

HOPE GLOBAL FORUM:

HOW THE POOR CAN SAVE CAPITALISM



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HOW THE POOR CAN SAVE CAPITALISM

Just pretend that the future, talented entrepreneurs are football running backs. That will solve many of our economic challenges, provide jobs for many Americans and help restore a vibrant middle class.

Well, not really. Yet that juxtaposition – placing importance on those thinkers among our young people who often are off the radar. They are the breakaway stars of our future and may be the most important elements in efforts by Operation HOPE and others to reshape the opportunity landscape of America.

If we can only get them onto the playing field, concluded one of the many panels who that addressed the 2015 HOPE Global Forum.

Why are they the stars? Because small businesses and entrepreneurs create jobs. And jobs, jobs and jobs – to paraphrase the old real estate dictum are one of the few sure ways to broaden, boost and burgeon the economy.

“Every person is a corporation of one,” said Richard Carrion, chairman and CEO, Popular Inc.

On the closing session on the closing day, the panel members had sharp, crisp insights on what we had heard and where we needed to focus as we left to return to our separate worlds.

The moderator for the panel in question, Natalia Peart, COO and Director, Strategic Initiatives, DeBruce Foundation, said she wanted to hear nothing short of solutions for rebuilding the middle class. She said it was clear what the message of the forum demanded, a mandate for all who attended, in four clear areas.

First, opportunity and inclusion serve as the opening gate. Where talent may be evenly distributed, opportunity is not, Peart said. “And our economy cannot thrive is we get to define who gets to participate.”

Second, the fuel of progress is collaboration both monetary collaboration to managed a more integrated global economy along with public-private partnerships and to establish “the sense that we are all in this together,” she said. “This is not just a moral imperative but it’s a business one because the fate of every single one of us is inextricably tied to each other.”

Three, restoring and refreshing human dignity through job creation and job fulfillment. “How do you have a sense of dignity and worth when you don’t even have control over your life? What we all want is the dignity to be able to try, to fail, to learn, to give, to dream,” she said. “It is true for all of us.”

Fourth is for all to realize that moment in history where we can still make a difference, Peart said. “Let’s not miss the bigness of this moment,” she said. “This forum was not meant to simply be a spectator sport. This is a call to action because the pain and the fear that is gripping our nation and our world today is palpable.

“We are all called upon to take our place and stand in the gap...so we can reach beyond that pain in order to lift us higher and take us forward,” she said.

Finding solutions for kick starting the global economy and rebuilding the middle class in less than 20 minutes was a stiff challenge. Yet that was enough time for panelists to offer precise observations of what has worked and what could continue to work well in the future.

“Global seems so big to me,” said Jeff Schmid, chairman and CEO, Mutual of Omaha Bank. “The solutions are created locally.” He said an “alignment between education and business,” to figure out how to create an educational system that partners with outcomes that meet the needs of business, is one key.

One path is augmenting hard skills with soft skills driven by the requirement of potential jobs. That means taking education, best practices and business needs and combining them at the table, he said.

“We need visionary and modern day prophets,” he said. “How do we put a 12-year-old on the right track? How do we understand, as business people, where are their talents? Where are their soft skills,” he asked.

Mathilde Mukantabana, Rwanda’s ambassador to the United States, said expanding economic opportunities and creating the sense that all are working together for the betterment of each other is exactly what happened in her country.

“We have done that,” she said. “We have created a place where people are included in the economic development of the country.”

Mukantabana said laws were constructed to empower the people, including the youth and women, to be full participants in the post-war economic resurrection. She said the new laws have made everything easier – “you can open a new business in six hours” – and has rooted a new system “where people can thrive.”

As one way to enhance self-reliance of the people, Mukantabana said a “dignity fund” was created in 2012 to eventually provide \$500 million in seed money for economic initiatives; the fund already has \$50 million in contributions from citizens, she said.

“You need to have informed leadership to do that,” Mukantabana said.

Schmid and the others said a belief in unleashing young entrepreneur was enhanced after watching the swashbuckling presentations by the finalists in the HOPE Business in a Box Academies.

“I am inspired by that 13 year old winning. It is fantastic,” said Carrion. “How could you not get emotional about that? Have people become womper, more freiqn tns become more entrepreneurs.”

Jim Clifton, chairman and CEO of Gallup, agreed.

“Operation HOPE discovered Mouhamed today,” Clifton said, referring to the young entrepreneur who won the HOPE Business in a Box Academies. “That’s a genius, though we don’t refer to it as a genius. We need that genus. We don’t need high IQ.

“He is a perfect example. He will create hundreds of jobs in his life.”

Clifton said Operation HOPE and all those who believe in making the changes needed should make it a priority to find others Mouhameds.

"If you have high IQ anywhere in the world, especially in America, we will find you...because as a society we are so good and have so much appreciation for intellectual development. We don't have that for entrepreneurship yet. It is still too random. We need to make that as intentional" he said. "If we spot a good running back, the whole state goes and finds that running back."

Clifton estimated that there are around "75,000 young men and women like Mouhamed roaming the hills and streets of the United States."

