

**“Poor Power”:**

**The North Carolina Fund & the Battle to End Poverty & Inequality in 1960s America**

**Overview**

Prior to President Johnson’s “War on Poverty,” North Carolina Governor Terry Sanford had already recognized the state’s troubles with poverty, illiteracy, low wages, and income inequality. In this lesson, students will learn about the North Carolina Fund, a series of experimental programs developed by Governor Sanford’s administration to address these challenges. Students will explore the North Carolina Fund’s components and its challenges and successes within the context of segregation and the fight for civil rights. Through the examination of photographs, a Power Point presentation, and discussion, students will learn how Governor Sanford’s innovative program – developed to be designed, administered, and operated by local communities – changed life in North Carolina and became a model for other poverty legislation. As a culminating project, students will use what they have learned, coupled with their own creative thinking, to prepare and submit their own North Carolina Fund proposal for improving poverty in the fictional county of Tar Heel, North Carolina.

**Grade**

8

**North Carolina Essential Standards**

- 8.H.1.3 - Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.
- 8.H.1.4 - Use historical inquiry to evaluate the validity of sources used to construct historical narratives (e.g. formulate historical questions, gather data from a variety of sources, evaluate and interpret data and support interpretations with historical evidence).
- 8.H.1.5 - Analyze the relationship between historical context and decision-making.
- 8.H.3.2 - Explain how changes brought about by technology and other innovations affected individuals and groups in North Carolina and the United States (e.g. advancements in transportation, communication networks and business practices).
- 8.H.3.3 - Explain how individuals and groups have influenced economic, political and social change in North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.H.3.4 - Compare historical and contemporary issues to understand continuity and change in the development of North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.C&G.2.1 -Evaluate the effectiveness of various approaches used to effect change in North Carolina and the United States (e.g. picketing, boycotts, sit-ins, voting, marches, holding elected office and lobbying).
- 8.C&G.2.2 -Analyze issues pursued through active citizen campaigns for change (e.g. voting rights and access to education, housing and employment).
- 8.C&G.2.3- Explain the impact of human and civil rights issues throughout North Carolina and United States history.

**Essential Questions**

- What challenges did North Carolina face in the 1960s?
- In what ways did African Americans and their allies fight for justice and equality during the 1960s?
- In what ways did the fight by African Americans for justice and equality parallel the fight against poverty?

- What was the North Carolina Fund and what strategies did it employ to relieve poverty within North Carolina?

## Materials

- “Poor Power: The North Carolina Fund & the Battle to End Poverty & Inequality in 1960s America” accompanying Power Point, available in the Database of Civic Resources (in PDF format)
  - To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click “View” in the top menu bar of the file, and select “Full Screen Mode”
  - To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to [CarolinaK12@unc.edu](mailto:CarolinaK12@unc.edu)
  - Please note that statistical information regarding issues of poverty is continually being updated, thus, the numbers provided in the Power Point are subject to change
- Warm Up Image # 1 & #2, attached and also available on slides 2-3 of the PPT
- Optional: Internet access and computers for exploring the photographs located at <http://www.lib.unc.edu/dc/barnes/?CISOROOT=/barnes>
- Excerpt from the Introduction of “To Right These Wrongs: The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty & Inequality in 1960s America,” by Robert Korstad & James Leloudis, attached
- Discussion questions for “To Right These Wrongs,” attached
- Tar Heel County Community Center’s Proposal to the NC Fund, culminating project attached
- “Even short-term poverty can hurt kids' health,” article attached
- Optional teacher resources:
  - “To Right These Wrongs: The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty and Inequality in 1960s America,” a book by Robert R. Korstad and James L. Leloudis. Information regarding the book can be found at <http://www.torightthesewrongs.com/>.
  - “Change Comes Knocking: The Story of the North Carolina Fund,” a documentary by Video Dialogue. Information regarding the film can be found at <http://www.ncfundfilm.com/>

## Preparation

Students should have a basic understanding of the Jim Crow era and segregation, as well as the fight for civil rights.

## Duration

- 90 minutes (can be split over two class periods)
- Additional time may be needed for presentations of the culminating project

## Procedure

### Poverty in America

1. As a warm-up, tell students to partner up and provide half of the pairs with the attached “Warm Up Image #1” and the other half of the pairs with the attached “Warm Up Image #2.” Project slide 2 and tell students that they will examine the image and discuss with their partner the questions provided on the slide. Tell students that after approximately 5 minutes of discussion in partners, they will report their thoughts back to the remainder of class.
2. Once ample discussion time has been provided, project slide 3, which contains “Warm Up Image #1” (a photograph by Dorothea Lange.) Since only half of the class has seen the image at this point, give students a few moments to silently examine it. Then, ask the pairs that discussed this image to share the titles they chose for the image (as instructed in the final question of slide 2). Finally, ask a few volunteers to summarize their conversations about the image. (Tell students you’ll share some information about this image in a moment, but you want to first hear from partners who examined the second image.)
3. Project slide 4, which contains “Warm Up Image #2” (a photograph by Don Sturkey.) Repeat the process from above.

