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The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 16
Issue 4 December

Article 9

December 1989

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James A. Geschwender
State University of New York, Binghamton

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Recommended Citation

Geschwender, James A. (1989) "The Truly Disadvantaged: Structuring an Agenda for Change," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 16 : Iss. 4 , Article 9.

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The Truly Disadvantaged: Structuring an Agenda for Change

JAMES A. GESCHWENDER

State University of New York-Binghamton

This manuscript addresses the question as to how we may best structure an agenda for change aimed at improving the economic situation for the "truly disadvantaged." I have chosen to address this question within the limits set by existing political circumstances. Policy proposals are presented because they are believed to be achievable and would be effective if implemented. It is impossible to think about this question without considering the proposals presented by William J. Wilson in his pathbreaking book, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987). Consequently, I briefly describe the intellectual context within which Wilson wrote his book and analyze the basic assumptions which underlay his proposals. On the whole, I believe Wilson's analysis to be sound and the proposals that he presents to be invaluable. Nevertheless, there are some difficulties with his formulation of the problem. Some of his assumptions are flawed and, consequently, his proposals, while pointed in the right direction, do not go far enough.

Wilson's Proposals in Context

Over the past few decades, a great deal of scholarly attention has been directed toward examining changes in the social and economic position of Afro-Americans in the United States. The social science scholarship which analyzed developments in the 1960s concluded that Afro-Americans had made a great deal of progress toward achieving economic equality and tended to project this progress into the indefinite future (Wattenberg and Scammon, 1973; Moynihan, 1972; Glazer, 1975; Freeman, 1973, 1976; Farley, 1977; Featherman and Hauser, 1978; Masters, 1975; Smith and Welch, 1977; Weiss and Williamson, 1972; Welch, 1973). Other scholars reexamined the

question incorporating data from the 1970s and concluded either that much of the progress of the 1960s had been eroded during the 1970s or that the gains were illusory in that they masked the fact that much of the Afro-American community was not sharing in the progress experienced by its more advantaged strata (Jordan, 1979, 1980; Hill, 1981; Reich, 1981; Lazear, 1979; Auletta, 1982; Wilson, 1980).

Perhaps the most extensive attempt to evaluate these conflicting interpretations was that of Farley (1984) who provided the major impetus for a rebirth of optimism. He found that the ratio between Afro-American and Euro-American median family incomes increased from 53% in 1959 to 61% in 1970 before declining back to 55% in 1982 which is consistent with the interpretation that progress during the 1950s was eroded during the 1960s. However, he also noted that, while the proportion of families headed by females increased for both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans during this time period, it increased far more rapidly for Afro-Americans. Separate analysis of trends by type of family revealed that two-parent, Afro-American families exhibited a greater increase in median family income than comparable Euro-American families during both the decade of the 1960s and the 1970s. Among female-headed families, Afro-Americans showed similar relative gains during the 1960s and then held their own during the 1970s. Farley concluded that two-parent Afro-American families have indeed, make major advances in American society, both absolutely and relative to Euro-Americans, and that the apparent relative decline in family income for Afro-Americans during the 1970s was a direct consequence of a greater increase in the number and proportion of female-headed families. Thus, he remained optimistic about the eventual complete elimination of racial inequality in America.

William J. Wilson (1980, pp. 174–75) argued that Farley's analysis is flawed because it is based upon the experience of employed persons between 25 and 64 and leaves out those Afro-Americans between 16 and 24 who have been the most excluded from the labor market. He suggested that the greatest relative disadvantage experienced by Afro-Americans may be their inability to even enter the labor market and that this is

further compounded by their higher rates of unemployment. Thus, Wilson concluded that the portion of the Afro-American community that he calls the underclass is still falling further behind middle-class Afro-Americans and is certainly not closing the gap relative to Euro-Americans. In his most recent work, Wilson (1987) concentrates his attention on the plight of the growing number of female-headed families in the Afro-American community and does not question Farley's assumption that two-parent Afro-American families are doing well relative to comparable Euro-Americans. He demonstrates that, among Afro-Americans, the number of female-headed families is increasing, in large part, in response to economic conditions which make it impossible for large numbers of males to get jobs paying a wage high enough to allow them to marry—although his index of "marriageable" men measures only employment status and not income. This contrasts sharply with the situation among Euro-American women where increases in female headed families are more likely to result from noneconomic factors.

