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TANF and the Libertarian and Communitarian Prescriptions to Poverty

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the libertarian and communitarian views of the welfare state and the proper responsibilities and limits of governmental action. In the middle of the 1990s, the Clinton administration administered systematic welfare reform with its central philosophy of temporary assistance and welfare for struggling families in order to facilitate them for reengagement into the work force and education. Such programs as The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the dynamics of welfare have changed since the era of the Great Society. With this policy in its first decade of existence, this paper focuses on both the theoretical and philosophical interpretations of the libertarian community and communitarian community.

The once chaotic and draconian state of nature has been replaced by a social contract of a liberal government and free market capitalism as first

advocated by John Locke in the Enlightenment and was further elaborated upon by Adam Smith, Thomas Paine, Jacques Rousseau, the framers of the American Revolution and a plethora of other political philosophers and statesmen up to the present epoch. Moving from the Enlightenment to the modern era, new challenges to liberalism have reformed the liberal state in the minds of contemporary political theorists. Aside from classical liberal notions of a night watchmen state meant to protect the rights to life, liberty and property, the new question of justice as fairness created the impetus for major revision in liberal thought. John Rawls addressed such challenges by explaining the need to provide primary goods for human need.

“This basis turns out to be a conception of citizens' needs – that is, of persons' needs as citizens – and this allows justice as fairness to hold that the fulfillment of claims appropriately related to those needs is to be publicly accepted as advantageous, and thus counted as improving the circumstances of citizens for the purpose of political justice.”¹

For Rawls and liberal-egalitarians, it has become the political responsibility of the state to provide the basic socioeconomic needs for human condition beyond the political rights of classic liberalism. If citizens of the liberal state were struggling to survive, there was something fundamentally wrong. Rawls even went as far to listing some basic human needs as political rights and liberties, freedom of movement and occupation, powers and rights of offices and positions of political and economic institutions, income and economic prosperity, and finally the social bases of self-respect.² The last two needs, income and economic prosperity and a social basis of self-respect, are of particular importance in modern political discourse and the formulation of American social policy.

The needs of income and a social basis of self-respect have been the founding themes behind many welfare policies that redistribute wealth to the less fortunate and impoverished. Welfare redistributive policies have created heated and intense debates on the philosophical level. What is the government's role in alleviating poverty? Is it in the government's power to even redistribute income and resources to help a portion of its population? Does the individual have obligations to the community that include taxation for welfare programs? Or does the taxation for such programs infringe upon the individual's rights? Finally, does welfare help or hinder the poor?

These very questions are at the root of the theoretical solutions to the issue of poverty, welfare and providing basic needs. Libertarianism suggests that welfare policies are actually counterproductive in the distribution of goods. Even worse than that, government dictation of who receives what goods and income and coerced taxation is morally bankrupt and an affront to individual

liberty. Welfare is just another roadblock that hinders free market capitalism. Meanwhile, communitarianism offers a drastically different solution to the issues of poverty, human needs and welfare. Communitarians acknowledge individual rights but also suggest the individual's obligations to the community. Welfare policies are not only just but are necessary programs that provide for the less fortunate members of the community. They do not believe the libertarian contention that increasing government programs would damage a free market system. However, welfare recipients also have a responsibility to rise above the poverty line and reach sustainability in addition to their rights of dignity and basic human needs.

Neither the libertarian nor communitarian would support free hands outs to the poor without conditions. It is morally wrong for an individual to fraudulently receive welfare payments. Nor is it beneficial for a welfare recipient not to make efforts to improve their situation and find ways to eventually get off welfare. This is reflected in recent welfare reforms in the Clinton and Bush administrations, in particular Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) that was created under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996. This replaced the existing welfare programs such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Jobs Opportunity Basic Skills Training and Emergency Assistance, which were essentially entitlement programs. TANF has four major goals that have fostered change in the American welfare regime. First and foremost, TANF aims to promote self-sufficiency by promoting job preparation for eventual entry into the workforce. The other goals are to provide assistance to needy families so children can be cared for within their own households, preventing and reducing out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and encouraging two-parent households.³ TANF is only a temporary welfare assistance program where recipients not only must reach a level of self-sufficiency, but can only receive TANF aid for a maximum of two years consecutively or a total of five years in a lifetime, and this can vary based on state-level requisites and conditions. Eligibility for TANF aid also varies at the state level as well. Essentially, TANF aspires to rehabilitate needy families to the point where welfare is no longer necessary for sustainability.