"We don't know who they are. If they were running backs we would know who they are," he said. "I think America has got to figure it out."

Clifton said real job growth is important since government figures tend to obscure the reality of job strength by focusing on jobs created and not the ones lost. "Jobs are the weakest they have ever been in four decades," he said. "We can fix that."

The only place you can reliably find new jobs is start-ups, he said. Unless we reverse the trend the number of full time jobs available to the adult population will continue to go down."

Carrion agreed, noting that "jobs, jobs and jobs" are the key. "The amount of jobs we create, the quality of the jobs we create and what's the impact those jobs will have on furthering the economy."

The wonderful thing about technology is that it really lowers the barriers to entry," he said. "Anything that tries to empower people...education...committing businesses to bring young people into the workplace, planting seeds of entrepreneurship in our young people, in our schools, I think it is great."

One vital step is provided those in deep poverty with some basic fundamental – sanitation, safety and security, health care, technology, communications – as foundation steps to "having people become empowered, more self-reliant and creating more entrepreneurs."

Operation HOPE's solution-based approach is another key, Schmid said, especially losing the bottom third of children being lost in 9th or 10th grade, a problem that needs to be solved quickly.

"This is really a call to action," Schmid, said. "The first thing is, when it comes to extreme poverty we got to figure out where that is and we got to collaborate both public and private organizations."

"It just shouldn't happen," he said. "We're in too wealthy of a world to really see that and put up with that."

Peart said it is fundamental that "we got to be able to raise talent, locate it and harness it."

"We are all in this moment in time, to stake our place and stand in the gap to reach beyond that pain, lift us higher and lead us forward," she said.

BUILDING YOUR OWN TABLE: EXPANDING THE GAINS OF WOMEN

Sometimes you need an opening. Sometimes you need a helping hand. Sometimes you need a roadmap. And with all of those you need inspiration and the knowledge that you can achieve what you are striving for – because others before you who share your experience have done it.

So when the subject is expanding the aspirations of women, a stellar panel of successful women provided rays of hope, along with brilliance and achievement to provide those foundations. It was a chance, as it has been said, to “to drink from a well of knowledge.”

“Exposure and opportunity and expand the mindset: That is truly about our paradigm,” said Aja Brown, the mayor of Compton, California. “We (can) change the perception of what their (young women’s) limitations are.”



Brown was part of a panel of high-achieving women who anchored the opening session of Day Two. The topic of “Expanding the Gains of Women and Girls -- How to Prosper in the Global Economy” stressed that it is time for women who have succeeded to forcefully illustrate the vast ways other women can succeed. Their personal stories resonate with the personal stories and dreams of other women, who need a roadmap and some core support to take the first steps to success.

The panel of women clearly understood where those who are aspiring are coming from and showed how they are ready to help them get to where they want to be.

Why is that important? As moderator Lisa Borders, chair of The Coca Cola Foundation and vice president of Global Community Affairs, quoted Dr. Jocelyn Elders: “You cannot be what you cannot see.”

There was much to see – and hear – and learn from the women sharing their stories.

“We should not allow others to limit the perceptions that define us,” Borders said. Indeed, the panel members were a catalogue of accomplishment, determination and success, of how women can achieve great things and shatter perceptions.

“It is your responsibility as a woman” to fight for it and let other women know it is their responsibility to fight for it also, Laura Roberts, co-founder and CEO of Pantheon Enterprises, said. “Give us a microphone.”

There was a strong sense of shared purpose and solidarity, and firm guidance leavened with the bounty of never giving up. There was a clear call to help others where ever and whenever possible – across the room, down the hall, throughout the city and around the world.

The stories shared during the session offered a common-core blueprint that mixed support and encouragement from parents, a determination to create opportunities when none were offered, and the realization that the battles waged by each individual woman are part of a larger mission to bring parity and equality for all women.

“Do not confuse having a seat at the table with having a voice,” said Kat Cole, President of Cinnabon, Inc. “If you don’t really have a voice, you are just wasting a seat. Focus on ways to have a voice, and then people will beg you to come have a seat.”

The foundation theme that successful women are examples for other women was stressed and built through the session.

Clare Woodcraft-Scott, chief executive officer for the Emirates Foundation, said it is important to get a significant number of women into CEO positions. “It’s hugely powerful,” she said. “You do not need to have hundreds of women around you. You just need one. They see one powerful woman in a powerful job, in a powerful role.... just the fact that she is there and successful, that’s enough for other women to see that they can achieve.”

Brown embraced that imperative. “Being a young woman mayor, every time I speak to a young lady it empowers her,” Brown said. “We have the power to speak life, to influence the lives of young women. It is really on us.”

She said women have a responsibility to connect with one another and help one another. She said the common thread she hears is “‘Well, men won’t give women a seat at the table.’ My sole response is why are we waiting for men to give us a seat at the table? Why can’t we build our own table? If one opportunity closes, make a new one. We have to make our own opportunities.”

Indeed, an increasing pride mixed with determination should be part of the fuel to spur women to realize their importance in the world. “Women hold up at least half the sky, although I think women hold up all of the sky,” Borders said.

