

# The Future Depends on Working Single Moms



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# Social Transformation, Single Parents and the Impact on the Future

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- ❑ Two every five children are being born to single Mothers
- ❑ Whites now have the rate of single parenthood blacks had when Dr. King came to Chicago, the Latino rate is twice as higher and the black rate has tripled; continued rapid change
- ❑ There has been a fierce attack for decades on programs serving single Moms, who have been blamed for trying to exploit the welfare system from Reagan to Clinton
- ❑ Stereotype of single Moms as being from the ghetto and living on the dole

# Realities

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- ❑ Moms are working, few on welfare
- ❑ This is not a teenage problem
- ❑ The social safety nets have been shredded
- ❑ Mothers have low incomes and limited preparation
- ❑ This is a trend across the world
- ❑ Following cutbacks in welfare, single parenting has surged

## Realities (continued...)

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- ❑ Single moms are everywhere, including suburbia and most conservative states
- ❑ Substantial majority in metro regions are in suburbs
- ❑ Strong relationship with education
- ❑ Low incomes
- ❑ Severe housing affordability burdens
- ❑ Very little support for increasing their human capital
- ❑ Highest child poverty of advanced nations—dramatically higher than Canada
- ❑ Poor prenatal care for women of color

# Policy Changes

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- ❑ Welfare cuts
- ❑ End of war on poverty
- ❑ Job training and welfare changed from education to immediate job placement
- ❑ Housing and other social programs cut
- ❑ Immediate work requirements after birth
- ❑ Reversal of civil rights policies

# Civil Rights and Single Moms

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- ❑ Very little discussion
- ❑ Strong impacts of housing and job discrimination
- ❑ Some strong common needs with white Moms
- ❑ Tendency of civil rights groups to focus on plight of men of color, who face huge risks
- ❑ There is important work to do in understanding and acting on these issues

# Challenge for Our Future

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- ❑ Among school age population, the U.S. will be a predominantly nonwhite and increasing poor society with an even larger share of children growing up in single parent families if existing trends continue
- ❑ There is a strong intergenerational impact-poorly educated moms living in poor areas tend to produce poorly educated children
- ❑ If we cannot raise and educate kids in low income and minority families, the average educational and income levels of our communities will decline



# The Male Part of the Equation

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- ❑ General delay of marriage and lack of responsibility for children
- ❑ Declining incomes for men without college
- ❑ Relative decline in higher education
- ❑ Almost half of black and Latino males do not graduate from high school
- ❑ Very limited employability/no welfare
- ❑ High probability of criminal justice system

## Why Issue has been so frozen

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- ❑ It was defined as a minority issue and the product of social of social pathology
- ❑ There was an assumption that it could be cured by cutting welfare
- ❑ General anti-government orientation
- ❑ Assumption that it was a relatively small issue for the overall society

# Civil rights involves broader social reform

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- ❑ 1963 March on Washington—MLK speech “March on Washington for Jobs & Freedom”
- ❑ War on Poverty, Title I, Medicaid, Work Study and College Scholarships, Headstart, Job Corps
- ❑ Must both provide rights and the ability to use them
- ❑ Without families able to function, children cannot have access to equal opportunity

# Education and the Dropout Crisis

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- ❑ Very strong relationship between dropouts and single motherhood, especially for Latinas
- ❑ In LAUSD 48% of students graduated with their class in 2005
- ❑ Huge loss in ninth grade—34% of freshmen did not move to tenth grade on time
- ❑ Massive failures, especially in Algebra
- ❑ Only a third of students who moved just before or during high school graduated with class
- ❑ Only 1/3 of English learners
- ❑ Magnet schools doubled graduation chances
- ❑ No NCLB accountability for grad
- ❑ Source: Silber, Sanders and Zarate, 2008, California Dropout Research Project

# Why don't we talk about this in politics

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- ❑ Obama is first urban liberal elected for 48 years
- ❑ The Congress has not had a secure Democratic majority for many years
- ❑ We have a suburban society dominated by suburban politics & leaders from affluent white suburbs/ politics of wedge issues and fear
- ❑ African American and Latino politics largely happens in largely segregated areas and has focused more on males
- ❑ Both parties embraced welfare cuts & portrayed problem as a success

# What to Do???

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Very positive developments in Stimulus package  
and children's health program

Child care and health as elemental necessities

Relentless focus on continuity of education

Need to consider making these permanent

Apply Obama Unemployment conclusions to welfare  
and job training for women

Help homeowners face crisis and renters find  
affordable rental housing in decent  
neighborhoods

# Creating a coalition

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- ❑ Women's groups, civil rights groups, labor groups, churches, and advocates for health and other programs have not come together
- ❑ Civil rights groups have to broaden agenda because their communities are most at risk
- ❑ Common agenda—a path to success in American society for all children
- ❑ These are our children, our future, and they and their mothers must have a fair chance or we will all pay in many ways

# Related Civil Rights Project work

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- ❑ Studies of metropolitan inequality
- ❑ Studies of dropouts
- ❑ Work on metropolitan segregation and housing discrimination
- ❑ Studies of equity in schools
- ❑ Studies of college access
- ❑ Studies of employment in metro Boston



For civil rights research including dropout college access and metropolitan equity studies:

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- ▣ [Civilrightsproject.ucla.edu](http://Civilrightsproject.ucla.edu)