and their brain development? Right? So we know that we make neural pathways when we're presented with an event of some sort and we're seeing now that really

impoverished environments, impoverished schools, impoverished neighborhoods, that they actually have a detrimental effect on children's behavior and the neural pathways that they're making. So those are two ways that that I've been studying poverty.

Robinson: Well, we also know that poverty has a relative character. So some people will say: well, compared to Sub-Saharan Africa or compared to other parts of the world, do we have poverty? And the answer is clearly yes, we do. It's relative. Your ability to function in your society and in your community and the means and the resources that you have, determine your socioeconomic status. In my studies, and I started out in life in a trailer park in a very small town in Kentucky. And you know, I had plenty of meals given by the federal government. My mother and I would make crackers and cheese and that was dinner, and so, for some of us, this is very visceral and it's based on our experiences. As an academician, what I would say is I believe rural poverty to be the single greatest issue facing our country since Lyndon Baines Johnson declared war on poverty in the 60's. We've seen some positive trend lines, but we still know that poverty, particularly rural poverty, is persistent and it's deep and it's generational. So, from the standpoint of studying it, we have to understand that the kids in the Mississippi Delta are facing slightly different issues, maybe than kids in Southeastern North Carolina, but the effect is the same. We know the first 18 months is very deterministic for brain development. We know that with certainty. We know about literacy and porosity and what is taught in the home and in the school and how the earlier the better and how it affects literacy.

Frederick: So lots of great stuff here. So there's a racial and gender component here. There's also a comparative component of time and place and context and all of these fit together. So, from both of your walks of life, you have to study economics and history and medicine and educational development, and psychology, and you have to study a ton of different things in order to get a grasp on a racial or gender ramification within a specific time or context or place.

Savage: Yeah. Exactly. Being a social worker, we study a lot of history and during the Progressive Era is when we really started this idea of public policy about, you know, to address poverty. And so it goes back sometimes, our policy, which all of

our research hopefully leads to that: this idea of how do we view poverty in the beginning? Right? How do we view it as human beings? And we see throughout history there tends to be a couple of ways. You know, one is are people worthy or they unworthy? Is the issue a public issue or is it a private trouble? Right? Is there some personal pathology that leads to people being poor or is it more structural? Is it a public problem? And so, I talk every day in my classes about this, because it really underlies all the policy and really our day-to-day views of poverty whether or not you're going to give to homeless students or not. Are they deserving or undeserving? Right? And that's run through our history of poverty. We're always, there's this tension that's there all the time. We're making these determinations and that shows up in our policy that we have today.

Frederick: And the value judgments vary based on a person's own upbringing and own world view of how they're interpreting why someone is poor and why someone is not.

Savage: Exactly.

Robinson: But we also know and I love this segue to public policy. What we also know is that one size does not fit all with public policy. Again, go state by state, area by area. We also know the sibling birth order is a factor in the family dynamic. We see cases in the Appalachian part of Ohio where very poor schools are enrolling kids in college at a high rate. We see cities and other areas where schools are enrolling kids at a very low rate. So it comes down to interventions and the dynamic between the family, the community, the higher education structure, and the K through 12 structure. So what fits in Washington DC doesn't fit in Kentucky, and may not fit in North Carolina. So then we're down to state legislators and the wisdom of state legislatures and who is doing what and where the resources are coming from. So again poverty being relative, we can't look at this as a one-size-fits-all problem and we have to start addressing this community by community, and who isn't a stakeholder? Everyone is a stakeholder.

Frederick: Right. And we're all sort of coming out of our own context. Right? So your context was the Kentucky upbringing that you had. I grew up in Florida in a middle-class household, but I did play ball and go to school with people who wore the same clothes day after day and if we had a team meal, they would be taking

everyone's leftovers. It doesn't always occur to you immediately that that might be their next meal. You just think that they might be hungry. And you grew up in Georgia.

Savage: I grew up in Georgia. Yeah, and I grew up impoverished. I've lived in public housing in Georgia and yeah, I had the government cheese and we had...