TANF illustrates the differences between the communitarian and libertarian solutions to welfare policy and aid to the impoverished. TANF is of particular interest because this policy centers on assistance to families and children as opposed to the general population below the poverty line. Children raise further moralistic questions over the role of governmental policy in welfare programs since children are not adults who are completely responsible for their economic, political and social well-being. Still, the libertarian camp maintains that governmental welfare over extends the moral boundary that government should not cross. Conversely, communitarians are open to governmental action, in addition to private actions, to provide for needy families. While not much has been written exclusively on libertarian and communitarian positions on TANF, there are great volumes of essays, books, and policy research in the greater debate of welfare. The libertarian and communitarian stances on TANF

would be closely consistent to their beliefs in welfare policy as a whole.

Before the differences of libertarian and communitarian prescriptions to welfare are addressed and analyzed, it is paramount to notice one key area where there is mutual accord. Neither the libertarian nor the communitarian would articulate that the poor should outright suffer and be left to a life full of poverty and adversity. This poverty violates the rights to life, liberty and happiness. Even the early classical liberal thinker, Adam Smith, who is greatly attributed to laissez faire capitalism noted, "In civilized society, man stands at all times in need of cooperation and assistance of great multitudes."⁴ Poverty is certainly a condition in which fellow human beings would work together to facilitate each other from adversity. Libertarians support charity. Sheldon Richman wrote, "Advocating the repeal of the welfare state does not stem from disapproval of people's branching together to help each other when in distress. Voluntary mutual aid is inherent in freedom."⁵ Here charity illustrates the ability for individuals to choose to give, out of their free will, to help others. In return there might be some form of reciprocity for when the donor might need aid. Communitarians too are supportive of charity and nongovernmental means of assistance. Charity shows the moral imperative and initiative of the individual and the community to provide those in dire straights. Amitai Etzioni, founder of the Communitarian Network, stated, "Communities should take care of their own members, the way immigrant communities long did and still do."⁶ However, even in arenas of agreement between these two schools of thought, we already see a divergence in what is adequate and necessary, let alone the reasons behind their positions. Private contributions are not the final solution for the communitarians while the libertarians find private charities to be ample enough to assuage poverty. Michael Walzer is critical of reliance solely on philanthropic methods of welfare. It could become subject to private interests, corruption, and most importantly, not able to alleviate poverty. "A welfare state run entirely by private, nonprofit associations would be dangerously inadequate and inequitable in its coverage."⁷

Is the solution to the perceived inadequacy of philanthropy governmental welfare programs such as TANF and its predecessors? Government involvement in this issue would in fact be outright and unequivocally pejorative in libertarian theory. Such policies violate the very individual liberties the state is supposed to protect and honor. Increasing governmental intervention is the antithesis to liberty to the point where fear of an authoritarian regime could replace a democratic minimal state. Governmental policies coerce its citizens into providing resources or income, usually in the form of taxation or tribute. Bluntly put, the Libertarian Party advocate, "we seek a world of liberty; a world in which all individuals are sovereign over their lives, and no one is forced to sacrifice his or her values for the benefit of others."⁸ While this is a broad and sweeping statement, it holds weight to welfare policy by outright opposing government welfare and relief programs and call for immediate privatization of daycare, and other facilities used to aid poor and needy families.⁹

