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Hidden Poverty in Union County

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File: Final_Project_Da'Mirah&Paloma.wav

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Transcript

- Da'Mirah ([00:00](#)) Hi. Welcome to Hidden Poverty in Union County Podcast.
- Da'Mirah & Paloma ([00:03](#)) This is your host, Da'Mirah, and this is your host, Paloma. How are you, Da'Mirah?
- Da'Mirah ([00:07](#)) I'm doing good. How are you?
- Paloma ([00:08](#)) I'm good, I'm good. It's nice to see you. So, before we get into it, I wanted to tell you some data that I gathered online. And I wanted to ask you, did you know that in 2022, 11.8% of Pennsylvania's population lived below the poverty line?
- Da'Mirah ([00:25](#)) No, I would have never guessed.
- Paloma ([00:26](#)) Yeah. So basically, I want to talk about that more and more specifically. Let's focus on Union County, where we're located here at Bucknell. So, what do you think about that?
- Da'Mirah ([00:37](#)) I think this is an important issue and it's interesting to kind of learn about how we as an institution help to alleviate poverty as well as contribute to its definitely.
- Paloma ([00:47](#)) Definitely. So, let's dive into it more. How about that?

Da'Mirah ([00:51](#))

Okay, let's get into it.

Paloma ([00:52](#))

Yes, but before we dive into it, let's define poverty. According to the USDA, in the United States, being in poverty is officially defined as having an income below a federally determined poverty threshold. This represents the federal government's estimate of the point below which a family of a given size has cash income insufficient to meet their basic needs. Any family or individual with a total income less than an amount deemed to be sufficient to purchase food, shelter clothes, and other essential goods and services is classified as poor.

Da'Mirah ([01:32](#))

I think that the definition of poverty is very useful, especially when understanding poverty in the Union County area and poverty in general. This topic, specifically hidden poverty in the Union County area, is especially important, especially for those students who come to Bucknell. Bucknell University students are less likely to need financial aid for the 2023 and 2024 academic years. The cost of attended budget is 84,650, with the high cost of students coming to Bucknell may not be aware of the difficulties found in the Unit County community. Bucknell students are less likely to think about people living in poverty in the area. We want to bring awareness and inform students on how economic insecurity affects people's lives here in Union County. For example, in 2020, 211.5% of children in Union County were living in poverty.

Paloma ([02:20](#))

Honestly, Da'Mirah, let me stop you there because I would have never guessed that coming to Bucknell. I would have never guessed that information. I would have never guessed that the percentage of poverty in Union County was this high just because of the institution and where it's

located. And, after finding this out, we decided that it was crucial to find out what are the social issues that contribute to poverty in the area. And we found out a lot of information that we are going to bring up right now.

Da'Mirah ([02:49](#))

According to the Union Snyder CAA's 2020 Community Needs Assessment presents a list of priorities for the next three years. The first ones being access to health care and health insurance, more goods, planned jobs working, not making enough money, children's success in school, child abuse and neglect, mental health problems and awareness, affordable housing awareness substance abuse racial discrimination affordable childcare transportation, and cost of nutrition.

Paloma ([03:18](#))

I think that you mentioning that is really important because this assessment emphasized that without handling the priorities of the area, poverty will continue to be an endless cycle here in Union County because they create barriers for their residents. For instance, the lack of transportation, public transportation to be exact, in Union County and Cider counties makes it difficult and often impossible for people to access programs and services in the rural region.

Da'Mirah ([03:50](#))

Understanding the community's social issues is important, especially when understanding why and how is poverty hidden in the Yuan County area. According to the Urban Institute, rural data collection and reporting is difficult contributing to accuracy issues small communities are known to have lower response rates to national surveys, in part caused by internet access. The challenge for tribal areas challenges compounds privacy concerns and can also keep public and private sector data owners from releasing useful data, particularly in geographies smaller than communities. Rural communities strongly believe in self-sufficiency and people will much rather rely on their resources and may not seek external assistance even when they are living in poverty which contributes to poverty being

hidden.

Paloma ([04:32](#))

Moreover, we had the opportunity to sit down with the founder of the Getting Ahead Foundation, her name is Rose. And we were able to learn more about this foundation that focuses on helping low-income individuals and their families and communities with no costs involved. They help participants by providing them with the essential and critical resources that allow them to reach stability, which can help them reach a better life. In our interview with Rose, we basically were able to understand what factors contribute to the hidden poverty in Union County. And this is what she said in Union County.