Robinson: We called it Reagan cheese.

Savage: And we had food stamps then. They were actually stamps and so I grew up with that. So I know what that's like. Most of what was coming down for us came from the federal level at that point in time and so I felt really constrained by federal policies at times because it was the Reagan Era. There was a lot of cutbacks during that time that we were growing up by that administration but public housing he cut from 90 billion to 19 billion in 1983. So there were huge cuts and I felt it because that was my day to day life. Then I went off to college and I was basically on my own in college. I was able to get scholarships and but I know it was before McKinney-Vento. We spent some times homeless. There was none of that and then I went off to college with that and then again it was the invisibility of it, right? And often time poverty is invisible. Ralph Ellison said, you know, he said that I'm invisible simply because people refuse to see me.

Frederick: Yeah.

Savage: Right? And so that's what I've seen with poverty is that I have been refused to be seen and then I see the students I work with today, the same thing. And even around here, right? You can drive around with rural poverty, and I know we'll get to in a minute but it is, you know, there's this mixture and in urban poverty, you can kind of go down certain streets or blocks and there's this concentration and we don't see that as much in rural poverty. So there's this invisibility.

Frederick: And it creates an isolation for people living in that moment of poverty to where they feel disempowered to have conversations publicly out of a sense of embarrassment or humiliation or nobody wants to hear my story.

Robinson: And, thankfully, a child living in an urban context typically is able within a few blocks to access resources. What does a kid 15 miles away from anything, in a trailer park, do? And the minute that that teenager takes his or her first drug or the minute that the teenager becomes pregnant, statistically its game over, and we just know that it's hand-wringing and upsetting to say it but statistically it's a fact.

Frederick: Well, let's pull that apart a little bit. What are the unique challenges? You mentioned geography for the rural poor and that makes access to medical treatment and medical care and all those sorts of things more challenging. What other facets of world poverty make it particularly challenging?

Robinson: We also know as mentioned earlier in the digital age, access and resources to pay the ever-increasing cable bills and the access is an issue. Mobile phone access and it is an issue or keeping them on, you know, and being able to pay for that. But isolationism just in and of itself has a psychological effect. It really and I've experienced this myself, when you feel cut off from other things, other people, you have to understand when you're in the same circle of people and you're going to - I'm going to use my 15-mile location again - when you're poor, but everyone else around you is poor, it's okay to be poor. And it's almost something that you expect. You don't necessarily embrace it but you just almost accept it, and you begin to function within that structure. We talked to families when I was a doctoral researcher and they couldn't tell me anything about a FAFSA or college application, but that mother would know when and what day and what time to be at the food pantry or to get the utility company assistance. I'm not criticizing that. I'm just literally saying they would they learn how to function within that context. And then what happens, just one extra layer, we would talk to families and literally, I had a mother and a father say to me at one point, well, what's wrong with the way we live? Or, you know, what's wrong with where we're from? And I was worried that it was almost taken as being judgmental to them, but what they were saying was, yeah, we want our children to be successful, but on the other hand are you saying something is wrong with the way we've raised our kids? So there is a generational psychological dynamic to this, too. You begin to accept that that's who you are, where you're from, and also with poverty comes poor health and poor health indicators. So we have 20 year-olds taking care of 40 year-

old parents and we have 40-year old parents burying 60 year-old parents, with tobacco usage and drug usage. So we're getting into the layers pretty quickly, but that's what unique about rural poverty particularly. It's literally the isolationism, which is multi-factorial.

Frederick: So you want services, you need support, but you may be in a situation where you call and you say how do I do this? And someone says well, go to this web page, fill out this form, and then you know, someone will contact you in seven days. Well, you know, the web page may not fit your phone and you may not have access. You certainly may not have a computer, or you have a computer but you don't have access to broadband. And so getting the answer to your problems or getting started down the journey to the answer to your problems becomes virtually impossible.

Robinson: And you may be functionally illiterate.