4. Finally, ask students to comment on any similarities they can point out between the two images. Hopefully, students will note that both images represent people living in poverty, though in two different time periods. Share a bit of information regarding the two images:
  - Warm Up Image #1: This image was taken by photographer Dorothea Lange in 1936 while she traveled around California photographing migrant workers during the Great Depression. It has become known as “Migrant Mother.” According to Lange’s description of the encounter with the pictured woman, “She told me her age, that she was thirty-two. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy food.” Ask students to share what they know about the Great Depression.
  - Warm Up Image #2: This photo was taken in 1969 by photographer Don Sturkey. It is of a small boy living in poverty in Jones County, North Carolina. The photo was taken in the kitchen of the boy’s home. Tell students they’ll have the chance to discuss this time period in just a moment.
5. Move on to slide 5 of the PPT and discuss:
  - What comes to mind when you consider the word poverty?
  - What does it mean to be impoverished, or poor?
  - Can you tell if someone is poor? Why or why not?
  - What do you think (or perhaps know from witnessing or experiencing) are the difficulties of living in poverty?
  - What stereotypes exist about poor people?
    - Note these on chart paper. While students should not be limited in how they respond, teachers should remind them to be serious and respectful in their answers.
  - Do you think mainstream America looks down on poor people? Why or why not? Is it fair to look down on people based on their socioeconomic status? Why or why not?
  - What are the various situations or circumstances that may result in a person becoming poor? Under what circumstances might a person be poor through no fault of their own? Explain.
  - The two images you examined at the start of class are from two different times in the past – one from the 1930s and the other from the 1960s. Do you think there are people in America living in similar situations today? What do you think the current poverty rate is like in America today?

### **A Poverty Quiz**

6. Let students know that they are going to focus on poverty throughout the day’s lesson and that you want them to begin by taking a poverty quiz. Go through slides 6-15, which include true or false questions for students to respond to, followed by the correct answer. Teachers can instruct students to answer by holding up their right hand for true and their left hand for false, or can tell each student to create two signs, one labeled true and the other false, to hold up each time their answer is required. For a more kinesthetic activity, another option is to label one side of the room as true and the other side as false, and instruct students to stand and move to the side that corresponds with their answer. As students progress through the quiz, facilitate additional discussion using the prompts below:
  - Slide 7:
    - Why do you think poverty exists in America today?
    - Do you think poverty has always been a problem, or has it been better or worse during particular periods? Explain. (Use this as an opportunity to glean what students already know. For example, students might mention the Great Depression as a time of terrible poverty, or other key historical periods.)
  - Slide 9:
    - Why do you think poverty is increasing in our country year by year?
  - Slide 11:

- Look back at our brainstormed list of the stereotypes we said are associated with poor people. When we think of people who are poor, why do we typically not consider the fact that they are people who may be hard workers?
- How is it possible to work as much as you can, but still be poor?
- What is dangerous about not having health insurance? (Ensure students discuss not only the medical risks, but also the financial risks. For example, if you have no health care and are in a serious accident, hospital bills can run thousands and thousands of dollars.)
- Why do many people living in poverty not have health care, even if they are working 40+ hour weeks? (Discuss with students that if a person is perhaps working three part-time jobs, the companies they work for provide no healthcare. If each of those jobs is minimum wage, it is possible that same person couldn't afford to purchase his or her own healthcare, which can cost hundreds of dollars per month.)
- Slide 13: Number students off, 1-5. After everyone receives a number, ask every student who was a number 1 to stand. Point out to students that if this class represented all children in America, those standing would be poor.
  - How do you feel hearing that 1 out of every 5 children in America is living in poverty?
  - Does a child have a choice whether he or she is poor? Do you get to choose who you are born to or what your parents are like?
  - Think about a typical kindergarten class. What do you think would be hard about being a poor child? What challenges might you face in school? At home? Elsewhere?
- Slide 15:
  - Did any information on this slide surprise you?
  - How do you feel hearing that 40% of the hungry families needing food assistance were actually working families?
- **Optional:** Additional information to share about poverty with students (from [http://www.un.org/works/goignon/poverty/lessonplan\\_poverty.html](http://www.un.org/works/goignon/poverty/lessonplan_poverty.html) source link not working, however, this website may provide some of that information <https://www.una.org.uk/get-involved/learn-and-teach/un-matters-teaching-pack>):
  - Every 43 seconds a child is born into poverty in the US.
  - Every 53 minutes a child dies from causes related to poverty in the US.
  - On average, more than one out of every three Americans - 37 % of all people in the United States - are officially classified as living in poverty at least 2 months out of the year.
  - Being homeless makes it extremely difficult to attend school regularly.
  - 41 % of homeless children attend two or more schools a year.
  - Homeless children have higher rates of learning disabilities and emotional and behavioral problems.
  - The average homeless family is a 27 year-old single mother with two children under the age of six.
  - Twelve million of the adult residents in the United States have been homeless at least once in their lives.
  - Children in America have higher poverty rates than adults, and people 65 and over have higher chronic poverty rates and lower exit rates.

7. Next, move on to slide 16 and give students a few moments to think about the question posed: Who is responsible for helping the poor? Teachers may want to provide 1-2 minutes of written response time and then ask students to share their thoughts out loud.
8. As students discuss, project the open-ended question on slide 17 and facilitate additional conversation: What is the government's responsibility in terms of poverty in America? Further ask students if any of them can think of any particular governmental programs or initiatives, past or present, that were created help fight or end poverty. Note student responses on the board or on chart paper.

### **Waging War on Poverty**

9. Next, ask students if any of them know anything about “The Great Society” or “The War on Poverty.” (If a student noted either of these in the brainstormed list from earlier in the lesson, simply focus students on this particular line item and ask them to share what else they already know about it.) Share the information on slide 18. For visual connections, remind students that Image #1 from their warm up was taken in 1936, the period during which FDR was President and initiated the New Deal in order to help families like the one pictured. Discuss:
  - Why do you think the government ramped up legislation addressing poverty and racial injustice?
  - Why do you think the legislation specifically targeted areas of healthcare, education, urban problems, and transportation?
  - Why do you think President Johnson’s War on Poverty programs were similarly structured to FDR’s programs after the Great Depression?
10. Let students know that in today’s lesson, they will be looking at government programs that were created to address poverty, specifically in the 1960s, and also, specifically in North Carolina. Again, call student memory back to their warm up, pointing out that they will be addressing the time period during which the second photograph was taken.