Monica Mehta, managing principal at Seventh Capital, reminded women of the imperatives of mentorship, strong parental support and being ready to launch when ready. “I am not going to wait for you to give me a turn,” Mehta said. “I am going to take my own turn.”

Because “you are your own greatest investor in life,” Mehta stressed that women need to learn about money, to focus on financial literacy as a skill to be mastered like driving or reading. “You need to learn about money,” she said. And because she has, she said she is able “to take complex ideas and make them simple.”

The dual track of women getting on key boards of directors or positions of influence and also building their own tables framed much of the panel’s discussion.

Roberts said part of a needed “transformation change” – and a “desperate calling” -- is getting women to the “design table in science, technology, engineering and math” bring a long-term focus to the work that needs to occur so solutions can be unearthed. “Women tend to be more wired for that long view,” Roberts said. “It is the only way we can create solutions. Instead of thinking short-term, [we need to think about] how do we get wide scale adoption. Women are more wired to have that conversation and be more patient along the way.”

Woodcraft-Scott said the challenge to close the gender gap is more daunting in some parts of the world, especially where it “still is not acknowledged that having women in the work place has value.”

Getting women on boards is “one way to really solving some of our structural issues on inclusion,” she said. And she reminded the audience that “it’s okay to be a feminist.”

Getting women on the fast track to break the glass ceiling will require trust and determination from those being helped and those helping, the panel members said.

Cole said women must “learn strength even from challenging circumstances.” She said that women who have succeeded must reach out their arms to those women taking the first steps or who are being challenged. Those women, in turn, must be strong enough to reach their arms to those trying to help.

“Part of what allows that to occur is a legacy of women willing to tell their stories,” Cole said. But equally key is having the successful woman ask those seeking guidance to tell their stories – and to show how each story is also powerful enough to inspire others.

“Don’t you ever forget where you came from, but you don’t you dare let it solely define you,” Cole said. Those roots should fuel a personal journey of self-renewal, enterprise building and “the power of seeing what’s possible,” she said.

It was made clear that it is vital that women help each other to unlock personal and collective potential. All must focus a portion of time and attention to helping other women break through barriers to career success. The shared personal stories of success and defeat from women who have overcome adversity provide a sense of hope and strength to others.

Borders underscored the value of the panel in providing pointed and illustrative inspiration and guidance by offering “some very good counsel, some very good roadmaps and some way finders for navigating the future,” she said.

HOPE BUSINESS IN A BOX: A MODEL THAT IS WORKING

Four winners came to Atlanta to show how it can be done -- that with the right opportunity, mentoring and enthusiasm, young people have a future in the business arena. And they were ready: As the two entrepreneurs from Clean Cut, one of the finalists, told the audience, "Yesterday we started the business, today we started working the business, tomorrow we will be legends in this business."

No one who saw the five student business leaders make their two-minute pitches is debating that prophecy in any way.

The HOPE Business in a Box Academies (HBIABA) are part of Operation HOPE's Youth Empowerment programs. Students in 4th-12th grades are taught financial literacy and entrepreneurship. These students can choose from more than 25 businesses that can be started for \$500 or less and pitch their startup in front of a live audience and top leaders from their community. The winners move on to the next level and receive a business mentor for 10 weeks and up to \$500 in start-up capital. The five students who pitched four businesses in Atlanta are all winners from their schools' individual competitions and have continued to grow their businesses.



The pitch competition turned the old cliché of putting your money where your mouth is upside down. For this challenge, the four entrepreneurs used their mouth to get where the money is. They were funny, they were confident, they were clever and they were inspirational.

Lawn care and maintenance and gardening. Disc jockey service. Handmade jewelry and accessories. A local mini-mart within the school-- that delivers. Four unique businesses, looking to share the karma of their successes and build even further.

Here they are, the final five of 1,139 students in the 2014 HOPE Business in a Box Academies:

Nicholas and Isaiah of Clean Cut Lawn and Gardening. Nicholas attends Benjamin E. Mays High School and Isaiah attends The New Schools at Carver. Nick's chosen career pathway is healthcare, due to the fact that he would like to be a psychiatrist when he gets older. Isaiah would like to move to California after college, and start his career as a police officer if he does not become a professional football player.

Rayshaun of Frost Productions. Stage name is Dj Frost. www.frostproductions.weebly.com. He attends B.E.S.T Academy Middle school (where??). He started his music career at age 3 as a drummer and later learned to played trumpet and tuba. He lives by the motto "Don't start something you can't finish."

Micyra of Mick's Jewelry. www.micksjewelry.com. She attends Benjamin E. Mays High School. Micyra has the opportunity to share her creations and her company motto of "feel inspired" with the world. She hopes one day to be a Marine Biologist and pay her way through school with her business.

Mouhamed of Mobile Mini Mart. www.facebook.com/mini.mart.940?fref=ts. He attends B.E.S.T Academy Middle School. Mouhamed is an entrepreneur at heart. He has already created two other business models for a clothing line and shoe shine kit. His goal is to become a wealthy and successful role model at an early age. He plans to attend either MIT or Stanford and earn his master's degree in engineering.