Savage: Right. Exactly. And then, even if they tell you there's a place to go to, so you don't have to use the internet, then just getting to a place can be very problematic because you are 15 miles away from everything and so transportation isn't there. There's no bus service in rural America for the most part and so then you rely on the patchwork of social service agencies to try to help you get from place to place and it is very fragmented. You know, whether it be the nonprofit agencies or the for-profit agencies or the federal government or the state government, it's very fragmented.

Frederick: And then to Bryan's point, when you get trapped in this cycle of desperation, you know self-care sometimes becomes making a bad decision which ameliorates the conditions for a few moments but doesn't help solve your problem and then you essentially have expanded your problems.

Savage: Yeah. And also when you're talking about people who are impoverished, whether they are urban or rural, with substance use, many people use substances throughout the socio-economic strata, right, but the penalty if you are impoverished is much higher and the impact is much higher, right? So a wealthy person can use cocaine recreationally, or what have you, and they have the means.

They have the access to health care when things go south and when you're very impoverished you don't have that access.

Robinson: It's more turn deterministic and fatalistic for those people.

Frederick: And it can roll right back into economics and public policy. So, the county or the state that you're living in wants to raise some more money so they make a decision to throw some additional sales tax on something. Well, if we're all paying sales tax on milk, the person like me who's working at a university, it's a few extra pennies and I'm fine, but over the course of a year the totality of those use taxes or sales taxes becomes exorbitantly punitive to people who have very little extra dollars to invest in a gallon of milk that now has become more expensive.

Robinson: And speaking of the margins, if you have a furnace that goes out, or you have a refrigerator that dies, working at a university, you can absorb that cost. When someone in rural America who's living dollar to dollar, perhaps paycheck or subsidy to subsidy, an event like that triggers a series of subsequent events that is very hard to recover from. The rural poor live on the margins so very tightly.

Frederick: And it's equally true that while we're also a nation of immigrants - we're just about everybody is from originally somewhere else and came here to sort of stitch together into this quilt that has become America - we're all also equally sharing the characteristic of being poor. You know, if we go back far enough, right, whether it was coal miner, or whether it was sharecropper, or whether it was a slave, whether it was someone who was dispossessed of their property. We all share that in common, but to the point that you made earlier about isolation, you know, after a generation or two some of that seems to be stripped out of our DNA and we act like, well, we've never had that situation when in fact, pull up a census record, you go back a generation or two and we all have been poor, come from poor stock, as it were.

Savage: Yeah, but there were opportunities historically, especially for white people that have kind of helped us give a leg up, right? I mean the Great Depression. A lot of the program's to ameliorate the poverty they went to white people, right? The southern blacks weren't really allowed those because the white Democrats said,

we're not going to allow your great your programs to come in here if you also include African Americans. And then after World War II, of course, there were the GI grant, that program that mostly benefited white men. So there were this ability to kind of pull yourself up a bit right by those opportunities where lots of people of color especially they weren't given that ability. And women, you know,

Frederick: It's fair to say historically in the way that America's society has functioned from a power perspective has also been applied across the board to the way that we have addressed poor people. So at a time period where men were disproportionately more likely to receive benefits, and white men and eventually over the past 20 or 30 years those conditions have improved for people of color and for women?

Savage: Yeah, but we're still not closing the gap right I mean for If you look the gender pay gap for white women, that's what 80 cents to every dollar that a white male makes and for women of color it's anywhere from 60 to 65 cents. So we're making inches, you know towards, you know, some sort of equality, but we still have a long way to go especially for peoples of color.

Chancellor Robin Cummings: This is Chancellor Robin Cummings and I want to thank you for listening to 30 Brave minutes. Our faculty and students provide expertise, energy, and passion, driving our region forward. Our commitment to Southeastern North Carolina has never been stronger through our teaching, our research, and our community outreach. I want to encourage you to consider making a tax-deductible contribution to the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. With your help we will continue our impact for generations to come. You can donate online at uncp.edu/give. Thanks again for listening. Now back to more 30 Brave minutes.