The purpose of government is solely for defense, law and contract enforcement and to act as an arbiter in disputes. The most minimal state with very limited redistribution in order to provide for these select functions are necessary and the only justified actions by the state. Anything more overextends the justified boundaries of the state. Welfare is an unjustified action of the libertarian, minimal state.¹⁰ In fact, such erroneous policies steal from those individuals who have earned their status through their own work ethic and merits. Redistribution is theft of property. According to Frederic Bastiat, “When a portion of wealth is transferred from the person who owns it – without his consent and without compensation – to anyone who does not own it, then I say that property is violated, and an act of plunder is committed.”¹¹

The libertarian reaction to the welfare state and egalitarianism is highly barbed in language. Such programs are equated to evil and theft. Ayn Rand detailed at great length her criticism of the welfare state and egalitarianism. Not only is welfare and redistribution poor policy, it is evil and intends to harm the poor and the productive alike, but is rationalized under the façade of humanitarian intentions. Instead of the poor being mollified of their desperate situation, the taxation and redistribution of welfare policies hinder and steal from the middle and upper classes by taking their earned wealth and have it squandered in ineffective welfare programs.

“Egalitarianism is so evil – and so silly – a doctrine that it deserves no serious study or discussion. But that doctrine has a certain diagnostic value: it is the open confession of a hidden disease that has been eating away the insides of civilization for two centuries under many disguises and cover-ups. Like the half-witted member of a family struggling to preserve a reputable front, egalitarianism has escaped from the dark closet and is screaming to the world that the motive is compassionate, ‘humanitarian,’ altruistic, collectivist brothers is not the desire to help the poor but to destroy the competent.”¹²

The libertarian reasoning behind how welfare and egalitarian policies target the productive and do little or nothing for the poor is the coercion behind such governmental policies. TANF, as with any other welfare program is redistributive by nature and requires taxation in order to operate. Taxation poses grave problems for libertarians because of the income taken from one individual and is given to another with little or no choice. If one does not pay their taxes or abide by whatever redistributive statute, there is the threat of some form of punishment, whether it is fine, imprisonment or any other punishment. Thus the citizen is not free to withhold their support of welfare programs.¹³

Libertarians draw parallels of taxation for social programs to that of slavery or conscription in military service to illustrate the ramifications of governmental intervention in a variety of sectors. Coercion is coercion, just with a different face for the different policies. This addresses the inconsistencies of the left for opposing war while supporting welfare and the right for supporting militarism while opposing welfare. Murray Rothbard challenged such inconsistencies. "How can the leftist be opposed to the violence of war and conscription at the same time supporting the violence of taxation and government control? And how can the rightist trumpet his devotion to private property and free enterprise while at the same time favoring war, conscription, and the outlawing of noninvasive activities he deems immoral?" ¹⁴

Libertarians even challenge the premise that welfare helps the poor. The libertarians argue that welfare does more to hinder the impoverished than to help them. Libertarians argue that welfare keeps recipients in a cycle dependent upon transfer payments and unable to develop the skills necessary to provide for themselves and their families. The incentive to be productive degenerates when salaries are replaced by government checks. The incentive of the donor decreases because they are no longer working for themselves and the incentive for the recipient decreases because they can rely upon the welfare payment. Sheldon Richman noted, "Once wealth is seen as a common holding, ideas on how to dispose of it will proliferate. The scope of government will grow and the incentive to produce will diminish." ¹⁵ Welfare is detrimental to the free market economy because it impairs productivity that is essential in a capitalist market. Any group or individual who takes but does not produce in the economy only strains the system. The government is not a productive enterprise in of itself. Its only income is through fees and taxation or through credit financing that creates deficits. This makes it fundamentally more difficult for producers and consumers to contribute to the economy. ¹⁶

Another essential premise the libertarians' criticism of welfare policy concerns the issue of equality. Some libertarians believe welfare redistribution creates equality in rhetoric only. Welfare policy is akin to the tale of Robin Hood where wealth is stolen from the rich and given to the poor. Libertarians argue that the welfare recipients are favored and receive more benefits from the state at the expense of the rest of the citizenry. ¹⁷ One group is preferred over the other, thus violating fair and even-handed treatment from the state.

