

Bianca Aponte has been living below the poverty line in Tucson since she was born. The cities of Tucson and South Tucson are the poorest in the state. Nearly half of the residents of South Tucson are considered poor, according to the [U.S. Census](#).

Not all the faces of poverty are the same, though. Poverty falls into different categories such as systemic, generational and decisional poverty. With so many ways a person can fall below the poverty line, it's difficult to solve a problem like poverty because it has so many variations.

"I come from generational poverty, I was a high school dropout, said Aponte. At one point during my transition [out of poverty], I was forced to make a family tree and it was close to 600 people and only one person has attended a university and I don't know her. I didn't really have an example to follow."

Education proves to be a key factor when it comes to poverty with the highest percentage of people in poverty not having a high school diploma, according to the [Center for Poverty Research at the University of California, Davis](#). Poverty tends to be something that sticks with families for generations much like wealth stays in the family for the very rich, according to Bonnie Bazata program manager of [Ending Poverty Now](#) in Pima County, Arizona.

"You teach your children how to get in line for a food box or how to do the paperwork for [DES](#) those are the problems that we are solving and that's a systemic issue."

"Generational poverty is something that is really hard because you're viewed like you're in a fishbowl and people are looking at you and are judging all of the decisions you are making in your life when it is broader than that," said Aponte. "Yes, it's the choices that are being made but it's also a systemic issue."

According to Bianca, it is so difficult for people in poverty to overcome because they feel stuck. It is hard for them to imagine a life other than the one they have always lived.

"You're used to not being heard, you're used to being looked at a certain way," said Aponte. "It's been hard there are a lot of things that the world is blind to."

Bianca believes one of the reasons poverty is such a problem in Tucson is because the local government it's listening.

"They don't respect the people enough to find out what really their needs are," said Aponte. "They study the group and they implement changes how they see fit. They don't ask the group, 'what changes should we make?'"

It wasn't until Bianca found a program called [Mothers in Arizona Moving Ahead or MAMA](#) that she felt she found a program willing to listen and understand her struggle.

Things are much better for Bianca and her family since finding MAMA. Bianca works as a caregiver and now helps others that are beginning their fight to end the cycle of poverty through the MAMA program.

"My bills are paid things are comfortable now things were different four years ago things were different two years ago," said Aponte. "I can't believe that's what I accepted, but it's what I had and we were happy and we were doing everything we could to be good parents."

Now that the Aponte family is on their feet they are living in a rental home but the fight to be rid of poverty it's over. With three children ranging from age two to 13, Bianca and her husband both work and must find time to care for their family and home.

"Even if financially we aren't struggling we are struggling in other areas," said Aponte. "My mental health is struggling. It's emotional breakdowns it's not knowing if you can wake up and do it the next day. It's being so tired your body hurts at the end of the day."

Bianca is just one of about a million people living in poverty in Arizona, according to [talkpoverty.org](#). This means one in seven people living in the state of Arizona struggle daily to make ends meet.