Frederick: We've painted a relatively bleak picture so far. Let's throw a ray of sunshine in here. What are some things that work within all of this absolutely multivalent problem where there's all these things coming together and it's hard to pull them out? There are some success strategies, right?

Bryan Robinson: Right. There are and you know, rural life has some nice aspects too, like Sunday school and Bible school and lemonade and beautiful days at the park and the rural life can be safer statistically.

Frederick: It's easier to hang a tree stand in the countryside than it is in the city.

Robinson: There certainly are benefits. I'm very proud of where I come from and I'm glad that I did. Having said that, we know and we were able to find and research that I was privileged to be a part of the Bellarmine University from Kentucky, is that when we focus in a particular county unemployment statistics, when we control for employment and we're able to isolate a couple of co-variants, we're actually seeing an increase in two and four-year college enrollment. And two year enrollment means diesel mechanics, plumbers, carpenters, electricians because under the Obama Administration a lot of those trade skills were moved to the two-year college. So I think the two-year college and the trade has a definite place in this context across our country. Having said that we also saw an increase in four year college enrollment. So we know if we can increase two and four-year college enrollment that's less crime and more taxes paid, you know in these contexts. So we know, again, I'll stay with the point that one size doesn't fit all but we know county, even county to county, we know what the answers are in many cases. We need the strength and the will and legislators and policymakers coming together to recognize and address the problem.

Frederick: And sometimes those answers are governmental. Sometimes they are faith-based. Sometimes they're nonprofit. Sometimes they're familial...

Robinson: It's all of them.

Frederick: How do you know when to deploy which of these sorts of agency-based approaches to solve a county-by-county problem?

Savage: Well, I think in the work that I've done, community-engaged work is really, I've seen lots of positive jobs from that, but I think it's because we got the community together. The faith-based community as well as the nonprofits working with people in their geographical area, doing what they would like to do. For instance. I was a part of a program in rural South Carolina where we were trying to

address this idea of obesity, hypertension, and diabetes and there were the local farmers. We were able to work with them to come up with a farmers market and we also worked with the local health providers to write prescriptions to their patients to go to the farmers market. And so everyone was buying into this and it was wonderful because what we saw was people who would never come to farmers markets to get fresh produce for a really low price we're starting to come. And it was a large geographical area, so we had to work with many of the health care providers, but they thought this is low cost for me. All I have to do is write this prescription to go to the farmers market and the farmers were really excited to have a farmers market because not only were the people coming that the prescriptions were written for but the local people were coming. But it took about six to eight months of really talking to the community and saying what is it you would like to have happen and how we would like to increase, you know, health outcomes or make them better, and that's what they came up with. I would never have come up with that, you know, it was a fascinating idea but it just came from community engagement.

Robinson: Well, and I think it's appropriate to mention in these counties where we experience in our area here in North Carolina with food deserts, that helps address food deserts, but that's also educational for the populace. Wal-Mart and McDonald's have figured it out. They figured out that a family living below the federal poverty line can come in and ride that dollar menu. And I'm not being critical of Wal-Mart and McDonald's, I'm just saying you can go and very cheaply buy a lot of processed food and a lot of fast food that's hot and feed your children especially if times are very tight. So continued education with farmers markets and about nutrition and you know tobacco, the abatement and usage of tobacco is very crucial because that affects obesity and health rates and all those things which just exacerbates the entire picture.

Frederick: I really loved your example because it originated out of a local area, right? So there's an old expression that says I'm from Washington DC or I'm from Raleigh and I'm here to help you and people go running from you. But when local people produce an alternative that helps the local farmers, that helps create healthier food options, but also creates an opportunity for community, people don't just come to the farmers market to get a zucchini or cucumber they come to have

conversation. And so they find this sense of community and it's good for all elements of the soul.

Savage: Exactly.

