

Being poor doesn't make one a bad person

Confucius once noted: "In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of."

Lately, there has been considerable debate regarding the growing disparity between the rich and the rest of us. Some think there is nothing to worry about while others seem to find the trend more troubling.

Civil discourse seems relatively nonexistent because the issue engenders such polarization.

The majority of the world's population considers even the poorest Americans to be fairly well off; at the same time, not all Americans are Warren Buffet.

My intention here is not to send anyone screaming from the room. I would simply like to offer two observations that seem self-evident.

First, it is fairly obvious that if you are "rich," you did not achieve that status in a vacuum.

While hard work and personal initiative no doubt contributed to your disproportionate acquisition of resources, so did other factors over which you had absolutely no control. The family and economic system you were born into should never be underestimated - heredity and capitalism afforded you unprecedented opportunities.

Second, we need to stop blaming the underprivileged for their plight in life.

Most of those who are barely getting by did not choose their circumstances and the vast majority are not a bunch of "moochers" as I heard them characterized recently. Some of the hardest working people I know live at or below the poverty level.

This idea that it's your fault if you're poor is callous to the point of being sadistic.

JFK once remarked: "The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life."

I just think we could do better.

Aaron Hughey
Bowling Green

The Daily News
(Bowling Green, KY)
Friday, August 26, 2011
Page 4-A