HBIABA channels and transforms a youth's natural aspiration and state of hope into practical and life-changing action steps. It helps create action steps that the students can implement themselves, with a little help from HOPE.

When kids are dropping out of your schools at a 30% to 70% rate, something is wrong with the business, not the kids. So Operation HOPE concluded that we have just simply failed to connect education and aspiration. What many people really want is economic opportunity. So what we've done is connect economic opportunity with education.

There are three components to the HOPE Business in a Box Academy curriculum: a course in financial literacy, self-esteem building, and a primer course in entrepreneurship. Whether you want to become an entrepreneur or not is irrelevant. Being an entrepreneur helps you manage a family and your life, and teaches you to be innovative and creative. Entrepreneurship fosters a solutions-based mindset. It creates leaders.

The student entrepreneurs cannot get their entire reward money unless they open a bank account. There are about 40 million unbanked people in this country—most of them people of color—and that's a problem. If you don't understand the language of money, and you don't have a bank account, you become an economic slave.

Our young entrepreneurs know those key fundamentals. Then they build on them.

Operation HOPE appoints one fellow for every four schools who tracks performance and reports results to us and to our investors. We believe we are going to see students graduate from this program and

have such success that they can become the next Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, John Rogers, or Reginald Lewis. We have lots of talent in our community, but it has to be nurtured. There's no doubt in our mind that those who were in Atlanta and many, many others are going to see some superstars come out of the HOPE Business in a Box Academy.

We designed something with the customer in mind— and the customer is the child. The creativity and passion of these students and the dynamic way that they won over the crowd moved judges in Atlanta to boost the winning seed money to \$2,000 for the winner and \$1,000 for each of the remaining three finalists.

"My favorite moment at the Operation Hope Global Forum was the Business-In-A-Box presentation," said Vanessa K. De Luca, editor in chief, ESSENCE magazine. "To see young budding entrepreneurs present their ideas to iconic business leaders with confidence and clarity of vision was a true testament of the power of this organization to transform lives."

Our four finalists made their pitches the same day President Clinton delivered the keynote address to the conference. They embraced what President Clinton said shortly thereafter, that we need to tell people that you can control your own destiny.

"We are supposed to empower people," the president said. Confidence, opportunity and capability are equally important coins of the realm in empowerment, as is funding. Through HBIABA, Operation Hope provides the first steps to that empowerment.

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KING HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR

It takes about seven minutes, depending on your pace, to walk from the Hope Center tour on Jackson Street down to the historic Ebenezer Church on Auburn Avenue. Spend another five minutes after that and your feet bring you to the birthplace of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

So that means 10 minutes, at the most, to talk and breathe and feel the history and the passion and the hope that exudes on this small block of civil rights touchstone that looms large in our nation struggle for human dignity, equal rights and justice for all.

Ten minute to walk the pavement. Decades to walk for justice.

An emotional high point of the Operation HOPE conference was the King Historical Walking Tour. Conference participants spent roughly 90 minutes walking along the half-mile tour, stopping at the markers of history and hearing the stories of the struggle and the triumphs.

President Clinton, who keynoted the Operation Hope conference, has long praised King's leadership and determination to enact change peacefully. Speaking at the King center during the Operation Hope conference, Clinton talked about furthering Dr. King's dream. "It's a fool's error not to spend more of

our lifetimes focusing on those things we have in common,” he said. “That is the only way to create a beloved community and turn our differences into advantage, and that is what this is about.”



Sweet Auburn, the focus of the following walking tour, includes the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site, which comprises about 2 blocks along Auburn Avenue, plus the surrounding preservation district, about 10 more blocks. A neighborhood that nurtured scores of 20th-century black businesspeople and professionals, it contains the birthplace, church, and gravesite of Martin Luther King, Jr. The area was a vibrant commercial and entertainment district for black Atlantans from the late 1800s until the 1930s, when it went into a steep decline. In the 1980s, the area where Martin Luther King, Jr., was born and raised was declared a National Historic Site, and now, under the auspices of the National Park Service, portions of Auburn Avenue are in an ongoing process of restoration. Although parts of the area are still in sad disrepair, new landscaping has beautified some of the street, and several homes on the "Birth Home" block have been restored to their 1920s appearance.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born January 15, 1929 at 501 Auburn Avenue, the home of his maternal grandparents. For the next twelve years he lived here with his grandparents, parents, siblings, other family members and boarders.

This walking tour provides insight into black history, the civil rights movement, and black urban culture in the South -- a wonderful opportunity to learn more about a great American and an important struggle for all of us.

Operation HOPE also operates the HOPE Inside Atlanta at Ebenezer Church, located on the campus of the King Center and as the anchor tenant of the Martin Luther King, Sr. Community Resource Complex. Martin Luther King Sr. or "Daddy King" as he was called, co-pastored Ebenezer Church with his son Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during the civil rights movement, and served on the board of a bank for 40-years;

a little known fact. Daddy King was also focused on making free enterprise work for all, as his son was focused in the last years of his life on poverty eradication and economic justice.

