

With Record Number Of Americans Falling Into Poverty, Senator Rand Paul Says The Poor Are Getting Rich

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Census data revealed today that a record 46.2 million Americans were [living in poverty](#) in 2010. But in an aptly-timed hearing entitled “Is Poverty A Death Sentence,” Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) [flat out rejected the idea](#) that poverty in the U.S is worrisome. As the Ranking Member of the Senate Health subcommittee, Paul offered a dissertation-length statement on how the correlation between poverty and death is only found in the Third World and to claim such a connection within the U.S. is nothing more than [“socialism” and “tyranny.”](#)

Stating that “poor children today are healthier than middle-class adults a generation ago,” he even blamed the poor for their own health problems, suggesting “behavioral factors” like a higher incidence of smoking, obesity, or weak family support structures as the only correlation between poverty and health.

Citing the deficit as a primary priority, Paul questioned whether federal low-income programs are “creating unnecessary and unhealthy dependence on government.” He unequivocally declared that “poverty is not a state of permanence” and that “the rich are getting richer, but the poor are getting richer even faster.”

PAUL: We also need to understand that poverty is not a state of permanence. When you look at people in the bottom 5th of the economic ladder — those at the bottom — only 5 percent are there after 16 years. People move up, the American dream does exist...The rich are getting richer, but the poor are getting richer even faster.

Watch

it:

<http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2011/09/13/318259/with-record-number-of-americans-falling-into-poverty-rand-paul-says-the-poor-are-getting-rich/>

Summing up his thesis, Paul said, “Rather than bemoan or belabor something [poverty] that is really truly something that is overwhelmingly being treated in our country, we should maybe give more credit to the American system, the American dream, and give credit to what capitalism has done to eradicate poverty in this country.”

First of all, the notion that the poor are getting richer faster than the rich requires an impressive level of ignorance. Currently, income inequality in the United States [is greater](#) than that of Pakistan and Ethiopia and [higher than at any other time](#) since the Great Depression. Indeed, thanks to exceedingly low tax rates, [the rich are getting richer](#), with the richest one percent earning [nearly 25 percent of the total income](#) in the country.

Meanwhile, nearly one in three middle-class Americans is [slipping down the income ladder](#) as an adult. And with [stagnant wages](#) and the purchasing power of the [minimum wage at a 51-year low](#), it's hard to see how suddenly "the poor are getting richer faster."

What's more, Paul's overwhelming deluge of pseudo-evidence to downplay the connection between poverty and poor health cannot shake incontrovertible facts. As the American Journal of Public Health [found](#), deaths resulting from poverty, income inequality, and low social support each totaled more than homicide deaths in 2000.

Paul's claim that Americans now have a greater life expectancy still doesn't change the fact that low-income individuals can expect to [live a shorter life](#) due to poverty. Indeed, a [report released at the hearing](#) noted that "this is the first time in our history that children born in certain parts of the United States can expect to live shorter lives than their parents' generation."

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