

Why do we have an obligation to obey the law?

Many US Citizens think that:

- (a) everyone, including the poor, should obey the law, and
- (b) all able-bodied, working age citizens ...should support themselves through legitimate (legal) work, even if that work is hard, low-paying, and unsatisfying.

Shelby thinks that in some cases, the ghetto poor don't have an obligation to obey the law.

Question 1. What is the Principle of Reciprocity? (We talked about this with the CBI.)

Question 2. Shelby says: "Most U.S. citizens think that ... when the ghetto poor engage in criminal activity or refuse to work legitimate jobs, this is ... a failure of reciprocity on their part." Reconstruct this line of thought. Why is breaking the law a failure of reciprocity?

Question 3. Why, according to Shelby, is it permissible for the ghetto poor to break the law? (That is: why is it *not* a failure of reciprocity?)

Question 4. If Shelby is right, does this mean that the ghetto poor can never be morally criticized? Why not?

Shelby. Tommie. "Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 35, no. 2 (2007): 126-60. All rights reserved.

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