Wilson's policy recommendations center around a series of proposed economic reforms designed to create more jobs for all. Afro-American men would, along with others, acquire these newly created jobs. This would increase the numbers of Afro-American men who could afford to marry and support a family, thereby, reducing the number of female-headed families and decreasing the number of persons living in disadvantaged circumstances. His economic proposals are quite laudable—anything which helps to create jobs for the jobless is indeed laudable. As is anything which helps make it possible for men and women to marry if they wish to do so. And in this sense, I fully support all of the measures that he proposes. However, to borrow a phrase from Jessie Jackson, "the patch just isn't big enough." *First*, the assumption that two-parent Afro-American families are doing reasonably well compared to similar Euro-American families needs to be rethought. It is too simplistic, and, consequently, tends to generate policy proposals that are inadequate to accomplish their desired objectives. Research by Geschwender and Carroll-Seguin (forthcoming) demonstrates that a much higher proportion of

the income of Afro-American two-parent families is generated by the wife's earnings than is the case for Euro-Americans. In all too many cases, it requires two workers in an Afro-American family to achieve the life-style that Euro-Americans can have with one. *Second*, it is simply not the case that all women who head families do so because of a shortage of what Wilson calls "marriageable men." Some do so by choice, and would like the opportunity to achieve a decent standard of living without having to buy a husband as part of the package. The program that Wilson proposes does not address this issue and would, if enacted, do very little to improve their circumstances. Nor is it, by itself, likely to produce very substantial gains for disadvantaged, two-parent families.

Data Analysis

In this section of the paper I use data derived from the 1980 United States Census as presented in the 5% microdata sample tapes for the state of California (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1980). Table 1 presents data on the economic status of families by ethnicity and type of family. Families are classified as poor if they are below the poverty level; disadvantaged if their income is above the poverty level, but less than twice that amount; low income if their income is more than twice, but less than three times, the poverty level; secure if their income is more than three times, but less than four times the poverty level; and affluent if it exceeds four times the poverty level. The plight of female-headed families—regardless of ethnicity—is evident. The proportion of such families living in either poor or disadvantaged circumstances ranges from a low of 33% for Japanese-Americans to a high of 73% for Vietnamese-Americans. Anglos (43%) approach the low end of the continuum while Mexican-Americans (70%) and Afro-Americans (66%) approach the high end. Male-headed, single-parent families are considerably better off ranging from 10% in poor or disadvantaged circumstances among Japanese-Americans to a high of 63% among Vietnamese-Americans. Anglos (19%) approach the low end of the continuum while Mexican-Americans (43%) and Afro-Americans (41%) approach the high end.