Rose ([05:11](#))

Well, I think like I said on the phone, most of my people come from across the river. I have a sprinkling of folks in Union County. I don't think it's acknowledged by our leadership. If you look at our public housing developments in Union County, you won't find them anywhere in the Lewisburg borough. They're outside of the just outside and they're also in a different school district. And so right out here on Airport Road is Century Village. Those people could walk into that close, but those kids are busting them if lumber. Now why do you think that happens? Why are poor kids being bused somewhere else?

Rose ([05:59](#))

They don't want them with the nonpoor kids.

Rose ([06:04](#))

Well, their test scores aren't going to be as high and so every school district has a report card, look it up on the state website. And I don't think Lewisburg likes their report card to look less than perfect. And so those kids are bused all the way to Mifflinburg instead of going to their local school district. South of Bucknell now is another housing, low-income housing. They could even walk to Mifflinburg. And if you're going to have low-income people, they usually need to walk somewhere. So, when they did

put the housing in by giants, you know what I mean by Giant food markets, those folks can walk. And that housing unit has the longest waiting list. People went in there. You could walk to Giant, you could get your hair cut, there's a Laundromat there. Everything they need is within walking distance. But even that development was really fought against.

Da'Mirah ([07:03](#))

After understanding how poverty is hidden, we wanted to know how Bucknell impacts poverty or contributes to the hidden poverty. We got a chance to speak with Sarah Farbo from civil engagement.

Da'Mirah ([07:14](#))

There she gave us some insight into how Bucknell contributes to hidden poverty. Here's a clip from the interview.

Sarah ([07:19](#))

Great question. I would say the inequity in compensation for employees of Bucknell, like hourly employees make way less than salaried. Hourly employees don't get as many benefits. Faculty make much more than staff. Upper Admin makes much more than everybody else. So, things like that. And it's the people doing the hardest work, facilities, housekeeping who make the least. And so, I think in that way, as an institution, we contribute.

Da'Mirah ([07:59](#))

Another way the institution and its students contribute to hidden poverty is the amount of space the universities take up in the Lewisburg area in association with the area's wealth. Rose further explains this idea in the interview.

Rose ([08:11](#))

She says, "Well, I think off-campus housing affects affordable housing for people that are low income. Because I could be a slum ward, which we have them, and I can charge 1500 for rent for a Bucknell student. They'll pay for it. But my family couldn't afford that. So that's a big problem. So, they scoop up that. And that's why you don't see a lot of poor people in Lewis

Borough. They can't afford to live there.”

Paloma ([08:45](#))

As part of our research, we decided that it was also crucial to conduct a survey. In this survey, we decided to focus on Bucknell students with the goal of obtaining what their personal thoughts were regarding poverty in the Lewisburg and Union County area.

Da'Mirah ([08:59](#))

Specifically, one of the questions we asked is, when you think of slash Union County area, do you associate it with poverty? Why or why not? One student stated, not really, because to live in a suburban outskirts area, you have to be pretty well off already to even sustain yourself out here.

Paloma ([09:14](#))

Another student said, "Partially because I think of agricultural communities when I think of poverty."

Da'Mirah ([09:22](#))

Another response was, "No, I associated with Bucknell and all of the students driving their BMW."

Paloma ([09:27](#))

Lastly, a student said, "No, I do not associate Lewisburg Union County with poverty. With the prominence of local shops, at least within Lewisburg, I feel that one would need substantial funds to be able to live here. As for Union County as a whole, despite being rural, I picture most of it being less wealthy than Lewisburg, but not enough to associate it with poverty because it is more affordable than the things in the state where I'm from."

Da'Mirah ([09:55](#))

Based on the data we have learned, that when Bucknellians think of poverty they do not associate it with the Lewisburg Area. But that does not mean that Bucknell students cannot get involved in the community now.

Da'Mirah ([09:56](#))

The next part of our research is about how Bucknell students can help. Actually, we learned that help is not the right word but rather be a neighbor in our community. We asked Sarah and Rose how Bucknellians can be a

good neighbor. This is what they said.