### **American Society in the 1960s**

11. Project slide 19 and tell students that before they begin to look at what North Carolina did to address poverty, they will first consider American society in general during the 1960s. Allow students to share their thoughts on the question, “What was society and life like in the 1960s?” Encourage students to remember previous lessons on issues such as Jim Crow, segregation, the Civil Rights Movement, etc. Review such information with students using slides 20-22, reminding students of some of the main ways African Americans’ rights were restricted, and the ways in which they fought for equality.
12. After going over slide 21, discuss the connections between race and poverty with students. This can be a complex concept for students to understand, but teachers can start by trying to use the analogy of running a competitive race with students:
  - When you run in a race, what are some universal rules? How do you ensure the race is a fair one? (i.e., you start at the same time, you begin at the same place, you run the same distance, etc.)
  - What if you are running a race, but you are told that you must begin the race one mile behind everyone else? What has this done to your opportunity for winning the race, or at least finishing side by side with the other runners? Is it still possible to win the race? If so, what would it take on your part?
  - Is it fair that you have to work so much harder to end up at the same finish line as everyone else who got a head start? Explain.
  - Consider all the ways in which African Americans’ rights were restricted throughout Jim Crow, the 1960s, and beyond. African Americans were consistently denied opportunities based on their race. Going back to our analogy, it’s as if they were told to start running hundreds of miles behind everyone else. Thus, how would this have a negative impact on African Americans over the years? (Encourage students to consider various categories such as educational opportunities, employment opportunities, health care, generational on families, etc.)
  - Even when Jim Crow laws ended, African Americans did not enjoy instantaneous equality. They still did not have the same opportunities in as others – why was this? (Not only did it take time for society to acclimate to this change, but in considering the race analogy, since African Americans had been forced to start race so far back, it would take miles and miles of running – or years and years of time passing - before they could catch the other racers. And regardless of if and when they caught up, it would never be fair that they had to work so much harder for no reason at all.)
  - Given this, why was it more likely for an African American person to be impoverished?

13. Move on to slide 22 and let students know that simultaneous to the struggle for African Americans to gain equal rights was the struggle for people living in poverty to make a living. After sharing the information on the slide, discuss:
- How would you characterize North Carolina's situation in the 1960s?
  - Why were so many people living below the poverty line?
  - Why are the education statistics particularly disturbing?

#### **Optional Visual Exploration of North Carolina Poverty in the 1960s**

14. **Optional:** Give students the opportunity to visually explore poverty in 1960s North Carolina. If access to the Internet is available, students can peruse the Billy E. Barnes collection of photographs, available at <http://www.lib.unc.edu/dc/barnes/?CISOROOT=/barnes>. From 1964 through 1969, Billy E. Barnes was the Public Relations Director of the North Carolina Fund. Among his many responsibilities, Barnes photographed various aspects of the North Carolina Fund's programs and activities, including the people the Fund was meant to help. Particularly striking images of poverty that students may want to examine include:
- Boy on dirt path
  - Boy sitting on porch steps holding a baby.
  - Boy swinging baseball bat in the middle of a street
  - Cabin with laundry hanging on clothesline
  - Family standing outside house
  - Outhouse with clothesline, homes in background
  - Porch of a slum house
  - Rear view of row of houses
  - Slum housing
  - Two children playing with puppy
  - Girl walking on deteriorated sidewalk alongside a row of houses and telephone wires
  - Man in Hat
  - Woman Leaning on Fence

#### **Think – Pair – Share: You are Governor of NC**

15. Project slide 23 and partner students up to complete the activity shown. Teachers should provide around 10 minutes for partners to work and then allow students to present their proposed steps to the remainder of class. Note which ideas are repeated and which are more unique. After discussing, ask students to think about which actions they think would be most effective and why.

#### **The North Carolina Fund**

16. Next, discuss the slides 24-28 with students, which introduce them to the man who was Governor during this time, as well as the steps he took through the groundbreaking North Carolina Fund to try and combat poverty in North Carolina.
- Slide 24: Governor Sanford believed that in an affluent society such as ours, there was no reason we couldn't "improve the lives of the 'neglected and forgotten' poor." Do you agree? Does poverty have to exist? Why or why not?
  - Slide 25: When we discuss poverty as a political issue, we often forget about the fact that there are people – often children – going to bed hungry. Why do you think it is easy to forget the impact on individual human lives when discussing political issues?
  - Slide 27: Why was private funding, rather than relying on governmental bureaucracy, important to Sanford? In what ways might this speed up the process of "change?" Do you think there could be any disadvantages to the NC General Assembly having no control? Why or why not?

- Slide 28: What do you think Esser meant when he said the North Carolina Fund would “create the possible?” What was the purpose of having college volunteers of all races go into poor communities and assist? What challenges do you imagine the volunteers faced? Given that this was taking place during segregation, what challenges might the integrated teams face?

17. Explain to students that the North Carolina Fund leaders ultimately felt they were working to extend the promise of democracy to poor North Carolinians who often were left without a say. Project the quotes on slides 29 and 30 and discuss this concept further:
  - When you think of democracy, what comes to mind?
  - What message is Sergeant Shriver conveying?
  - Do you agree that democracy is about more than just voting? Explain.
  - Why do you think the poor often did not have a voice in democracy in the 1960s? What about today – do you believe poor people have a voice in current times? Why or why not?
  - What do you think Joseph Flora would say is necessary before we can be proud of our democracy?
  - What does Flora mean by “Poor Power?”
18. Finally, share the information on slide 31 and discuss:
  - Why did the Fund’s founders stick to the plan of only having it operate for five years? Why do you think they worried about it becoming victim to “routine,” or “red tape bureaucracy?”
  - Several of the Fund’s programs became nonprofit organizations that survived on their own, many still offering services to NC citizens today. How does this reflect positively on the NC Fund as a whole?