Table 1

Family Economic Status by Family Type and Ethnicity: California, 1980

Family Type	Economic Status	Anglo American	Afro-American	Mexican-American	Japanese-American	Chinese-American	Filipino American	Korean-American	Asian-Indian American	Vietnamese American
Two Parents	Poor	3.5	9.4	13.2	2.4	8.4	4.1	10.8	9.1	34.1
	Disadvan.	10.3	19.9	29.1	7.1	14.2	15.8	20.6	12.0	20.9
	Lo Income	33.0	38.2	40.3	29.1	32.2	47.0	37.6	36.9	34.5
	Secure	26.1	20.3	12.6	31.2	23.4	24.3	19.1	25.6	7.0
	Affluent	27.0	12.3	4.9	30.1	21.9	8.8	11.9	16.5	3.5
	N	17790	12036	27698	2730	32380	3275	1004	661	545
	X Income	28475.20	22534.40	19395.20	31318.80	27955.70	26547.10	24312.80	27184.20	16281.50
Male Single Parent	Poor	7.6	21.4	16.6	4.3	11.1	8.6	19.0	20.7	39.1
	Disadvan.	11.7	20.2	25.9	5.7	16.3	17.6	26.2	17.2	24.3
	Lo Income	29.3	35.3	40.2	30.0	32.1	39.2	35.7	31.0	23.5
	Secure	25.7	16.1	13.4	32.1	23.7	26.1	11.9	13.8	10.4
	Affluent	25.7	6.9	4.0	27.9	16.8	8.6	7.1	17.2	2.6
	N	751	1423	2219	140	190	222	42	29	115
	X Income	24706.70	15554.20	15717.60	25689.40	22714.30	21103.30	15973.10	20332.40	13092.90
Female Single Parent	Poor	18.2	38.3	40.3	14.2	21.8	17.9	26.2	26.5	46.0
	Disadvan.	24.6	27.9	29.9	18.6	22.4	24.3	25.2	18.4	26.6
	Lo Income	36.4	26.3	23.9	34.8	33.3	35.9	35.5	36.7	20.2
	Secure	14.6	5.7	4.8	21.2	15.0	16.1	10.3	6.1	5.7
	Affluent	6.2	1.8	1.3	11.3	7.5	5.8	2.8	12.2	1.6
	N	2530	7773	5833	345	321	465	107	49	124
	X Income	14755.30	10799.50	10587.70	18270.60	16264.00	17214.30	14826.40	17149.50	12155.10
Female Single Parent Assumption of Equality	Poor	15.3	34.1	35.0	12.2	19.3	14.8	20.6	20.4	42.7
	Disadvan.	18.3	21.2	25.3	15.4	15.0	14.2	19.6	14.3	25.0
	Lo Income	32.4	27.5	28.2	27.3	33.0	35.1	34.6	38.8	17.7
	Secure	19.9	11.9	8.3	24.4	18.7	22.6	19.6	10.2	11.3
	Affluent	14.1	5.3	3.2	20.9	14.0	13.3	5.6	16.3	3.2

Source: 1980 United States Census, State of California, PUMS 5% A Sample.

Two-parent families fare much better than either single-parent type. Nevertheless, the proportion of such families in poor or disadvantaged circumstances ranges from a low of 9% among Japanese-Americans to a high of 55% among Vietnamese-Americans. Anglos (14%) approach the low end of the continuum while Mexican-Americans (32%), Korean-Americans (31%), and Afro-Americans (29%) approach the high end. This data hardly supports the notion that marriage, by itself, is any insurance that women will have a decent standard of living. However, these data do not constitute an adequate test of Wilson's proposals. He stressed the need to stimulate the economy to produce more jobs so that more men could afford to marry and support families. The data in Table 1 do not control for employment status. Table 2 presents data on the economic status of two-parent families in which the husband is employed full-time, year around, controlling for ethnicity and wife's involvement in the labor force.

The proportion of two-parent families with the husband employed full-time, year around, who live in poor or disadvantaged circumstances ranges from a low of 5% for Japanese-Americans to a high of 33% for Mexican-Americans. Anglos (7%) and Indian-Americans (11%) approach the low end of the continuum while Vietnamese-Americans (19%) and Afro-Americans (17%) are closer to the high end. Perhaps a better indicator of the probability of a family achieving economic security by relying solely upon male earnings, is provided by data on families in which the wife is not in the labor force. The proportion of such families living in poor or disadvantaged circumstances ranges from a low of 9% among Japanese-Americans to a high of 48% among Mexican-Americans. Anglo (11%) and Indian-Americans (14%) approach the low end of the continuum while Vietnamese-Americans (46%) and Afro-Americans (33%) are closer to the high end.