Where the libertarians see welfare as a violation of essential rights and as a hindrance to the population, communitarians maintain the need for welfare policies and a stronger community commitment to help the less fortunate. The individual has rights but also responsibilities beyond their own self-interests that extend to the holistic health of the community. While libertarians oppose increasing egalitarian overtones in liberal society, communitarians embrace some egalitarian redistribution. This might strengthen the community that communitarians hold to be essential for the moral well-being for society. Both the liberal state and the libertarian state are relatively fragmented societies that

often pay less attention to communities and social entities in comparison to communitarian states. The liberal and libertarian societies, according to communitarians, are at risk of fragmentation and crumbling into failed societies.¹⁸ More governmental and private contributions to the community at large could only strengthen the wellness of all individuals. These programs, both public and private, stem from a foundation in shared values, that less defined in liberal-libertarian states. Liberal and libertarian states uphold procedural functions over the base conception of a shared moral good. The normative issues of wealth distribution and redistribution, aid to families, or any other policy cannot be settled without shared conception of the morally right values.¹⁹ This in turn sets the agenda for what is just and right policy. Policy then reinforced the community with respect to individual and collective rights.

Libertarians advocate negative rights, or freedoms from hazard, tyranny or external force. Communitarians do value negative rights or freedoms but also include positive freedoms that allow freedoms to do things or freedoms that are provided by the state. Some positive rights are known as welfare rights. It is incomplete for citizens to be free from harm, but is free to have to facilities available to pursue happiness and provide basic necessities. In order to ensure welfare rights, sometimes it is essential for the state or community to intervene in the lives of others to achieve such ends.²⁰ There is certain universality to these welfare rights that provide primary needs. Everyone has physiological and psychological needs such as food, clothing, shelter, physical and mental wellness that all need to maintain, whereas libertarians focus more on individual

Contrary to libertarian objections that welfare policy will diminish productivity; communitarians believe productivity is lost when citizens do not have basic human needs. Freedom cannot be obtained or cherished if one is unable to sustain oneself or their family. This also holds true in the economic arena as well; ones ability to procure a vocation is severely impeded if there is a constant struggle to provide and secure essential primary goods for oneself and ones family. Alan Gewirth detailed how human needs are essential for freedom and how the state can provide some assistance in mitigating socioeconomic hardships.

“Because without freedom and well-being one cannot either be an agent at all or a generally successful agent, one must have an assurance, as far as possible, that these goods will be securely possessed. Positive rights with their correlative strict ‘oughts’ provide the normative grounds for such assurances. These ‘oughts’ are directly translatable into legal enforcement, in a way looser ‘oughts’ of charity cannot.”²¹

Should the state fail to provide or attempt to provide welfare programs for the impoverished to obtain the minimal level of sustainability, and then the state has failed to uphold its responsibility to its citizens. The state, like the individual, has a moral imperative to aid those in need if they cannot aid themselves. The state is the fairest means of providing welfare programs²² because it has the broadest consensus and legitimacy of the community to take action. Not to provide basic needs is a failure of the state and community, since basic provisions are requisite to freedom and dignity. As Gewirth noted, "The existence of poverty is an at least prima facie violation of human rights."²³ President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society also advocated this notion. The government had a moral initiative to provide for its most destitute citizens and no American should live under the line. In a speech in 1965, Johnson said, "In a land of great wealth, families must not live in hopeless poverty. In a land of such great harvest, children must not live in such hopeless poverty."²⁴