**“To Right These Wrongs: The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty & Inequality in 1960s America”**

19. Tell students that to learn more about the North Carolina Fund, they will be reading an excerpt from “To Right These Wrongs: The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty & Inequality in 1960s America,” by Robert Korstad & James Leloudis. Distribute the attached reading and discussion questions. Depending on the reading level of students and the time left in class, the reading and questions can be assigned as a partner reading to be completed at the end of class, or can be completed the following day of class as a partner warm up. The reading can also be assigned as an individual homework assignment if student reading and cognition levels allow for such. Ensure class time to discuss the questions as a class and ensure student understanding.

**Governor Terry Sanford’s Second Emancipation**

20. Tell students you want to give them the opportunity to “meet” Governor Sanford by watching an excerpt from an important speech he gave in January 1963. Before moving on, ask students to share what they remember about Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. After a brief review, explain to students that in this speech, purposely given on the 100th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, “North Carolina governor Terry Sanford called for a second emancipation that would free the state’s citizens—black and white alike—from the twin scourges of poverty and Jim Crow. Four days earlier, George Wallace had offered a very different vision of the South’s future. In his inaugural address as governor of Alabama, he declared, “Segregation today! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!” Sanford’s determination to uproot what one contemporary called the “poverty-segregation complex” became the North Carolina Fund’s guiding principle.” (Source: <http://www.torightthesewrongs.com/from-the-archives/>)
21. Go to <http://www.torightthesewrongs.com/from-the-archives/> and play the short video excerpt for students, starting around the 2.47 mark and playing it until the end. (The excerpt will last approximately 6 minutes.) As they watch, tell students to jot down notes regarding what they believe Terry Sanford’s purpose and message is with this speech. Also ask them to note particular “action items” he sets forth.
  - What is Governor Sanford’s purpose in this speech? What message is he trying to convey?

- Why do you think Governor Sanford chose to deliver this speech specifically on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation?
- Governor Sanford stated, “Now is the time in this 100<sup>th</sup> year, to not merely look back at freedom, but to look forward to the fulfillment of its meaning.” What message is he conveying?
- Governor Sanford notes that despite great progress (in the face of great adversity), economic opportunity for African Americans is not sufficient in 1963. What examples does he note of this? What does he say is the greatest block to African American progress?
- What does Governor Sanford call for all Americans to do? How does he believe African American progress will be realized?
- What specific actions does Governor Sanford outline that North Carolina will do to increase economic opportunity for African Americans?
- Did anything in this speech surprise you? Is 100 years a long time? As of today, how long ago was it that slavery was legal and practiced? Do you find it surprising that in terms of the history of our world, slavery actually wasn’t that long ago? What lasting effects might this have?
- The Governor started his speech by saying his message would mean a lot to the “development of the life and character” of North Carolina. Did it? Why or why not?
- Given the time period it was delivered and based on this speech excerpt, how would you characterize Governor Terry Sanford?

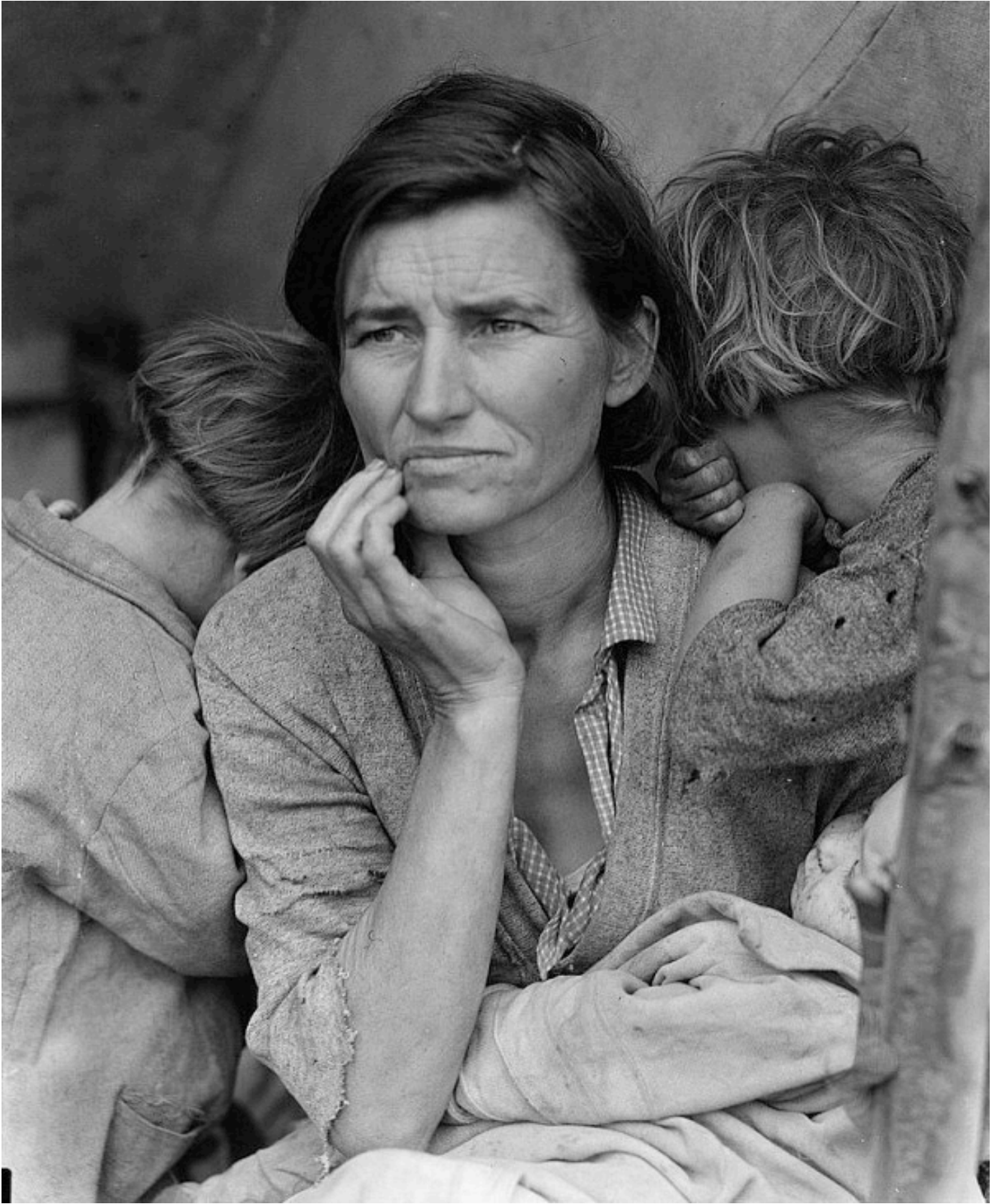
### **Tackling Poverty in the Fictional Tar Heel County**