It is often said that Atlanta's past is on every corner. On this walk, however, the corners reflect much of America's past.



To walk Auburn Avenue in a summer evening past was to experience the vitality of black life in the city: the sounds of ragtime from the Top Hat, the smell of fried chicken from Ma Suttons and the constant hum of animated street chatter. It became the place for black dreamers. You knew you had arrived on the Avenue once you had your own pulpit or your own cornerstone.

And that center of vibrancy sent out an energy that helped fueled the walks – the drive – for civil rights.

Walks for justice go beyond walking for a tour. As Martin Luther King Jr. said in a sermon in Albany, Ga., in 1962, "So listen to me, children: Put on your marching shoes; don't get weary; though the path ahead may be dark and dreary; we're walking for freedom, children."

Today still walking for justice means that we need to keep on fighting against social inequality, which continues to exist today. Still Walking for Justice, means that no matter how far we've come, there are still many boundaries which inhibit freedom and justice for all. Still Walking for Justice means carrying on the legacy of those that came before us. By continuing to walk we acknowledge the importance of the issues and risks so many before us have taken. We also show that their fight is one we will continue until we see a world will true equality for all people.

Still walking for justice means that the battle is never over, there is always change to be made

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2015 HOPE GLOBAL FORUM WORKING GROUPS: WHAT WE LEARNED

One of the most important elements of the HOPE Global Forums program is our unique approach to community leadership through our working group model. Throughout the HOPE Global Forum conference, our delegates break into several breakout sessions to reflect on what they have learned from each speaker and panel and compute that information into key findings that Operation HOPE can act upon in the coming year.

Operation HOPE partnered with Co-Vision to author this report for the 2015 HOPE Global Forum. The full report of their findings can be located [HERE](#).

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PRESIDENT CLINTON’S MESSAGE FOR THE FORUM: OUR SUCCESS OR FAILURE HINGES ON INCLUSION

President Bill Clinton delivered a thorough, detailed, and inspiring message to keynote our conference, a message that rested on one fundamental, bedrock theme: Up or down together.

“This is an enormous opportunity for us,” President Clinton stressed, talking about the specific work of Operation HOPE and the larger importance of NGOs in the world. “There is a lot we can do here. You matter. You have to know this.”

The President praised Operation HOPE and other stellar NGOs for filling the crucial gap that most likely will always exist between what the private sector can produce and what the government can provide. And he said one of the key ways that Operation HOPE can continue to make positive change is to help spread the idea that our common humanity is more important than simple dollars and cents.

“We have to drill down deep and say we have more to gain by joining hands and working together,” President Clinton said.

The President said his experiences show that it is a must for society to pick up the people who have been left behind. “We have to build economics. If we succeed, we will have more inclusive politics. People will not be mad but be thinking about what we can do to make more good things happen. This really, really matters,” he said.

The President’s connection with Operation HOPE is strong and deepening each year. President Clinton’s message for our conference – as well as his post-presidential work – underscore the human dignity that is a foundation of our mission.



"Perhaps no president has done more to advance the cause of financial dignity and expanded opportunity in their post-presidency than Bill Clinton," John Hope Bryant, founder, chairman and CEO of Operation HOPE, said when President Clinton was announced as the keynote speaker. "Operation HOPE is deeply humbled and honored that President Clinton will address the 2015 HOPE Forum, especially against the backdrop of the MLK Day weekend festivities in Dr. King's hometown of Atlanta. We are looking forward to the president's spirited address and a meaningful two-day forum which will help provide the foundation for President Clinton's comments."

Operation HOPE works with the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Commitment to Action in a shared mission of expanding access and opportunities to underserved communities. This commitment, Project 5117, is a multi-year project that will help turn underserved communities into emerging markets, will track and increase business role models for youth, boost credit scores for adults, and empower underserved

communities. We are always eager to work with an organization that shares our vision for improving the lives of others and our motivation to identify tangible plans of action.

President Clinton stressed that a key imperative is helping businesses change the way they think about making money. Many businesses bristle when anyone suggests changing or modifying a plan that today produces profits and appears to minimize requirements. Yet often, those leading a business want to be better citizens of the world and just do not know how to get there. They may also labor under the belief that being a good citizen and an economic partner of others will cut into profits and perhaps undermine their economic independence and disrupt their business plan.

The president said Operation HOPE and others have to show these businesses not “the money,” but how money can be made more wisely, more thoughtfully and in a more encompassing way. “Inclusive economics works better than trickle-down economics,” he said.

Before giving vivid examples of how such a more encompassing approach works, the president outlined the stark dangers if things continue largely the way they are today.

“What kills people is not adversity. What kills people is that tomorrow is going to be like yesterday and there is not a darn thing they can do about it,” the president said.

Thus the Operation HOPE conference matters, President Clinton said, because in America and all over the world there is growing inequality as the gains from the tech boom fueled a “wealth generation” that has the ability make money for itself - which creates a widening gap in opportunity.

