**Fundamental Urban New Deal**

**Paving the Road from Poverty to Prosperity,**

**from Victimhood to Empowerment**

Our urban areas are full of people trapped in a prison of poverty. Poverty is not about laziness or lacking in some moral ethics. It is so easy to fall below the poverty line. And once you do, the odds of getting out are stacked against you.

One thing that we rarely talk about is the psychological damage that poverty inflicts on its victims. The feelings of depression, anxiety, hopelessness, helplessness, and despair are boundless in our poverty-stricken population. But, the effects of poverty do not just include the psychological issues and financial issues. Once trapped in poverty, a person is limited in the type of housing that he or she can afford, which usually limits the person to high crime areas, leaving them vulnerable to additional harm and trauma.

We need a new deal for our most vulnerable populations. We need to provide a pathway to prosperity, from victimhood to empowerment, so that every American, regardless of economic status, can achieve the American dream.

1. Education Plan:

This plan makes it possible for every child to prosper academically and move along the educational track at his or her own pace. This makes it nearly impossible for a child to “fall through the cracks”. This plan also allows for parents to make the determination of whether they want their children to receive a secular education or a Biblical education, without discriminating against the religious rights of either group. This plan gives the parents and children more flexibility in the days and times that the child is in school, making it more flexible for the modern family. This plan takes us from a system that is designed to pick out winners and losers and moves us to a system where everyone wins. The demographic that would be benefitted the most are those trapped in that prison of poverty, giving them more choices and freedoms, rather than limiting their choices and freedoms.

1. Sentencing Reform:

The REST (Rehabilitative Earn-Out Sentencing Time) plan seeks to break the cycle of the revolving door of our criminal justice system. Crime is a symptom of people falling through the cracks in society. REST is based on identifying the lack of skills and resources that led to the criminal behavior, then providing an individual rehabilitation plan to heal what society has broken. REST allows us to take someone who has fallen through the cracks and provide the education, training, skills, work ethic, interpersonal skills, and treatments necessary to ensure that the person released back into the community is better than the one plucked off the streets. The goal is to transform the criminal into a productive member of society in order to break the cycle of criminality. This makes the poverty-stricken areas safer as each year passes.

1. Decriminalizing Drugs:

Drugs are a symptom of a bigger problem. Drugs lead to prison, which makes it less likely that the person will be able to get a sustainable job after serving his or her time. This is one of the biggest ingredients contributing to the revolving door of the criminal justice system. By decriminalizing drugs, we can regulate and tax the drugs to fund long-term treatment programs at reduced cost so every American afflicted with the disease of addiction can receive treatment, regardless of economic status. By decriminalizing drugs, we take the air out of the sails of the street gang. We may even be able to turn today’s street gangs into the legitimate business owners and entrepreneurs in industrial hemp and hemp manufacturing industries. This greatly improves the safety concerns of those trapped in the prison of poverty.

1. Incentives for Minority-Owned Businesses:

Minority groups (African-Americans, Hispanics, etc.) are disproportionately affected by urban poverty. Minority-owned businesses employ minority workers, providing wealth to others within their community. Owning a business can be very difficult and involve a lot of paperwork (red-tape) that is often confusing. Too many people say, “I just want to run my business, not spend my time trying to figure out all the codes, regulations, and paperwork.” We need to bring business-owners and entrepreneurs into our urban areas to provide seminars on how to navigate all these various aspects of owning a business. We need to train our minority brothers and sisters in the mechanics of owning a business. We also need to provide a network of support to encourage them in their journey to owning businesses. We need tax breaks during the first couple of years to alleviate the headaches in those first couple of years.

By providing a support system that encourages entrepreneurship in our urban areas, we can rebuild our poverty-stricken areas into thriving metropolitan centers of prosperity. We will lift our brothers and sisters out of despair and give them the vehicles needed to thrive in our capitalist economy.

1. Better access to birth control:

The abortion rate in our urban areas is atrocious. It is always better to prevent an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy rather than terminate a pregnancy by stopping a beating heart. We really need to focus more on easy access to birth control. We need to educate our young ladies to not just practice safe sex, but to utilize multiple methods of birth control for the most effectiveness. By preventing the unplanned or unwanted pregnancies, we are saving our young ladies and women from the emotional and psychological pain that often comes with an abortion.

This education needs to be in every school, with easy access to birth control for every young lady. Of course, we need to educate our young gentlemen about their responsibility in preventing unplanned and unwanted pregnancy. We need to educate them that “being a man” is NOT defined by impregnating a young lady, but by being physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, and spiritually present every day in the lives of their children. We need to teach our young gentlemen that “being a man” is stepping up, marrying the mother of your child, and providing a stable home for your children.

Easier access to birth control for our young men and young ladies makes it possible for them to focus on themselves and their future a little longer. It makes it possible for them to chase their dreams and build a stable life, so when they do have children, their children will have a much better chance at success in life. Better access to birth control will provide a method for our young men and young ladies to break the cycle of poverty and free themselves and their posterity from the hopeless despair of poverty.

1. Various Mentorship Programs:

We all need someone to guide us through the difficult parts of life. For many people, these “mentors” are their parents and other family members. For the children without a father in the home and a mom who works a lot, this structure is lacking. We need to provide mentors to our youth, to act as those strong voices and support systems to help our youth navigate the complexities of the teen years and the early adult years. We need for mentorships to continue through age 25. Hopefully, these youths that are being mentored will “pay it forward” and become mentors for the next crop of young men and women. We need these mentors to teach boys to become gentlemen and teach girls to become ladies.