22. As a culminating project, divide students into small groups and assign the attached Tar Heel County Community Center’s Proposal to the NC Fund project assignment, in which students will work to create a North Carolina Fund proposal for alleviating poverty in the fictional Tar Heel County, NC. Go over the assignment with students, letting them know how much class time will be provided for working on their proposals. Teachers should let students know the due date of their final project and time should be allotted for presentations and project feedback on this day.

### **Additional Activities**

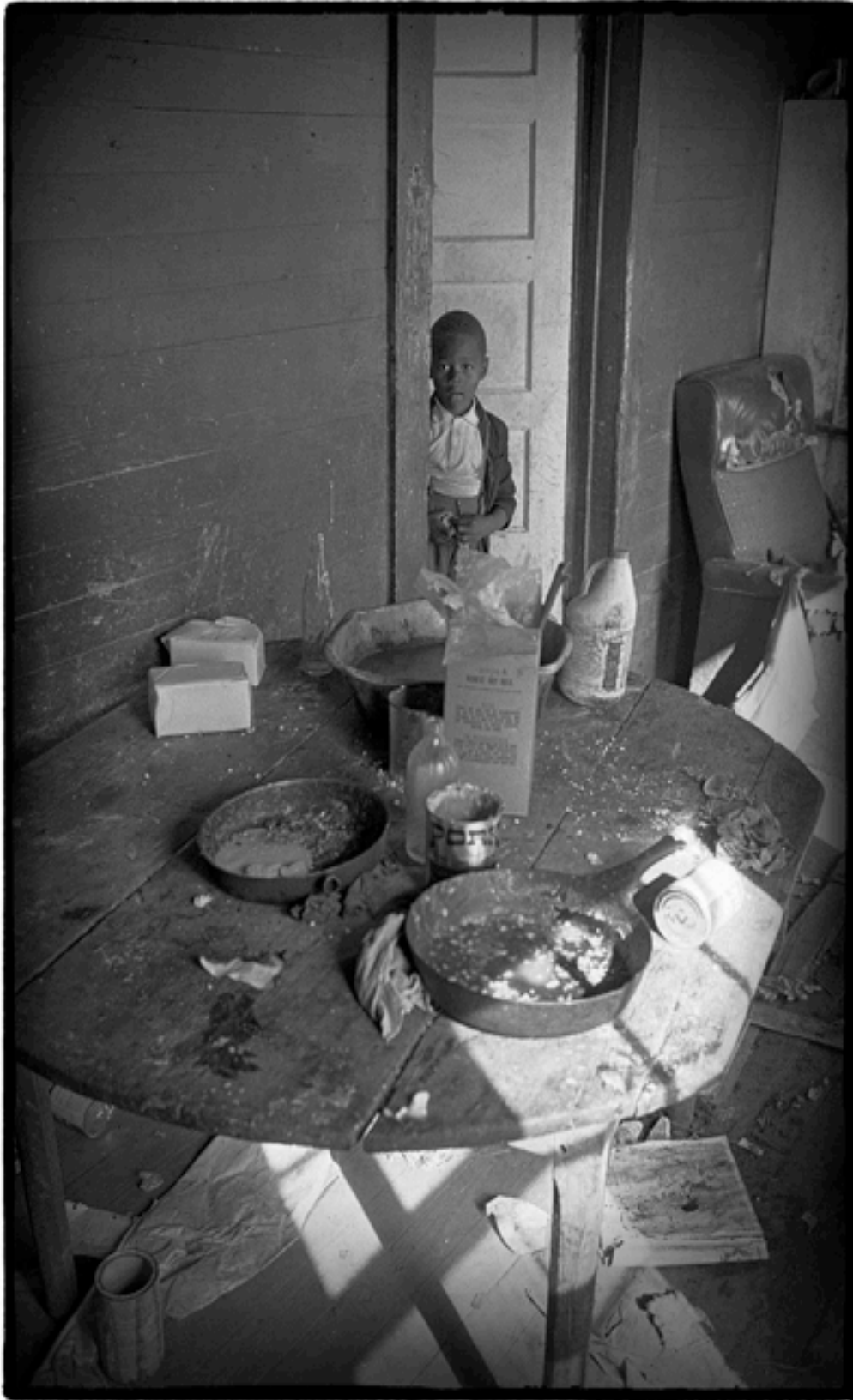
- Show the documentary (or excerpts of the documentary) “Change Comes Knocking: The Story of the North Carolina Fund,” by Video Dialogue. Information regarding the film can be found at <http://www.ncfundfilm.com/>
- Have students read and discuss the article “Even short-term poverty can hurt kids' health,” attached available
- Design and implement (or ideally, have students design and implement) a service project that addresses poverty or food insecurity in some way. For example, students could tour a local food bank and learn about their services, model of operation, clients, etc., then work with the food bank to solicit donations, sort food, etc.