It does not seem that finding and marrying a "marriageable" man—even one employed full-time, year around—is a path that a woman can follow with confidence that it will arrive at economic security. Such families are better off than those with unemployed or underemployed husbands, but, again,

Table 2
Economic Status of Two Parent Families with Male Employed Full-time by Female Employment Status and Ethnicity: California, 1980

Female Employ. Status	Economic Status	Anglo American	Afro- American	Mexican- American	Japanese- American	Chinese- American	Filipino- American	Korean American	Asian Indian American	Vietnamese American
All	Poor	1.7	3.4	7.4	0.9	2.3	1.6	2.3	1.8	3.0
	Disadvan.	5.6	13.1	25.8	4.5	9.7	11.7	13.2	8.8	16.0
	Lo Income	30.0	40.7	44.8	27.1	32.9	47.1	42.5	37.0	58.7
	Secure	29.9	26.4	15.7	33.5	27.9	28.4	26.3	32.8	14.8
	Affluent	32.8	16.4	6.2	34.0	27.2	11.2	15.7	19.7	7.6
	N	11443	7083	17568	2063	2199	2121	612	457	237
	X Income	32891.10	26888.50	21914.90	34073.60	32510.90	29714.40	29875.90	31382.80	24959.70
Females Not in Labor Force	Poor	2.7	7.1	12.7	1.0	5.4	5.1	1.5	3.1	8.8
	Disadvan.	8.0	25.6	34.8	8.1	14.2	27.9	23.3	11.3	36.8
	Lo Income	35.1	44.2	39.8	37.5	41.4	47.0	40.7	40.7	45.6
	Secure	26.9	16.8	9.6	29.5	21.1	15.4	18.0	29.9	5.9
	Affluent	27.4	6.2	3.1	23.8	17.9	4.6	13.2	15.0	2.9
	N	4383	1944	7713	701	592	351	189	194	68
	X Income	31180.30	20490.80	18666.00	31367.90	28173.40	22807.70	26444.80	30403.50	19697.80
Female Employ. Less Than Full-Tm. Year Around	Poor	1.3	3.1	4.4	0.6	1.4	1.5	0.3	1.4	0.0
	Disadvan.	6.3	14.5	23.6	2.6	8.3	16.6	12.5	7.7	9.3
	Lo Income	34.6	45.0	51.0	25.0	32.4	53.1	50.0	37.8	66.7
	Secure	30.3	23.8	15.6	33.1	29.7	20.8	24.4	37.8	20.4
	Affluent	27.4	13.6	5.4	38.7	28.2	8.1	11.9	15.4	3.7
	N	3912	2268	5557	656	710	607	160	143	54
	X Income	32578.90	25910.10	22420.90	32964.70	31615.40	26715.50	27322.10	28967.20	23707.60
Female Employ. Full Time Year Around	Poor	0.6	1.2	1.9	1.0	0.8	0.6	1.2	0.0	0.9
	Disadvan.	1.6	3.5	12.6	0.7	3.9	4.3	6.5	5.8	7.0
	Lo Income	17.2	34.8	45.6	9.8	18.3	43.9	38.9	30.0	62.6
	Secure	33.5	35.1	26.9	24.9	25.9	36.4	33.6	31.7	17.4
	Affluent	47.1	25.5	13.1	63.6	51.2	14.8	20.0	32.5	12.2
	N	3136	2871	4288	706	897	1163	262	120	115
	X Income	36920.60	31993.50	27134.40	37790.40	36087.50	33370.10	33925.30	35844.50	28669.80

Source: 1980 United States Census, State of California, PUMS 5% A Sample.

male employment is simply not a big enough patch. Of course, the wife may also enter the labor force if she is childless, has children old enough to care for themselves, or can find adequate day care. Table 2 presents data which allows us to explore the consequences of this action.