Sarah ([10:07](#))

The first thing students can do is, learn who, and where we are at as a place, and the history. Going to new places, going to restaurants, or going to Milton. Going to the Farmer's Markets, talking to people and do that as a first step in being aware of your own identity and how you might be perceived by the community. I also always ask students to think about how they think the community sees Bucknell. You know this pretty elite institution on the hill. Primarily white, a lot of rich people, and even if that is not true for all students that is the perception. And how do you break down all of those assumptions and barriers. I think being aware as a student is one of the first things our office would want you to do and think about that humility piece. Because you do not know you do not know about these communities. So going out, listening and learning together.

Rose ([11:22](#))

The biggest help I have seen. So, I had an anthropology student who embedded herself in my Getting Ahead group because she needed to mend herself in a different culture. So, you know she was a fluent and at first, she came sort of dressed with some nice jewelry but soon she figured it out that this isn't the way they dress here. And so, she dressed in her sweats and her T-shirt. And before I knew it, my participants really enveloped her into the group We serve a meal with each group and we always have leftovers and they were always sending leftovers with her. And so, I saw the biggest change because that person spent 19 weeks with us as opposed to a volunteer who only comes once or twice, you know you just don't get that same experience. Bucknell students could help us really by having a fundraiser, that would be fabulous. You know it costs money, we don't receive any state or federal money. We rely on our community to support this and without our community support, this isn't going to work, that is

why fundraisers are really important for us.

Da'Mirah ([12:49](#))

To conclude we would like the audience to understand what poverty is and how it impacts many people in the Union County community even if we do not see it. The different types of poverties and how Bucknell can get involved to bring awareness and help those living in poverty. And overall be a good neighbor.

Da'Mirah & Paloma
([13:02](#))

This concludes our podcast. Thank you for listening it was your host Da'Mirah and your Host Paloma. We hope this information was really helpful so that you can use it in the future. Thank you!

Artist Statement

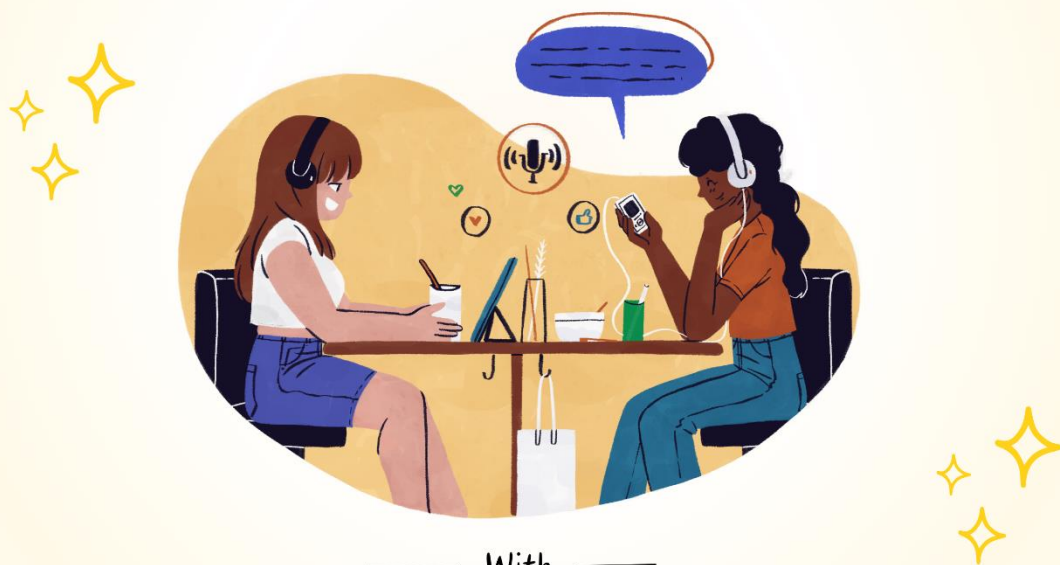
Our mission is to address poverty in Union County. Through this podcast, we aim to build strong relationships with the community, while being empathetic and open to understanding the realities of poverty in the area. Our goal is to raise awareness among Bucknell students who may not have previously considered this issue. We believe that working with members of the local community has allowed us to gain a clearer understanding of this social issue. By taking the time to get to know the community and its people with kindness and empathy, we can all become better neighbors here in Union County.

Cover Art

LIVE ●

Hidden Poverty in Union County

PODCAST



— With —

Da'Mirah Vinson and Paloma Flores

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