Warm-Up Image 1



*Photograph by Dorothea Lange*

Warm Up Image 2



Photograph by Don Sturkey

Source: <http://www.torightthesewrongs.com/photos/>

***Edited Excerpt from “To Right These Wrongs: The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty & Inequality in 1960s America,” by Robert Korstad & James Leloudis***

A year before President Lyndon Johnson declared a national war on poverty, Governor Terry Sanford and his allies in the state Democratic Party set out to awaken North Carolinians to poverty’s social costs. The governor aimed to diversify the economy, improve public education, and reduce the state’s dependence on low-wage manufacturing. He and his supporters even signaled a willingness—indeed, an eagerness—to surrender segregation, so long as they could control the pace and direction of change.

As much as they understood poverty as a structural problem, they also worried about the values that deprivation appeared to instill in those they called the “people of poverty.” Sanford and his associates embraced the notion of a “culture of poverty,” which had been popularized in 1962 by Michael Harrington’s best-selling exposé, *The Other America*. The poor were “pessimistic and defeated,” Harrington wrote. “They tend to be hopeless and passive, yet prone to bursts of violence; they are lonely and isolated, often rigid and hostile. To be poor is not simply to be deprived of the material things of this world. It is to enter a fatal, futile universe, an America within America with a twisted spirit.” Worse yet, these characteristics seemed to be self-perpetuating, for “the children of poverty [became] the parents of poverty and [began] the cycle anew.”

Governor Sanford saw in the sufferings of the poor a dark vision of the future. He reasoned that North Carolina would remain outside the economic mainstream so long as it was burdened by men and women who lacked the motivation, work ethic, and skills to participate successfully in the labor force and in the lives of their communities. It was necessary and *right*, Sanford and Fund officials insisted, for the state to develop new strategies to “reverse trends, motivate people, re-orient attitudes, supply the education and the public services and the jobs that will give all our people the chance to become productive, more self-reliant, and able to compete in the complex but dynamic, exciting but perilous world of today and tomorrow.”

The Fund’s initial efforts adhered closely to a traditional, top-down model of social change. In the fall of 1963, it called for proposals from local social service agencies and private charities that were interested in working together to “analyze their [communities’] poverty problems, and come up with some ideas for solving them.” Fifty-one groups responded, and from that number the Fund chose eleven projects spread across the state and with “a good balance between large cities and smaller ones, rural communities and industrial areas.” Most of the proposals emphasized the deficiencies of the poor and, to that end, called for educational initiatives—kindergartens, tutoring, bookmobiles, and vocational training—that encouraged self-improvement. The petitioners also stressed a dire need for additional teachers and social welfare workers. A long history of underfunding had left welfare agencies and the schools ill-equipped to meet their basic responsibilities, much less take on bold new ventures.

The Fund responded by hastily organizing a volunteer program for North Carolina college students during the summer of 1964, a moment when hundreds of young people, mostly from outside the South, were traveling to Mississippi to take part in the Freedom Summer campaign for civil rights and black voter registration. Students in the North Carolina Volunteers came from nearly three dozen campuses across the state and were assigned to racially integrated teams of men and women to work for each of the eleven community action programs. They served in a wide variety of roles, from camp

counselors to tutors, library assistants, and aides to public health nurses. In 1965, the Fund drew on its experience with the Volunteers program to train the first participants in President Johnson's "domestic Peace Corps," Volunteers in Service to America.

The student volunteers were the first to confront the challenges that would soon challenge the Fund and the larger national antipoverty movement. The fact that they worked and lived together—black next to white, women alongside men—horrified most whites in the communities they went to serve. Every team suffered racial taunts; many endured social ostracism; and in several cases, the volunteers were fired upon by members of the Ku Klux Klan. Those experiences alarmed and unsettled the students. They were disappointed by the resistance they encountered, frightened by the rage they provoked, and shocked by the conditions they discovered in poor people's homes. Some simply soldiered on, trying as best they could to put scenes of misery out of mind, but most could not avoid asking hard questions about themselves and their society. White volunteers confronted their own prejudices in the angry faces of those who scorned them, while their black peers wrestled with the possibility that whites might be trusted allies. Together, black and white students came to understand that charity and self-help would never be enough to alleviate poverty. That task, one Fund veteran explained, required something different: a "radical strategy" to "stop the exploitation of the poor by the more economically well off."

Just such a strategy erupted from the unpaved streets and ramshackle houses in poor communities, where residents struggled to pay the rent, feed and clothe their children, keep warm through the winter, and stay healthy without indoor plumbing and safe drinking water. When members of Congress crafted the Economic Opportunity Act, they included a requirement that all antipoverty efforts promote the "maximum feasible participation" of the poor. To most lawmakers, that meant little more than consulting poor people as the clients of community action programs and finding ways to improve their access to government services. But as the North Carolina Fund began to organize in locales across the state, men and women who had long been denied the basic rights of economic and political citizenship were emboldened by their inclusion in a national crusade. That was particularly true of blacks in Durham, a tobacco manufacturing town, and in "North Carolina's Mississippi," the cluster of counties in the northeastern corner of the state dominated by tenant farms and plantation agriculture. In these places, poor residents drew strength from a long local history of struggle against white supremacy as well as from recent agitation for civil rights. When offered the opportunity, they stepped forward and insisted on serving as officers, not just foot soldiers, in an ever-broadening battle for economic justice and political equality. That mobilization frightened whites up and down the social ladder. But, as one activist explained, the goal of poor people was at once less sinister and more profound than usurping the authority of whites: "We weren't trying to take over; we were just trying to have a participatory democracy."