The wife's entry into the labor force reduced the number of poor or disadvantaged families regardless of ethnicity. The decreases ranged from as little as 3% among Anglos, 5% among Indian-Americans, and 6% among Japanese-Americans to 15% among Afro-Americans and Filipino-Americans, 20% among Mexican-Americans, and 36% among Vietnamese-Americans. While the improvement in status brought about by women's earning is shared by all groups, the proportion of families remaining in poor or disadvantaged circumstances remains unacceptably high. Even without taking into account any cost that might be associated with child care, 10% of Chinese-Americans, 13% of Korean-Americans, 28% of Afro-Americans, 18% of Filipino-Americans, and a whopping 18% of Mexican-Americans remain in poor or disadvantaged circumstances. It is obvious that the earnings of employed married women are important to the family. The entry of the wife into the labor market along side of a fully employed husband sharply reduces the proportion of families living in poor or disadvantaged circumstances. But, women's employment also do not constitute a big enough patch.

People are not poor or disadvantaged because they are unwilling to work. There are a limited number of jobs available for either men or women. Pressures caused by the presence of children, difficulty in finding adequate child care, and its high cost, when available, make it harder for married women to enter the labor force. It is often the case that available jobs simply do not pay enough to allow the working poor to live with dignity and economic security. Nor is there any guarantee that this standard of living can be achieved even if both parents are employed full-time, year around. Approximately 15% of such Mexican-American families still live in poor or disadvantaged circumstances as do 8% of Filipino-American and Vietnamese-American families. These are frightening figures.

Discussion

Significant numbers of ethnic families—with or without a husband that is employed full-time, year around—live in poor or disadvantaged circumstances. Entry of the female spouse into the labor force, and especially full-time employment, improves their economic situation, but far too many remain disadvantaged. Perhaps the major reason why female employment does not do more to improve the economic circumstances of families is the “65 cent dollar” with which women are paid. Both Euro-American and Afro-American women—even if employed full-time—earn significantly less than comparably qualified Euro-American men (Farley 1984, pp. 72–75). There is no reason to assume that other Women of Color fare any better than Afro-American women in this regard.

Girls are socialized into feminine gender roles and women are systematically shunted into “female” occupations which are paid considerably less than “men’s jobs” even when they demand comparable levels of skill and training. Still, women’s earnings do a great deal to reduce the number of families living in disadvantaged circumstances. Table 3 presents data on the economic status of two-parent families by ethnicity and employment pattern. This will help us to determine what women’s earnings could accomplish for their families if they were paid with a 100 cent dollar—that is at the same level as similarly qualified men.

The left hand portion of the table presents the proportion of families that would be poor or disadvantaged if wives did not contribute any income, the proportion as currently existing, and the proportion that would be poor or disadvantaged if women were paid at the same level as men. This latter figure was computed through a process which involved dividing current women’s earnings by .65. The data demonstrates that, even under present conditions, women’s earnings reduce the number of families living in poor or disadvantaged circumstances by anywhere from 7 to 14%, depending upon ethnicity. The greatest impact is found among Afro-Americans, Filipino-Americans, and Korean-Americans. “Comparable Worth” legislation would further reduce the proportion of poor or dis-

Table 3
Impact of Women's Earnings on Economic Status of Two Parent Families by Ethnicity: California, 1980

