

Unemployment Reflection Guide

Statistics:

- As of March 2012, the unemployment rate in the US is 8.3%, meaning that there are 12.7 million people that are unemployed
 - Are these numbers surprising? Numbing?
 - 12.7 million people is the size of Pennsylvania, the 6th most populous state in the US. Does this help you think about the number?
 - How has unemployment touched your life?
- Michigan's unemployment rate peaked in August of 2009 at 14.2%, and has since fallen to 9.0% in 2012. This is still .7% higher than the national average
 - How have you seen unemployment during your time at Calvin? In your service-learning experiences? Does it seem as though the rate has decreased since 2009?
 - The unemployment rate in Grand Rapids is 7.4%. Why do you think Grand Rapids has a lower rate than both the Michigan and the national average?
- The national unemployment rate among African-Americans is 15.6%; nearly double the national average and that of Caucasians (8.7%)
 - What do you think might account for this difference? Is it significant or not?
 - As Christians, how should we respond to numbers such as these?
 - The unemployment rate among Hispanics and Latinos is 12.5%. Again, what might account for these higher rates among minorities?
 - How might a high unemployment rate within a minority community affect the culture of that community?
- These statistics measure the number of jobs as a fraction of the labor force. The labor force is a group defined by people who have actively looked for a job in the last 4 weeks.
 - How might these numbers above change if those who have become discouraged and stopped looking for work were counted?
 - Do you see any problems with the way unemployment is measured? What might be a better method?

Resources:

- Obama's Dilemma: More Jobs, Same Unemployment Rate- CNN Money
 - <http://money.cnn.com/2012/03/09/news/economy/unemployment-election/>
 - How much of a political factor is unemployment? Why do you think this is?
 - What do you think about the statement that "it's possible that an improving economy can actually cause the unemployment rate to remain static, or even rise, as more discouraged workers start mailing resumes"? Have you ever considered this

reality before? What does it say about our methods for measuring unemployment?
Does a low unemployment rate always mean high employment?

- Flat Unemployment Rate Masks the Race Gap- Common Dreams
 - <http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2010/04/03-1>
 - How did this article make you feel? Have you considered the role of race in unemployment before? If no, were you surprised by what you read?
 - What did you think about the bus line example? Does it make sense to you? How often do you ride the bus? What kinds of people do you see when you ride it?
 - Respond to the following quote: ““There will be job growth. The question is who gets the job.”
- Does Race Affect Employment?- ABC New Now
 - <http://abcnews.go.com/Business/video/race-affect-employment-9253036>
 - What do you think about what you heard? Were you surprised?
- Honoring the Unemployed- ABC News
 - <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/honoring-unemployed-npr-scott-simon-national-public-radio-11570701>
 - Have you ever thought about the work of the unemployed?
- Discrimination Against the Unemployed- 60 Minutes Overtime
 - <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7399344n>
 - Have you ever considered the discrimination against the long-term unemployed?
 - What did you think of the statement: “You need a job to get a job”?

What Now: Resources for Further Engagement

- Change.org:
 - <http://www.change.org/petitions#search/unemployment>
 - Read some of the petitions and, if you are comfortable, sign some of them.
- GROW (Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women)
 - <https://www.growbusiness.org/Default.aspx>
 - Click on the “Get Involved” tab and think about ways that you could volunteer. Contact the Service-Learning Center for help getting connected
- Human Resources- City of Grand Rapids
 - <http://grcity.us/human-resources/Pages/default.aspx>
 - A great resource for the unemployed to get connected in Grand Rapids (explore it a little and imagine what you would do with the resource if you were unemployed)
- Michigan Works Association
 - <http://michiganworks.org/?gclid=CJX868fX5q4CFYcUKgodABocfw>
 - Click on the “Advocacy” tab at the top and type in your zip code. Consider contacting one of your representatives about the issue of unemployment. A simple e-mail

(there is link on the page) can go a long way. Incorporate some things you have learned through your service-learning experiences in your message.

- Explore more of the options in the Advocacy section
- Unemployment Lifeline
 - <http://www.unemploymentlifeline.com/resources>
 - Provides resources for the unemployed
 - Explore the publications and play with the Local Resources section. Pretend you are unemployed and looking for work- how would you use this resource. Is it helpful?
- Women's Resource Center
 - <http://www.grwrc.org/>
 - Advocate on behalf of women that are unemployed (contact the Service-Learning Center about opportunities to volunteer)
 - Explore the "Volunteer" tab and consider how you could help

If you have any suggestions or comments on what we can improve, please contact us at slc@calvin.edu or 616-526-6455.



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