That democratic impulse transformed the War on Poverty's agenda. By 1966—two short years after the call to battle—both the North Carolina Fund's George Esser and OEO director Sargent Shriver had adopted a new vocabulary. Esser, who had devoted his early career to the study of public administration and the promotion of bureaucratic efficiency, now explained that his agency's purpose was to "strengthen and expand the democratic process itself at all levels, so that all our people can play an active part in the shaping of their own, and the nation's, destiny." In testimony before a Senate committee, Shriver echoed that view. "Democracy," he explained, "means more than giving every man a vote, because many of the problems we face today will never appear on a ballot: welfare regulations; code enforcement; garbage collection; police brutality. . . . Beyond the formal ballot

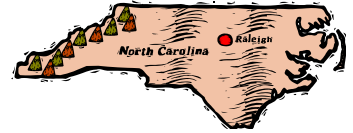
comes the larger mandate of democracy—to give the poor an effective voice in reshaping our cities. To give the poor a role, an opportunity to contribute to the rebuilding of our society.”

Democratic aspirations also rose up from predominantly white communities in the hills and hollows of Appalachia. One of the Fund’s most ambitious community action projects was sponsored by Watauga, Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey Counties in the northwestern corner of the state. Here, as in other sites, women were among the most effective grassroots organizers, and they, along with Fund-supported staff, connected local antipoverty efforts with a broader regional uprising that first emerged from the coal towns of Kentucky and West Virginia. White Appalachian activists drew inspiration from the black freedom struggle and set out to duplicate the victories won with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which cut the legs from under a century-old system of legal discrimination. “The time for action is now,” they declared. “Never again can Americans take pride in their ‘democracy,’ for the basic facts of the denial of human rights to one-third of [the] people have been exposed. True democracy can and will be realized through the use of ‘Poor Power.’ . . . Thirty-four million Americans can, by uniting around their poverty, exert the necessary pressure . . . to change the present structure of power which has for so long denied the opportunity to rise to the standard the other two-thirds of the nation enjoys.”

### Discussion Questions

1. Summarize your understanding of what is meant by a “culture of poverty.”
2. Why do you think poverty is considered a “cycle?”
3. Beyond providing financial and job assistance, Governor Sanford thought it was important to work with poor people to change their mentality as well. Why do you think he prioritized this? Do you agree that this was an important strategy? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think Governor Sanford asked local community organizations to examine poverty in their own community and submit a proposal for what they thought was needed? What can be positive about such local control? Might there be any negative aspects to such local control?
5. What challenges did the black and white volunteers face? Of these challenges, which do you think would have been most difficult to face and why? What do you think kept them from giving up?
6. The article states that “the students came to understand that charity and self-help would never be enough to alleviate poverty. That task, one Fund veteran explained, required something different: a ‘radical strategy’ to ‘stop the exploitation of the poor by the more economically well off.’” What does this mean?
7. What does it mean to “mobilize” a community? In what ways did the NC Fund mobilize poor people?
8. The article discusses how poor people who had long been denied basic rights began to learn how to stand up for themselves and participate in democracy. Why do you think the mobilization of poor black people frightened some white people?
9. Based on Sergeant Shriver’s comments, how do you think he defines democracy? What role does he believe the poor should play in a democracy?
10. Why do you think NC Fund members felt that Americans couldn’t take pride in America’s democracy until poverty was addressed?
11. What is meant by the phrase “Poor Power?”

## Tar Heel County Community Center's Proposal to the NC Fund



Imagine the year is 1963. You live in Tar Heel County, North Carolina, a place you love but also a place where poverty is a real problem for much of the county's residents. You work at the only community center in the county and you've found it difficult to offer the services that you know people need. You've just learned that Governor Sanford has requested proposals for addressing local poverty. Since the poverty rate in your county is very high, you and your co-workers decide to design a program and submit it to the NC Fund for funding.

First, use the information below to review the current conditions of your home county of Tar Heel in 1963. Then, work with your fellow committee members to create a proposal that you believe Governor Sanford will approve.

### Information About Tar Heel County:

- Tar Heel is one of the smallest counties in western North Carolina, with approximately 4,500 residents as of 1963.
- 38% of Tar Heel residents, or 4 out of every 10 people, are living below the poverty line.
- Tar Heel has four high schools, all of which are still segregated in 1963.
- Tar Heel's graduation rate has been slipping over the past five years; currently, only 42% of students who enter high school graduate.
- Many young people in Tar Heel complain that there is nothing to do. There is only one community center (the one you work for) located in the middle of the county, but you haven't had funds to purchase new sports equipment or implement recreational program in years. There are currently no public parks either.
- Due to the mountainous landscape, isolation is a big problem in Tar Heel due to the rural nature of the county. It is hard for many residents to access basic utilities such as electricity, clean water, and a sanitary sewage system. It is estimated that approximately 30% of residents lack basic services. Many of the residents living on the mountain also have homes that are falling apart and that lack adequate heat. Many of the homes are surrounded in trash, as there is no community dump for disposal.
- Accessing the one hospital located in Tar Heel County is difficult since many of the roads are very poor and some residents have to travel hundreds of miles to get there.
- The main source of employment in Tar Heel used to be three popular textile mills, two of which closed over the last five years. Approximately 32% of Tar Heel residents are currently unemployed. The two factories are still in good condition however. There are also hundreds of acres of land that have not been cultivated in Tar Heel. It has been found that Christmas trees grow exceptionally well in the area.
- For the remaining residents who are employed, working-class wages present a huge problem. Workers are often not paid enough to be able to adequately provide for their families.
- The main town in Tar Heel is Cardinal Town. There are two buildings in Cardinal Town that house many of the town's poorer residents. The two buildings, owned by the same man, are in terrible condition. Pests and filth are commonly noted as problems, and many residents report that their appliances (i.e. refrigerator, stove, or heat) do not work consistently.
- The crime rate in Tar Heel has been on the rise, with the past 6 months showing a steady 5% increase in robberies. Several shops in Cardinal Town have moved to neighboring counties after being broken into at night.