Clinton said that when investments, opportunities and support are evenly distributed, “I have found that people can endure hardships and not resent other’s success as long as they [believe] they can do better and give their kids a better deal.”

Without changes, Clinton warned that the system eventually will shut itself down because it runs out of what is fueling it today. “You have a consumption-based economy where people do not have the money to buy things to consume,” he said. “This is a serious restraint on growth in America.”

The fulcrum of change, he said, “is about telling people you can control your own destiny.”

One successful tactic is to involve major business enterprises by showing them how they make profits while hiring and training more people and pricing their products more reasonably, President Clinton said.

To be clear, the president said it is not enough to call for business to just stop practices that are unhelpful economically to those needing jobs or to the world environment. We need to show those businesses how to make money in a different way, he said.

“There is no demon here,” the President said. “It is making money in turning the ship around before it hits the iceberg. This is how you have to see yourself. Building a new, inclusive economy. You are making the market work.”

“I want to encourage you all not to get discouraged,” he said. “The people you are working with [have] got to be able to make a living.”

President Clinton gave four examples of inclusive economics spreading increased wealth to all parties.

The first example came from the time the Clinton Foundation was launched and “AIDS was running wild.” Following a conversation with the prime minister of St. Kitts and Nevis, President Clinton learned of the “money and organization problem” that that nation and many others faced in battling AIDS. For example, they were paying \$10,000 for AIDS medicine when the generic was available for \$500 - but they could not obtain it at that price.

At the time, only about 200,000 AIDS patients of the nearly 6 million AIDS patients in the world were receiving medicine because of high medicine cost. Clinton learned that the generic medicine was controlled by companies in India, who charged high prices because they had to stock a heavy inventory in the face of a small, uncertain volume -- like a family jewelry store in a small neighborhood, Clinton said in comparison.

Through the work of other nations and other groups, Clinton said the AIDS effort resulted in changing the formula to one based on a massive volume of sales with a lower profit margin per unit but, importantly, with certain payment. It became a win for all parties. In the Bahamas, for example, the price for the treatment dropped from \$3,500 to \$500 through generic medicine – enabling the Bahamian health system to treat six people for the every one person treated before.

“Over time we worked with the providers and improved production and distribution and got certain payment prices. A \$500 cost for generic fell to eventually \$90, and [medicine for] children is dropped from \$600 to \$60, for example. Today, thanks to those changes, about 14.5 million are receiving AIDS medicine, including 8.6 million from contracts we negotiated,” he said. “Those drug manufacturers are making way more money today than they were before. They’re just making money in an inclusive way. Inclusive capitalism works better than exclusive capitalism.”

The second example was finding ways to deal with childhood obesity and diabetes caused in part by soft-drink consumption. Diabetes alone claims about 25 percent of all taxpayer spending for the Medicaid program for lower income Americans, the president said in identifying the vital need to act.

Clinton said he met with the soft-drink producers and acknowledged that they cared about the issue and that they are not trying to make the kids sick, yet that the products were helping fuel a serious health problem. He also said the problem was the result of many things, such as Americans having less time to prepare food, low disposable income, and changes in the food Americans consume to foods that are high in bulk, low in nutrition.

“Let’s figure out a way to make money but in a different way,” Clinton asked. They agreed and they got rid of full-sugar drinks in school vending machines and cafeterias, supplanted the offers with fruit flavored water, and went to smaller portions of processed juice, he said. After four years there was a 90 percent reduction, and “they’re not losing money, they’re making money in a different way.”

“When you go out and say we need to train more people, we need to start more apprenticeship programs, we need to hire more people, you got to make an argument that over the long run it is good economics, and you have to make it good economics,” he said. “You have to do that.”

The third example dealt with the aftermath of the tsunami that hit Asia in 2004, when many fishermen lost their boats and other means to make a living. Getting them boats was a quick first easy step, and then someone made the suggestion to Clinton to give the fisherman cell phones. Why?

“They had no clue was the price of fish is. They were being ripped off every single day. You cannot be in a market economy if they do not know what the price of the market is,” he said.

Once they had cell phones – and they were able to check market prices -- the average income rose 30 percent, he said.

His final example was from Africa, where farmers were losing half of their income from crops because they had no transportation to market or access to storage facilities. Once those issues were fixed and lower prices were negotiated for better seeds, income increased by 576 percent (that is 576 accurate).

“And nobody lost money,” he said. “Everybody made more money.”

The four varied examples are relevant to the U.S. and anywhere else where inclusive economics should be a factor. “So that is how you have to see yourself, building a new inclusive economy and people, developing people’s innate abilities, you are making the market work,” the president said. “And the only way it can work is by expanding the circle of participation.”

Clinton said the harsh realities of the world leave people full of anger and resentment, with little opportunity for economic growth even if they are able bodied and eager to work.

“We owe these people a different tomorrow. We have not provided a different tomorrow that they are entitled to,” he said.

The president also noted that it is up to each individual – within an organization or standing alone – to act decisively and with determination.

