

What is Poverty Scholarship?

By Tiny 2002

Who is considered a great scholar? How is scholarship attained? How is greatness honored? And from what barometer do we assess this canon?

At POOR Magazine we have a very different notion of scholarship, who deserves it, how it is attained and how it is used. We have established a new kind of scholarship, The Scholarship of Poverty. This scholarship has a new canon with new designations for greatness. Survival itself, through extreme poverty and crisis, homelessness, racism, disability and welfare to name a few are what you need to qualify for poverty scholarship. Conversely, a person who is formally educated with a Masters Degree and no poverty scholarship would be considered inexperienced and therefore should not be writing, lecturing or legislating on issues that impact communities in poverty.

The formally understood “signs” of scholarship such as writing, researching, critiquing publishing, require an inherent privilege. These signs afford people an ability to be integrated, heard and recognized. As Trin Min Ha writes, Writing, reading, thinking imagining speculating. These are luxury activities, so I am reminded, permitted to a privileged few whose idle hours of the day can be viewed otherwise than as a bowl of rice or a loaf bread less to share with the family.”

This was my truth, my struggle; I was a homeless child who had to drop out of school in the sixth grade to support my family. I did not have the time away from earning a loaf of bread, I did not have the paper, I did not have a computer, and more importantly I did not even have the privilege of an organized life, as so many other people struggling with homelessness, poverty, disability, racism etc. therefore these are the people who are inherently denied a voice in the media, in the creation of legislation and academic scholarship. It is our goal at POOR Magazine to intentionally listen to, conceive of policy and reassign authorship to the folks on the front-line of the experience of poverty and racism- the poverty scholars.