### Develop a Proposal:

Given the issues described, think creatively with your group to determine a program that would effectively help the poor people living in Tar Heel County.

### 1. Brainstorm:

- What are the most **pressing issues** facing Tar Heel County? (Consider what is mentioned above, as well as other problems that aren't mentioned but are likely present based on the current conditions.)
- What are the various ways these **problems** could be **improved**?
  - Consider all of the various **programs, initiatives, campaigns, recreational activities**, etc. that might make a difference in the lives of Tar Heel County residents. What skills do residents need to better their lives? What assistance (counseling, family services, etc.) would be beneficial? Are there specific classes or events the Community Center could offer that would be helpful? What will you do to ensure residents from all over the county have access to any such programs, events, etc.? Are there social issues you need to address? (i.e., segregation, equal rights, etc.)
  - What types of **development and/or construction** would improve the county, its economy, the quality of life of all residents, etc.? (i.e., buildings, facilities, community spaces, systems)
  - Are there particular groups of people you will target? (i.e., children, senior citizens, the unemployed, rural residents, homeless, etc.)

### 2. Draft a Proposal:

Develop a proposal to submit to Governor Sanford and the NC Fund. Your final proposal should show how your county will make a difference if given funding from the NC Fund. Final proposals should contain:

- A **broad title for your overall proposal** (for example, "Tar Heel County – Eradicating Poverty Step by Step")
- An **introductory paragraph** that contains an overview of Tar Heel, its problems, and why your proposal is the best chance for improving life for Tar Heel residents
- A **detailed description of 3-5 initiatives or programs** that you will implement in the county to improve the lives of those impoverished. These are the programs you will implement if the NC Fund gives you funding. Each description should contain: a creative program name and slogan; a detailed purpose; necessities that will be needed for the program's operation; an explanation of the positive impact the program will have if funded. For example:
  - **Program Name:** Meals-on-Wheels
  - **Slogan:** "So no senior ever goes hungry..."
  - **Purpose:** As of 2007, there were nearly 6 million seniors across America facing the threat of hunger. To address this problem, Meals-on-Wheels delivers healthy meals to at-risk senior citizens (elderly people who are disabled, homebound, sick, etc.) to ensure they do not go hungry.
  - **Necessities for Program Operation:** Funds are needed for the staff, space, and supplies to prepare the meals. Meals are delivered by volunteers.
  - **Impact:** Hundreds of meals are delivered daily, ensuring seniors are fed and cared for.

**Note:** Your group can research real programs created to address issues of poverty. However, even if you base your ideas on such programs, your proposal should be merged with your own creativity so that it is unique.

### 3. Finalize & Present Your Proposal:

Once your group has reviewed, finalized, and written out your proposal, prepare to present it to the remainder of the class. We will then vote on which proposal we think should be funded by the NC Fund in 1963. Your group should take time to plan out how you will present and describe your proposal to the class. How will you get everyone interested and excited about your ideas? You may want to create a visual poster to accompany your presentation. All group members must actively participate in creatively describing your proposal to class.

### Even short-term poverty can hurt kids' health

Being poor for even a short period of time can have lasting health implications for children, according to a new report by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. 15.5 million children are living in poverty in the United States, that's one in five children according to the Census Bureau.

Researchers looked at data surrounding four topics: Health, food security, housing stability and maltreatment. They examined each in relation to past and present recessions. During childhood, the body is growing quickly and researchers say even a brief period of poor nutrition could lead to lifelong issues.

21 percent of all households with children were estimated to be "food insecure," according to the report data. "Food insecure" is when a family doesn't have access to enough nutritionally adequate food to meet proper dietary needs. "The numbers illustrate that even a one-time recession can have lasting consequences," says Dr. David Rubin a co-senior author of the study.

Enrollment in programs such as food stamps has increased. "We had counties in the United States where 70 percent of all children in that county were receiving food stamps. It's shocking to me that we are at those numbers," says Rubin, who's also director of the PolicyLab at Children's Hospital in Philadelphia. Parents who are trying to trim food costs may turn to less-expensive meals, such as fast food, and this could have an impact on childhood obesity.

Affordable housing directly influences a child's health according the report. Unsafe living conditions, homelessness and frequent moves put children more at risk to suffer from a number of health issues including hypertension, heart disease, depression or anxiety, asthma, developmental delays and behavioral problems.

The maltreatment of children either physical or emotional has decreased according to the report, but the researchers note the government has downsized the number of programs focused on these issues. Researchers found child neglect incidents rose during previous recessions leading them to expect a rise following the current recession.

Researchers did find the number of children covered by health insurance is up. "Stability is very important to child well being," says Dr. Kathleen Noonan co-senior author of the study. "The planning that was done to create a safety net for children for insurance actually created a buffer," but she says, the subsidies families receive when it comes to other needs are usually a one-time benefit, yet these families continue to suffer year after year.

The report will be discussed as part of a congressional briefing with Sen. Bob Casey on Wednesday.

Trisha Henry, CNN Medical Producer

Source: <http://thechart.blogs.cnn.com/2010/11/15/even-short-term-poverty-can-hurt-kids-health/>