Ethnicity	All Two Parent Families					Both Parents Working Full-Time				
	Percent Disadvantaged			Percent Affluent		% Low Income			% Affluent	
	If Wife Not Emp.	As Is	W/O Disc.	If No Female Inc.	As Is	W/O Disc.	As Is	No Disc.	As Is	No Disc.
Anglo-Afro-American	20.9	13.8	6.5	17.8	27.0	39.6	19.4	11.7	47.1	63.4
Mexican-American	43.8	29.3	26.2	4.1	12.3	18.8	38.5	24.2	25.5	40.8
Japanese-American	53.7	42.3	38.7	2.2	4.9	7.5	60.1	49.5	13.1	23.0
Chinese-American	16.5	9.5	8.6	16.0	30.1	37.8	16.7	11.5	49.0	63.6
Filipino-American	33.0	22.6	20.2	10.5	21.9	28.1	33.0	23.0	37.4	51.2
Korean-American	43.5	19.9	15.9	2.6	8.8	16.8	48.8	29.0	14.8	30.4
Asian-Indian	45.2	31.4	28.3	7.2	11.9	15.1	46.6	34.0	20.0	28.2
American	30.9	21.1	19.1	10.6	16.5	21.0	35.8	23.3	32.5	48.3
Vietnamese-American	70.3	65.0	51.9	0.7	3.5	5.3	70.5	53.0	12.2	19.1

Source: 1980 United States Census, State of California, PUMS 5% A Sample.

advantaged families by another 2 to 13% and would increase the number of families living under affluent conditions by between 2 and 13%. This is on top of the 3 to 14% increases resulting from women's employment under present circumstances. A comparison of families under the assumption of "no earnings by wife" with those under the assumption of "Comparable Worth earnings" shows a total decline of families in poor or disadvantaged circumstances of between 8 and 28%, and a total increase of families in affluent circumstances of between 4 and 22%, depending upon ethnicity.

The right hand portion of Table 3 presents data reporting the impact of "Comparable Worth" legislation for families in which the wife is employed full-time, year around. Paying women at the same level as men would reduce the proportion of families living in poor or disadvantaged circumstances by between 7 and 20%, and increase the proportion living in affluent circumstances by between 7 and 16%, depending upon ethnicity. This represents a total increase of between 18 and 48% of families living in affluent circumstances. Data included in the lower portion of Table 1 demonstrated that women who head families would also be helped by the elimination of gender inequality in wages. The proportion of such families living in poor or disadvantaged circumstances would decrease by between 6 and 13%, depending upon ethnicity.

Conclusion

This analysis probably overstates the impact that "Comparable Worth" legislation would have upon Anglo families and understates its importance for Families of Color. Afro-American women working full-time in 1982 earned \$1,100 less than comparably employed Euro-American women (Farley 1984, p. 57). Other Women of Color are likely to be faced with a similar earnings deficit. If anything, this strengthens my argument that we must create a multi-pronged effort to drastically alter the opportunity structure in American society if we are to make serious inroads against racial inequality. Any meaningful reduction in racial inequality requires a simultaneous reduction in gender inequality. I fully support the policy proposals put forth by Wilson in the *Truly Disadvantaged*, but

believe that we must go much further. Wilson's policy proposals embody an unconscious sexism and accept the inevitability of the traditional two-parent family. This is a fine family form for those who choose it—but not everyone wishes to do so.

Wilson does not believe that this is the natural, or even the preferred, family form. He simply argues that the level of sexism that exists in our society dooms women who choose alternative life styles to disadvantaged circumstances. Nor do his proposals entirely ignore the needs of women. He emphasizes the need to create jobs for both men and women (Wilson 1987, p. 106; 150), but the major thrust throughout his book is aimed at solving the problems of women in the underclass by increasing the size of the pool of "marriageable" men. He also discusses the need for day care with reference to female-headed families (Wilson 1987, p. 153), but not in relation to the needs of two-parent families. Further, he suggests that day care should come from the private sector, which would make it prohibitively expensive for low income families. Nor would the tax credits that he advocates help all that much since low income people pay few taxes. Lowering the age for admission into preschools, as advocated by Wilson, would not help as much as it appears on the surface. Preschools often have short hours and still leave the problem of day care availability for the remainder of the day as well as the problem of providing transportation between preschool and day care. Wilson does not present any proposals related to wage discrimination against women.