“There is no Operation HOPE,” he said. “If you are the person, someone released from a job, they don’t think about Operation HOPE or the federal government. They are looking to see if somebody is standing there or there is not, a real live body who either cares about this person or does not.

“There is a lot we can do here... you matter. You matter. You have to know this. We spend too much time fighting and too little time working together. We think our differences are more important than our common humanity.”

Get people that first job, he said.

“We think that if you put people on the conveyor belt to success, they may never fall off,” President Clinton said. “And you add to that work.”

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[GET INVOLVED: PROJECT 5117](#)

President Clinton has told us that we are supposed to empower people. Up or down together. And that we have more to gain by joining hands and working together.

Here is how you can offer your hand to help others join us on the path to a better economic future: our Project 5117.

Operation HOPE partnered with Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) in 2013 for a unique and historic commitment. Leveraging our Project 5117 commitment, we rallied our fellow Americans both inside and outside the CGI membership to join us in scaling up our vision and our impact. Project 5117 operates nationally with measurable local impact across the country, community by community. —, We are putting in place for society a pragmatic and tangible plan of action. Everyone, starting with you, (individuals, schools, community-based organizations, as well as the private and public sector) can play a meaningful role in showing your support for America through our Operation HOPE commitment.

This shared mission of expanding access and opportunities to underserved communities is a multi-year project that will help turn underserved communities into emerging markets. It will track and increase business role-models for youth, boost credit scores for adults, and empower underserved communities. We are always eager to work with an organization that shares our vision for improving the lives of others and our motivation to identify tangible plans of action.

Project 5117 is supported by a national alliance with the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) and has the ongoing support of the American Bankers Association and Protective Life. Its mission is to strengthen the economy by focusing on empowering those who earn less than \$50,000 a year. Led by co-chairs Dr. Bernice King, Ambassador Andrew Young and John HOPE Bryant, Project 5117 is supported by a broad range of services, from homeownership counseling to credit-card debt management--a program that helps those with low credit scores raise their score to 700--to the comprehensive entrepreneurship-training course HOPE Business In A Box Academies.

Project 5117 stands for:

- 5 million youth empowered with a new level of financial literacy through unique financial-dignity education programs that have successfully been taught in 3,500 schools across the country. The program ensures basic consumer-protection education for a generation, while making it cool to be smart, so kids stay in school.
- 1 million of these empowered youth will have an opportunity to become future entrepreneurs and local job creators through HOPE Business In A Box Academies, supported by a 100-year partnership with the Gallup Organization. This effort powerfully reconnects education with aspiration in the lives of our youth. By the year 2020 there will be 2,000 HOPE Business In A Box Academies across the United States, in both urban and rural communities.
- 1,000 first-ever bottom-up empowerment centers, branch banks with HOPE Inside units spread throughout America and 5,000 certified locations containing “HOPE Inside Plus” units. This plan is consistent with the long-term growth strategies of top regional and money-center banks, and appreciates the under-utilized, 100,000- unit branch banking network across America.
- 700 Credit Score Communities will be created through the expansion of HOPE Inside and “HOPE Inside Plus” locations. These communities will have access to credit counseling, debt management, and education on credit and money management, offered in an individual or group setting.

This next phase of Operation HOPE’s work operates on a national scale with measurable local impact across the country, community by community. With this launch, we are now putting in place for society

a pragmatic and tangible plan of action in which everyone can play a meaningful role in. It is our way of answering some of the questions posed by Dr. King in the Poor People's Campaign, in both word and deed.

This is your door to get involved now, and here is how you can extend your hand:

- Become a Project 5117 HOPE POWERED by-partner.
- Sponsor a HOPE Inside location in your community.
- Become a National Signature Partner of Project 5117.
- Volunteer to teach Banking on Our Future or HOPE Business In A Box Academies to a classroom of students in your city.
- Volunteer to serve as a Business Role Model to help a youth entrepreneur launch a new business venture.
- Volunteer to serve as a judge for a Pitch Competition at local HOPE Business In A Box Academies.
- Recruit others in your organization to serve as volunteers at HOPE Business In A Box Academies in your area.
- Contribute to the launch of a youth entrepreneur's new business venture through crowd funding.
- Commit to an annual subscription to sponsor HOPE Business In A Box Academies in your city.

Operation HOPE also operates the HOPE Inside Atlanta at Ebenezer Church, located on the campus of the King Center and the anchor tenant of the Martin Luther King, Sr. Community Resource Complex. Martin Luther King, Sr., or "Daddy King" as he was called, co-pastored Ebenezer Church with his son Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., during the civil rights movement, and served on the board of a bank for 40 years - a little-known fact. Daddy King was also focused on making free enterprise work for all, just as his son was focused in the last years of his life on poverty eradication and economic justice.

We could not have done it without our supporters, our friends, our partners and our believers. Reach out your hand and join our efforts.

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CAN START-UPS SAVE THE AMERICAN DREAM?

The easy way is to have a rich friend across the hall from you in college. Then your brilliant idea will have a financial backer and - boom – off you go to success.