Communitarian views of human nature are also drastically different. Libertarians view human nature as one where the individual and the maintenance of free will are the center of human actions. People act for their rational self interest, insofar it does not violate another's free will and well-being. Thus, any interactions in a communal setting are done so out of one's free will and no obligation to another (other than not infringing upon their free will) individual or community. One can leave the social gathering as they see fit. Any charity satisfies self-gratification or satisfies a means of reciprocity. The communitarian argues that people have a sense of duty and sacrifice in addition to rational self-interest. People aid others not just out of self-gratification, but because it is the right thing to do. Jan Narveson stated, "People who relieve suffering hardly do it because they enjoy it; they do it because their conscience tells them that they should. But if their conscience is correct, then it is no more their duty than anyone else's, and it is the responsibility of society to see that it is done without sanctioning special impositions on people of exceptional good will."²⁵ Since people have a sense of duty, governmental intervention is not what Bastiat would declare as legal plunder. Welfare illustrates how symbiotic the community is, and that people need social interactions for wellness and economic stability. Welfare is considered a mutual relation that benefits the community and all in it.²⁶ Productivity requires a functioning community and a robust state.

It is significant to note that communitarian support for welfare programs does not denote welfare recipients have no responsibilities to the community just because of their unfortunate situations. The recipients have a duty to do as best as possible to provide for themselves and their families. Etzioni provided some specific responsibilities in which recipients can contribute. If the recipient has not found employment, they should continue their education and seek job training, in addition to family obligations. This however faces a hard reality of poor families being unable to provide essential needs in the interim time between education and unemployment to the time they procure employment. Any job training and job search takes time to achieve. To ameliorate this reality,

temporary programs like TANF are regularly supported in communitarian circles. Communitarians do want to emphasize that even when faced with unemployment, one can still contribute to society by ways of education or job training. Thus, full employment and eventual progression above the necessity of welfare is the most preferred mode of contribution.²⁷ This shows that communitarians support welfare as a necessity to provide for the less fortunate, but they prefer that everyone is able to sustain themselves to the best of their own abilities. Essentially, the less people on welfare the better, and the more people rehabilitate into self-sufficiency, that is even better. This is one of the major principles and objectives behind TANF and modern welfare reform. Other communitarians even suggest that by using welfare, the recipient is contributing to the moral good of the community. They are engaging the community and seeking means of rehabilitation and upward mobility. This allows them to provide for their families, who would otherwise be deprived of essential needs.²⁸

Libertarianism and Communitarianism are not without staunch criticism on their positions of welfare policy. Libertarians are attributed and accused of neglecting certain harsh realities of a free market of limited government interventions. Akin to the communitarian response to libertarian theory, this political philosophy creates frail communities and isolated individuals that can lead to abject poverty and the destruction of many social bodies. Communities are not well protected and shielded from the ravages of the competitive capitalist markets²⁹. Even some defenders of libertarian theory have noted this very flaw. "One cannot deny that libertarian-liberal scholarship has paid insufficient attention to issues of conduct of communities in commercial society."³⁰ John Gray went, as far to say that libertarian, neo-liberal policy was self-defeating because they are based upon a "constellation of interests, that neo-liberal policy was bound to dissipate."³¹

Communitarian policy solutions fall under particularly important criticism by feminist scholars who believe communitarianism neglects to acknowledge the work and needs of the caregivers of dependents and that care giving is still inequitable among the genders. Caregivers, such as mothers and social workers do not enjoy the same full citizenship as others due to the unequal amount of work they do and responsibilities relegated to them. Communitarians, as well as liberals and many other theorists focus too much on income as a means to social contribution and duty that hard labor is often neglected.³²