We also need mentorship programs for our struggling entrepreneurs. Mentorships and apprenticeships help to bridge the gap between dreams and fulfillment of those dreams. Our adults need seminars and community events to teach important topics like taxes, loan basics, wills and estate planning, budgeting, stretching a budget, low-cost/no-cost life hacks, health and wellness, investing basics, and much more. When adults are trapped in poverty, it is usually a result of that adult falling through the cracks at some point. It’s our responsibility, as a society, to full in those cracks so we can lift up our brothers and sisters.

1. Spiritual Leaders Outreach to Struggling Communities

Decay often takes root in places with a lack of spiritual leadership. We need to take our spiritual leaders out of the pulpit and bring them to the people who need to hear the message the most. Street gangs take root where there is no God. The best way to combat the street gang is with opportunity – educational, spiritual, and economic opportunities. Where we find these 3 pillars thriving, we see virtually no street gangs and very low crime. When even one of those pillars is missing, gangs and crime grow rapidly. Our spiritual leaders need to take the pulpit to the street to infuse our youth with the hope of salvation. Where there is hope, there is light. And light destroys darkness and evil.

1. Mental Health:

Our society is extremely complicated. Modern life is hectic, crazy, and extremely exhausting. Stress is not something that appears now and then. It’s all around us, every second of every day. For our brothers and sisters in urban areas, this stress is astronomical! Many are living in a perpetual “crisis” mode. Stress has a way of festering and then destroying the person afflicted. Counselors are specially trained to help us navigate through our dark, stressful, hopeless traumas, so we can get through them and come out on the other side stronger and more resilient.

Mental health has a stigma attached to it, but there is no reason for this stigma. We all go through rough patches; some go through more than others. We all need some counseling at some point. It’s not a sign of weakness; it’s a sign of strength and self-love. It shows that you care about your own health (mind, body, and spirit) and love yourself to make sure you get and maintain disease-free. Most people have accepted that vaccines protect the body from diseases. Regular counseling sessions protect the mind and psyche from mental diseases. It should be a part of all “preventive care” plans.

Our urban areas need more mental health clinics and caregivers. We need these at low-cost or no-cost. We need for recent graduates with mental health degrees to come into these areas and provide this desperately needed care. In return, we can offer student loan forgiveness, in part or in whole. This provides incentives to get the providers in these needed areas. And we need a massive campaign to shred the stigma and promote mental health checkups as part of a healthy, responsible, preventive care plan.

1. Military Recruitment

In urban areas, street gangs are growing and taking over our streets. They think they are so tough, strong, and invincible. They have “street smarts”. Just imagine if we recruited those young men and women into our military! We need that kind of toughness. We need that kind of strength. If they want to shoot at someone, let’s get them shooting at terrorist. Let’s train them to join our military in the fight for freedom and liberty.

Most people in street gangs join because they do not have much hope for a better future. Our military offers free healthcare, free housing, free college, and much more for our veterans. If your future looks bleak, spending four years in the military opens up doors that were previously inaccessible. You will be set for life. The benefits of service are the best in the world. We can pluck these young men and women out of the prison of poverty and catapult them into the middle class instantly. Our military is the quickest vehicle out of poverty. It offers skills, education, and experience that you cannot get anywhere else.

One of the greatest features is that it is an opportunity that can fit anyone’s life. There’s active duty, inactive duty (reserves), enlisted, officers, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and the newly formed Space Force. Yes, a child from the mean streets of Chicago CAN explore the world and experience space travel!

1. Making Welfare Work:

There are many people who think that recipients of government assistance programs should be tested for drugs. Assuming that the reason is to deny coverage for drug users, this would cause more harm than good. When someone is in need of government assistance, that person is already at a low point in his or her life. Kicking them when they are down is not a solution. It merely ignores the problem and makes it even more difficult for that person to climb out of the hole they are in.

However, just shelling out money, month after month, for years or decades is not the answer either. We need a solution that balances the needs of the poor, with the desire of the financially stable to not subsidize laziness.

When someone is on, or applying for, government assistance, our first thought should be “why?” We need to diagnosis that individual’s specific needs and get that person the tools he or she needs to become successful. We can administer drug testing to determine if the person needs drug treatment. A positive result for drugs should not result in a denial of benefits, but result in help getting off the drugs and dealing with the issue of addiction.

Other types of testing should also be used to identify other needs that may be hindering the individual’s success, such as literacy tests (get the person into classes), mental health screens (to get the person treatment and counseling), physicals (to treat physical problems the person may have, i.e., glasses for someone with bad eyesight, etc.), and a constitution test. The Constitution Test may seem odd, but it makes sense. Every American should know and understand his or her Constitutional rights. When someone is not aware of his or her rights, he or she is extremely susceptible to becoming victims of bad people. This is a way to protect our poor, the most vulnerable among us. They become less vulnerable and more empowered as soon as they are armed with the knowledge needed to protect their own rights.

Conclusion:

Some people think that the problems in our inner cities and urban areas are beyond repair and even if they can be repaired, it’ll take generations to change the mindset of the people in these areas. First, I believe that it can be fixed. We just have to have the guts to take bold action now. The longer we wait, the longer it will take to repair our urban areas. Poverty is a multi-facetted problem, which requires a multi-faceted solution. By taking bold actions in the various components of this problem, we can effect change much more quickly, breaking the cycle of poverty so families stand a chance at success and achieving the American dream.