Robinson: We also found a story. I'd studied a lot about Appalachia which bleeds into Ohio, a lot of people don't really realize that. But in Ohio, there was actually a story, it was a white bread story, where they were talking about white and wheat bread and they were trying to get people to eat wheat bread and they would have preferred white bread, but we saw a particular story at a school and they utilize goal setting. What they did was they took the kids starting in the first grade with the parents leading up to the time of high school graduation and they set specific goals: academic, life-social skill goals. They taught people to look one another in the eye when you talk, to shake hands appropriately, firmly, to dress appropriately and professionally. You don't have to be wealthy to dress and take care of yourself, so they taught these life skills as well as setting academic goals that were attainable and the enrollment rate in college, the high school graduation rate, or leading to a trade was phenomenal. So we know interventions work. It takes intentionality and it just takes me enough people to care.

Frederick: What's next? What would you like researchers to study next? Where are you heading in terms of another direction of getting deeper and deeper into both understanding the conditions and identifying some solutions?

Savage: Well, I think next I've been interested in the policies that are out there, especially at the federal level, and how we can change those in a way that would really help the impoverished communities. You know, the earned tax income, right, income tax when you get some money back from that. That would be great if we extended that to people that didn't have children that were impoverished. Right now that earned tax income is only for people who have children. That would be a nice way to sort of help people that are impoverished. I think also looking at the criminalization of poverty is really important. Right now, since I work with people that are homeless there are lots of townships and communities that arrest people that are homeless because they're in encampments in public spaces. When I used to work for a homeless shelter, they would, actually we called it Greyhound therapy. They would actually arrest the homeless people and give them a one-way bus

ticket to Charlotte and say either you leave or there'll be other consequences. So they would come to us. We'd actually go to the bus station because we knew that...

Frederick: That's where you would find people.

Savage: That's where you would find people. Yeah, it was a place to find people. So I think having community efforts where they're helping people that have encampments and even in rural areas people are in encampments. So it's not just in urban areas that that happens and I think working with police and public policies so that we're not criminalizing it, we're not arresting people because they are homeless. That just doesn't do anything except get people out of your way for a moment, but it hasn't anything to help with poverty. I think the school to prison pipeline. Lots of those kids are impoverished. Lots of those kids are kids of color and I think we need to take a hard look at that and change public policy for that because we know the outcomes. Once you go to prison your outcomes are pretty dire after that.

Robinson: Well, I agree with a lot of what my colleague and friend has said. I don't believe the federal government, with all due respect to President Johnson, and leading back to the 60s and to the present day that the federal government is going to solve poverty in the sense that it's, oh, we can check the box; it's solved. It is very much a community issue. That having been said, the federal government and the best thing the taxpayers can do is provide funding for intelligent programs that we know work and that we can reproduce in different contexts. Having said that, as for me, what I'd like to spend the rest of my career and life continuing to study is that poverty is structural. It has a very structural nature. Your ZIP code is deterministic. The geography you are from is deterministic. Genetically, there are things that are predetermined. So, I myself feel like in some measure, coming from a small town, I was able, I don't want to say escape, but education was the catalyst for me as I think it is for so many people. So I think investments in education, investments in goal setting, which doesn't take anything other than just effort and intentionality and focus. Mentoring is a big part of this too. But you have to have the church, the community organizations, and entities like the United Way. Communities have to come together because just every 1% we move the needle we save thousands of lives. We improve thousands of lives and then that repeats to

other people, but poverty is structural. It's just inherent. It's the way it is, but what we can do is we can provide mechanisms to significantly move the needle.

Frederick: So the answer might not be a prescription. One thing designed to fix one problem. It's a multivitamin. You need something that can address a bunch of different things at one time.

Robinson: It is indeed.

Frederick: Lightning round here. So our time is dwindling, so a couple of things. Tell me one thing you wish people didn't think about poverty. What's one of the biggest myths or the biggest balloons you'd like to burst as it comes to the study of poverty?