TANF fits the communitarian mold of poverty solution than it does in relation to libertarian policy prescriptions. TANF is a work rehabilitative oriented welfare policy that matched Etzioni's call to get recipients back to work and/or school. TANF so far seems to be effective as well. In 1999, three years after its initial implementation, 4.2 million Americans were no longer in poverty, roughly half of which were children. By 2001, there was a 58 percent reduction in TANF caseloads nation wide. States with harder TANF eligibility and more work

requirements had a greater degree of TANF caseload reductions and an overall higher income level in the state.³³ In a Congressional testimonial in 2003, the Department of Health and Human Services reported a sixth straight year of TANF caseload reductions. Single parent household employment has also increased to “unprecedented levels.”³⁴ TANF has also been successful its goal of reducing out-of-wedlock pregnancies and illegitimate births. Teenage caseloads only constituted 5 percent of TANF and illegitimate births decreased for the first time in the late 1990s since the late 1940s.³⁵ Both TANF and communitarians aspire to help people reach self-sustainability and support the traditional, two-parent family. However, the reduction in caseloads could mean that states made TANF requisites more difficult obtain, and the temporary nature of the program might not mean that all TANF recipients were able to achieve self-sustainability. After two years, the recipient is automatically bumped off the program unless they meet a special exemption. Also, the definition of poverty to the DHHS might be different than what communitarians view as acceptable standards of living. Some communitarians might also find it unacceptable that this aid is temporary and certain families might need more assistance than what they are given. If impoverished families do not receive TANF aid, then the communitarian might find it immoral that no aid is given.

Libertarians as a whole are opposed to TANF or any governmental welfare program, due to its coercive taxation nature. However, compared to former welfare programs, temporary assistance is a step in the right direction. No longer welfare is just a governmental entitlement eligible for an indefinite period of time, which would strain the market greatly, but now recipients are at least pushed to productivity. This however creates a dilemma for libertarians. Coercion of welfare programs and redistribution is immoral, but yet recipients of TANF are forced to find jobs based on government conditions. Any attempt however to reduce the welfare programs and starving the beast is progress to more moderate libertarians.

Both theories provide some relevant points and have some flawed assumptions. Libertarianism provides the greatest chance for individuals to achieve for themselves and achieve high degrees of upward mobility; conversely, free market capitalism comes with great risk and misfortunes. Also, not all individuals or families are born and raised with the same opportunities as other more wealthy individuals and families are. Also, the market cannot provide all essential human needs such as political rights, social rights and physical and psychological health. Libertarianism also assumes that everyone will always do what is either rational or right for his or her self-interests or people would donate to charity through their own volition. Libertarian apprehension of the encroachment of increasing government is not without merit since there will be a degree of waste and inefficiency in all governmental programs due to human imperfections whether it is corruption or incompetence. Also the greater a government program grows, the greater the national deficit grows and private industries are crowded out. There is the propensity of governmental corruption, pork-barrel politics, inefficiency and misallocations in

welfare programs. What is commendable and important to realize about libertarian theory is the wide degree of private actions that can happen to help others through free will, and not government coaxing. Also the faith in human productivity is important for the market to reach maximum productivity and prosperity.

Communitarians acknowledge the importance of communities that libertarians often neglect. Groups take identities and needs just as much as individuals since after all, they are a group of people. What is interesting about this theory is the permission of individual liberty with community obligations. Whereas socialists focus more on the community of the state and one class, and libertarians focus solely on private interactions, communitarians allow for both. However, this could lead to some major dilemmas. Where is the line between individual liberty and communal obligation? It is highly plausible that one could compromise the other. Where libertarianism relies on private charity, communitarians also provide for governmental welfare that could generate more resources to the needy that charity alone cannot provide. But it also forces the citizens to pay a certain share of what they have earned into that system with the knowledge that they may or may not get something back in return. Those who live in a communitarian society and disagree with the welfare programs, or any program, still have to divvy up their income for taxes and fees or face some form of legal penalty.

The libertarian approach tends to be more effective in alleviating the situation of poverty because it promotes individual ingenuity and motivation to achieve sustainability and prosperity. It allows for social interaction and the formation of communities based on need and will. No one is bound to preexisting conditions of obligation to a community that may or may not provide for them. People have to be efficient because they have to be responsible for their prosperity. There is also freedom of movement and career changes should an individual find displeasure and perceived unfairness at their current job. Job mobility keeps positions open, giving lower income people a chance at upward mobility.