Wilson's political agenda is structured on pragmatic considerations. He does not believe that racial special interest legislation can be passed in the present political context. Consequently, he urges an agenda which would create a broad based alliance by providing some potential gains for a wide spectrum of Americans. I think that he is right in his reading of the times and in his basic approach. However, it will not be possible to implement his agenda without struggle. I cannot understand why we should engage in a massive struggle to implement a program that allows for the perpetuation of sexist institutions and, consequently, would fall far short of accom-

plishing our objectives. If we are going to have to struggle to bring about change anyway, and we must, let us make these changes worthwhile. Let us also struggle to eliminate sexism at the same time. This is not utopian. We can build a broad based movement on behalf of such a program by making more people aware of exactly how sexist economic practices work to their own disadvantage.

Legislation with teeth which strengthens the bars against overt gender discrimination is both desirable and achievable. But it does not go far enough. It does not attack the problem of sex-typed occupations. The only thing that I know of that would attack this is "Comparable Worth" legislation. "Comparable Worth" legislation is essential and, I believe, achievable. We will certainly never get it if we sit back, write it off as unobtainable, and strive for lesser things. We can and must make the effort. The ERA, Comparable Worth, Federally funded day care centers, and tax laws that allow child care costs to be deducted directly from income are all essential parts of the package. Such a legislative agenda would have a major impact in reducing the number of families living in disadvantaged circumstances and would help them to achieve a minimal level of decency. This program would have a significant impact upon opportunities offered to such current members of the underclass as single women, female heads of families, and to working wives. All family types, with the possible exception of male headed, single-parent families, would gain.

It would also help a category of persons that has not yet been considered. Many Afro-American families have only recently been able to achieve what is usually referred to as middle class status and their hold upon it remains insecure (Geschwender and Carroll-Seguín forthcoming). Afro-American males, even those with advanced levels of education do not receive the same economic payoff for added years of schooling that is accorded to Euro-Americans. Afro-American families which are middle-class in terms of husbands' education and occupation, have frequently had to opt to have two income earners in order to achieve the same middle-class life style that Euro-Americans can normally achieve with one wage earner. The earnings of employed females have made it pos-

sible for many Afro-American families to achieve middle-class status—whatever that means—and these earnings are essential for its retention. There is evidence that this same pattern holds for Asian-American families as well (Geschwender and Carroll-Seguín 1988). Thus, it appears that “Comparable Worth” legislation can be as essential to middle-class People of Color as it is for the underclass.

Women’s earnings, especially for Afro-Americans, may become of even greater importance in the future. In the past few decades, inflationary trends combined with changes in the occupational structure to make it increasingly difficult for males to find jobs and, if employed, to earn an income adequate to support a family at a minimal level of decency. Males are leaving the labor force in growing numbers. Farley (1984, pp. 40–43) notes that much of the decline in the labor force participation rate of Euro-American males results from the early retirement of males over 55 while the decline for Afro-Americans, which has been greater in absolute size, is largely found among men under 54 who, presumably, cannot find jobs. If these trends continue as expected, it will be increasingly important that we incorporate an attack upon gender inequality as a major feature in any attempts to reduce racial inequality.

A Political Afterword

The proposals outlined by Wilson in his work, and those that I have outlined above, must be included in any program of action if it is to be effective. They will be characterized by many as “reformist.” They fall short of calling for the socialist transformation of American Society as the only possible solution. However, such a transformation is not going to occur within the next decade. In the meantime, there are large numbers of persons living in misery. We cannot simply leave them there in the hope that their presence will hasten the revolution. We cannot stand idle in the belief that nothing meaningful can be done under capitalism. To do this, when we might be able to alleviate their suffering is cruel and insensitive. But, it is more than that. It is bad politics. The struggle for change, especially when it is successful, helps create a sense of power in

people. It helps to create the belief that they can collectively develop the ability to control their own destiny. It helps to mobilize people and strengthen the movement for further change. These measures that advocate are reformist, but they are worth struggling for on their own merits, and they are worth struggling for because each successful struggle for reform has the potential to develop into a broader struggle for justice and equality.

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