Robinson: People who are poor are not always lazy. People who are poor didn't choose it. People who are poor are not poor because they can't hold down a job. I think there are a lot of misconceptions from a lot of people in different parts of the country, that if you're from this area you're poor and you choose to be poor and they also have to realize if people say well if you're in a depressed area, well, why don't you just move? Well, sometimes that isn't so easy. When you have a family dynamic and it's hard to function if that's all that you know. So the number one thing that really I find almost offensive is it if you're poor you must just be lazy and a deadbeat because that is not true. Poverty is not a choice.

Savage: Yeah. I agree with you Bryan. That's what I hear a lot and especially if I teach an introduction class and I get students that aren't in the social work program. Once they're in it for a while we tell them. They think that they're lazy and that they're to blame for their situation and if they would just get smarter and move. And, of course we know that moving takes a lot of money to move. There's lots of stigma attached with poverty. This idea that people are worthy or unworthy. I always say everyone is worthy. Everyone is deserving right? And it's not a choice. We were born in it and unfortunately many people die in poverty and they try really hard and they work many jobs. So you can't just pull yourself out of it or work yourself out of it sometimes.

Frederick: So give us a reason to be helpful.

Robinson: Well, the first thing I would say is the better the economy the poverty statistics improve. Okay, and I think there's also reason to be hopeful that the manufacturing base in this country is not completely gone. Regardless of your politics, we are seeing a slight resurgence, an absolute resurgence in some areas, but a slight uptick in manufacturing. We need the manufacturing base to come back to help rural America. In my hometown of Brandenburg, Kentucky, which has suffered for number of years, there is a 1.2 billion dollar investment being made in a steel plant and it's thousands of jobs. So we see pockets of this and that's something to be hopeful about, regardless of politics. Number one. Number two, I would also say I have found that while there are stigmas with poverty, there are misconceptions about poverty, the understanding of the function of poverty is increasing. So I think the scholarly community is getting the word out there. I do. I really believe that, because people like Bill Gates and his foundation, people like the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation out in DC and Mr. Warren Buffett, they're actually saying to people: Listen, look, you know poverty I think you misunderstand what causes poverty. And so we're seeing the truly wealthy and a lot of self-made wealth in this country that recognizes the problem and is making investments in cleaner water, ameliorating food deserts, improving the plight of people, which we know disproportionately are rural. Let's be clear the majority of poor people in United States of America live in rural areas, but that gives me hope.

Savage: Yeah, I think for me I'm seeing more to policy level I think about the fact that there was Obama care, the Affordable Care Act and I didn't think I would see that in my lifetime. And so I think that we're inching towards good universal health care for all, of course people that are impoverished, that would help them so much with their health outcomes because we see that their lifespans are cut so very short because of health problems. So I see a positive there. I think we're going we will be going in the... we kind of stutter. We take a couple steps forward and three steps back, but I think eventually, in my lifetime I hope to see that, and I didn't think that ten years ago. So that's nice. I think that policy-wise we have a long way to go. I hope that there will be some policies that are not so regressive. The last few years that's what we've seen. A lot of more regressive policies, but I have hope because people I think are getting the word out about poverty and the people are understanding more. I think the media has shown it a bit more in the last 10 years

or so. I know that people, at least my friends who are social activists, they're getting the word out and we're bringing in more and more social activists around these different issues like the criminalization of poverty and homelessness. And I think that's still growing and that gives me hope.

Robinson: And I have hope. And I just wanted to say, too, as to technology, which I think is a great point. Some impoverished people have trouble with access to technology, but it's undeniable that our world and our country is more connected than ever before. So the flow of information happens a lot more quickly and I think that is what increasing awareness about certain things is. And when you see something tragic happened or a family can't afford to, who's lost a loved one, Go Fund Me and just people being able through technological means to help people. I think that's a positive. I think we're probably losing some humanity with our technology, sometimes, too, but there is an upside. That connectivity does make people who previously felt locked out, maybe not feel quite as locked out.

Frederick: And that's a topic for another edition that we'll work on later. Dr. Savage, Dr. Robinson, thank you for your time and your passion, and your expertise. Really great discussion. And thank all of our listeners on 30 Brave minutes. Join us again next time.

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Frederick: Good job everybody.