What makes libertarian theory even more attractive is the problem that arises from a sprawling government. Even if welfare helps some poor, the politics of the program will require it to grow and need more tax income to the point most citizens are violated by that loss of income. What started out as a well intended program turned out to be one that marred with inefficiency that only harms the taxpayer and welfare recipient alike. Dependency upon welfare programs is also problematic because recipients could take from the system without providing anything in return and strain those who provide tax money for these programs. Often neglected, as Kittay mentioned, are the caregivers who labor every day as social workers, volunteer workers, and family members who care for others. Government welfare has barely addressed the needs of these caregivers and their contributions to society. This is an abuse of the system that even the most bureaucratic efficiency and accountability would have difficulty in

resolving. It is a continual strain on the system that can only be solved by one of two ways: reducing the program or increasing tax, fees and other government revenue, which is highly contentious. Given the problems many states in the country face in balancing education and healthcare costs, a larger welfare burden would place many states deeper in debt. Government agencies crowd out functions that the private sector can perform, in a competitive environment. Government by nature kills competition and quality is compromised. If the government acts with increasing power in welfare policies, there is less incentive for individuals to give out of their will to worthy charitable causes. Private firms and organizations can provide philanthropic ventures and provide more jobs through competition.

However, welfare is needed in times of unfortunate circumstances such as natural disasters, disease, or the damage caused not by the impoverished but by others who placed them into poverty through theft, physical harm. The market alone doesn't provide for people in times of disasters, neither are many families born into affluence and have a structurally more difficult task of achieving a living income. Many people are poor because of scenarios out of their control. Libertarianism generalized that all people have the same opportunities, but these opportunities are taken away by others or by nature. Temporary welfare programs can help bring these people back on their feet, or in the case of disease allow them to live with a level of dignity. Temporary assistance, such as TANF, also prevents an overly burdened welfare state given its rigid work standards and push to get needy families back into the job market.

Welfare programs that are rehabilitative by nature are more effective, as shown in the policy studies on TANF. Temporary assistance prevents government programs from increasing out of proportions. The best solutions tend to be the ones that allow people to take freedom and responsibilities into their own hands, even if they need some training or temporary income initially. Societies that are more free-market oriented, such as the United States, Japan and the more market oriented European nations have higher standards of living, whereas large government states in Asia, Latin America and Africa are more prone to poverty and other social woes whether the measure is in GDP per capita or in the socioeconomic conditions of the country such as mortality, education and employment measurements. This is not to say that state programs do not propagate some of these high living standards, but a vast majority of these countries have a robust private sector that contributes greatly to the standards of living in these more industrialized nations. Minimal governmental interference eventually benefits the many, even those who are on the lower end of the income scale. Poverty in the United States and Japan is much more hospitable than poverty in Africa. The ultimate goal of welfare and charity is to eventually reduce the need of such programs, not to increase them. Increase in welfare is indicative of systematic problems in the society.

About the Author

I was born in Stamford Connecticut and was raised in Stratford Connecticut. I graduated from Bunnell High School in Stratford where I found an interest in politics and the humanities late in my high school career. I started to attend Adelphi University in the fall of 2002 where I declared a double major in History and Political Science. I am a member of Phi Theta Alpha and Phi Sigma Alpha honor societies for my respective studies. There I was an editor for the campus newspaper, *The Delphian*, president of the Student History Society, member of Amnesty International and was head delegate for the university at the National Model United Nations. In May 2006, I will have completed my studies at Adelphi and aspire to go to graduate school for an advanced degree in political science. I have also worked for Senator Joseph Lieberman and for Juris Publishing within the past two years. In addition to my interests in history and political science, I am also fond of philosophy and economics. I would like to take this time to acknowledge Dr. Traci Levy, professor of political theory at Adelphi University for all her assistance and guidance in the formulation of this thesis. I also extend my gratitude to the Political Science and History departments at Adelphi University for their valuable education and opportunities they have provided me in the past four years.

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