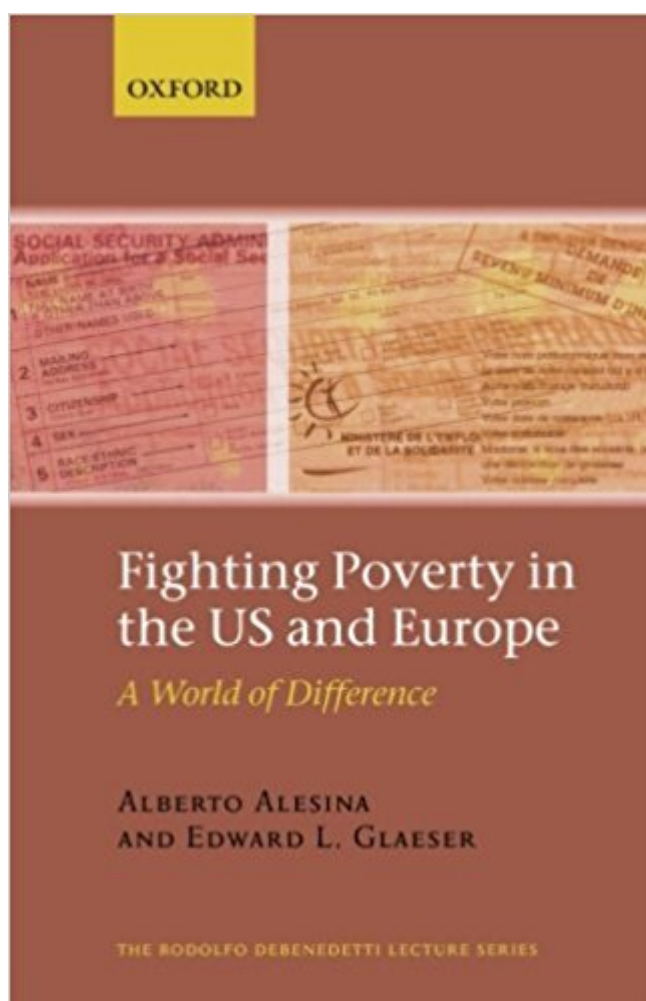


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# Fighting Poverty In The US And Europe: A World Of Difference (The Rodolfo De Benedetti Lecture Series)



## Synopsis

In this timely study of the different approaches of America and Europe to the problems of domestic inequality and poverty, the authors describe just how different the two continents are in the level of State engagement in the redistribution of income. They discuss various possible economic explanations for the difference, including different levels of pre-tax income, openness, and social mobility; they survey politico-historical differences such as the varying physical size of nations, their electoral and legal systems, and the character of their political parties, as well as their experiences of war; and they examine sociological explanations which include different attitudes to the poor and notions of social responsibility, as well as, most importantly, attitudes to race.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Mr. Alesina and Mr. Glaeser, both Harvard economists, are doing what the best in their profession do well these days: seeking to explain society not merely with conventional economic tools but with analysis of institutions, geography and social behaviour."--The Economist  
"An important contribution to this enduring debate"--Region Focus  
"This probing of the forces behind 'American exceptionalism', as measured by a much smaller welfare state than in Europe, is immensely important. The authors take a multi-discipline approach and consider many factors, including narrowly economic variables, political institutions, racial and ethnic diversity, the effects of wars, attitudes toward the poor, and still others. Their findings are sometimes surprising and frequently

provocative. This monograph will quickly become the foundation of further literature on a subject of enormous significance."--Gary S. Becker, Nobel Prize Laureate "In what ways, and why, are the United States and Europe so far apart in social policy? Alesina and Glaeser give us as definitive an answer to this fundamental question as we shall ever see."-George A. Akerlof, Nobel Prize Laureate

Alberto Alesina is Nathaniel Ropes Professor of Political Economy and currently Chairman of the Department of Economics at Harvard University, and has been Visiting Professor at IGER-Bocconi and MIT. He is a Research Associate for the National Bureau of Economic Research and for the Centre for Economic Policy Research. He is Co-editor of the Quarterly Journal of Economics, and in addition to his many books and papers he has published columns in the Financial Times, the Wall Street Journal Europe, Le Monde, Il Sole 24 Ore, La Stampa, Frankfurter Zeitung, and Handelsblatt, and many other newspapers nationwide. Edward L. Glaeser is a Professor of Economics at Harvard University, where he has taught since 1992. He teaches urban and social economics and microeconomic theory, and has published dozens of papers on cities, economic growth, and law and economics. He is a Faculty Research Fellow for the National Bureau of Economic Research, and has also been a consultant for numerous international institutions.

Good readings on how to combat poverty in America.

fast delivery and it came perfectly for my class

I used this book for two courses as a freshman at Princeton University. One of them was a seminar on politics of economic inequality, the other one - an introductory comparative politics course. This book provides a good introduction to explaining political outcomes in terms of socio-economic interests (as opposed to just culture or institutional arrangements). The argument of the book is fairly interesting and well-developed: the size of the welfare state depends highly on racial fractionalization of the population and political institutions (federalism, checks and balances, winner-take-all electoral system) which are the result of a historical interplay of socio-economic interests. The discussion of the historical context (e.g. the "entrepreneurial" use of racial hatred to fight against redistributive policies) and possible counterarguments are both well done. Furthermore, this book debunks some myths such as the notion that upward social mobility is higher in the US than in Europe. However, it is not without its problems. It gets fairly dry and repetitive sometimes. The arguments themselves are not flawless either. Alesina and Glaeser imply that the reason for the

large welfare state in Western Europe is the strength of the left and the labor movement, while in reality the welfare state in Western Europe was largely built by right-wing parties (the Conservatives in the UK, Gaullists in France and Christian Democrats in Germany). The attempt to argue in terms of "the right" and "the left" often backfires, too, since it is not always possible to clearly draw the line. Nevertheless, this is a solid and thought-provoking book.

Absolutely fascinating, very thorough discussion of the reasons why the US and Europe have such different approaches to social welfare policy. The presentation is systematic and extremely detailed, with data to support every point and reject competing hypotheses. It is compact and easy to read, though the writing style is a bit dry. I found the book very very useful, and I haven't encountered anything else that fills this intellectual niche so well.

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