

**Another War on Poverty? Not So Fast.
New Report Calls for a Better Approach to Reducing Inequality**

For Immediate Release: April 24, 2007

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Washington, DC: This week the Center for American Progress joins Presidential candidate John Edwards and others in calling for a national goal to cut poverty by a specific amount. In a report issued today, Inclusion, a progressive think tank, suggests a different approach—one that doesn't define the problem simply as poverty—is needed.

The authors describe why the U.S. poverty measure is not a meaningful measure of economic deprivation, a conclusion reached by the National Academy of Sciences more than a dozen years ago.

But, as the report details, the problem with relying on a poverty framework to reduce inequality in the United States goes beyond measurement. Most Americans believe people are poor due to individual shortcomings—bad decisions, character flaws and moral weakness. In a Pew poll published last month, 7 out of 10 Americans agreed with the statement that the “poor are too dependent on government assistance.”

In place of poverty, the authors argue for a broader alternative approach, drawn from the United Kingdom. This approach—known as social inclusion—overcomes many of the flaws related to defining the problem as poverty. The social-inclusion approach has contributed to reductions in relative poverty rates and improvements in education, health, and housing quality in the United Kingdom.

The authors are blunt in their assessment: “In our view, adopting [a poverty] goal would not be part of an effective strategy to improve living standards in the United States. The United Kingdom has a broadly accepted definition of poverty that is tiered and multidimensional—the measure is not limited to income inadequacy—and a vision for what it means to end poverty in this broader sense of social inclusion. We have neither in the United States.”

A primary advantage of social inclusion over poverty is that it is not limited to a single measure: “In the United States, a social-inclusion goal provides more room than a poverty-reduction goal for consideration of comprehensive policies, including universal health care, paid leave, democratic workplaces, and portable retirement accounts that result in an economy that works for all.”

The report is posted on Inclusion's website at www.inclusionist.org/files/socialinclusionusa.pdf.

Inclusion is affiliated with the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR). The new report is a joint publication of Inclusion (US) and the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion in London (Inclusion UK). The authors include Shawn Fremstad, Rachel Gragg, and Margy Waller (co-founders of Inclusion US), as well as economist Heather Boushey of CEPR, and Natalie Branosky of Inclusion UK.

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