Well, few of us have such a delightful, convenient setup. And even when it exists, what looks to be a good business marriage may dissolve over differing business philosophies -- even for the more successful entrepreneurs such as Steve Case.

"We want to make sure that opportunity is available to everybody, wherever they happen to live," Case said. "Never give up even when you have those dark days. Maybe you will get lucky, maybe it will be an overnight success (but) in most cases it is a long term journey."

Case, one of America's best-known and most accomplished entrepreneurs, and a pioneer in making the Internet part of everyday life, is chairman and CEO of Revolution LLC, a Washington, D.C.- based investment firm he co-founded in 2005. Through Revolution, Case partners with who he determines are visionary entrepreneurs to build significant 'built to last' new businesses.

He and Jean Case also lead The Case Foundation, which has the goals of revolutionizing philanthropy, unleashing entrepreneurship and igniting civic engagement.

Much like waves that come to a beach, there are different current of innovation and investment that flow through the world. That said, there are certain fundamentals that catch Case's eye when he sees an idea and convince him the idea shows the signs of being a successful start-up with high growth potential.

Case, who went to high school with President Obama, said that early on he "did not know what the word entrepreneur was but I knew I wanted to start things." His first attempt was in 1982 when he was manager of pizza marketing at Pizza Hut and decided to use the still infant Internet as a way to get people to place orders for pizza.

As someone who has seen and experienced the ups and down and the how-to invest, Case said the lesson is perseverance and having "a long term built-to-last mentality.

"It starts with an idea, you have to fall in love with the idea, it has to be a big idea," Case said. "It has to be an idea that will change the world, a powerful idea that can for transformed. It may take a long time to have an impact. (And) then you have to look at the people (who are part of the team)."

Cases repeatedly referred to establishing ways to help all potential innovators are "getting more people on the on ramp." For example, in 2014, 76 percent of venture capital went to three states – California, Massachusetts and New York. "What about the other 47," he asked. "There are great entrepreneurs are building great companies across all sectors of our economy, all regions of the country and we need to figure out ways to give them more access."

Case said entrepreneurship is a team sport and is not just about one person. One of the most important things – as Operation HOPE proclaims – is the belief in the idea. In the case of AOL, Case said that "I always believed we would live in a more connected world."

The young entrepreneurs in the Business in a Box pitches meet all those criteria, Case said – perfect example of the kinds of individuals where some funding and some guidance will help in a major way.

Case noted that not every effort is a success, including the highly touted AOL-Time Warner merger. The reason – two types of visionaries with different philosophies, making common cause but not a similar strategy. In the AOL-Time Warner case, the strategy "did not achieve some of the objectives we were hoping for" because of the different cultures.

"It is the different between being a kind of attacker and being a defender," Case said. "Entrepreneurs are attackers, challenging the status quo, trying to usher in a better ways. Most Fortune 500 companies are defenders, more trying to protect the status quo."

Yet it is that battle that "fuels the entire entrepreneurial revolution," he said.

Case said such financial pathways such as Kickstarter and Crowdfunding are important ways to offer capital to minorities, women and other groups that traditionally have been shut out of financial support -- pathways particularly needed by those often served by Operation HOPE. Again, he said, a key and an imperative is to level the playing field for those without a rich friend across the dormitory hall, as how Facebook was able to launch.

"Access to capital. It is not a fair fight. Unless you know someone that has money, you don't have shot," he said. He said the financial alternatives such as Crowdfunding which "figure out new ways to provide lending to help millions of different people."

Case said that only 10 to 15 percent of traditional venture capital goes to women-founded companies. "But on platforms like Kickstarter start-up money, more than half go to" women-funded companies, Case said. "People are looking for the idea and (then) deciding if they want to invest in it.

"Everybody who has an idea, wherever they happen to be, (needs) to get a shot," he said.

There are other ways to help, starting with the "recognition in the role that start-ups play in building and rebuilding the economy," Case said. First comes leadership across all spectrums in championing start-ups. Big companies can and must help small companies. Local government can create enterprise areas and watch "the ripple effect across the community (though) the power of start-ups and innovations," he said. And as important he said is that companies must learn that creating shareholder value must be accompanied by creating value for the communities - such as creating jobs -- which is not occurring today.

"We need new ways to provide lending. For initial capital and for expansion," Case said. "We have to take a look at regulation and how to simplify things."

He also said we need to change the education system to encourage creativity, so students and others are "looking at problems in a different context...seeing the world that someday might be different...how to learn, how to think, how to dream."

And it needs to come down to this, Case said. Encouraging creativity in a way that the person looking to launch is looking at a problem, seeing it "in a different context and seeing an opportunity nobody else sees.

He said America has led the world "because we have the most innovative economy" that led the way and carried through the agricultural revolution, the industrial revolution and the tech revolution.

"It is clear, to be a strong nation, we have to back our entrepreneurs," Case said. "Leveling the playing field on capital is a critical ingredient.....in to make it possible for everybody who has an idea to have a shot of getting that idea on the field.

"Everybody needs a shot...if we are going to use start-ups to rebuild the economy and rebuild the communities."

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HOPE AND PROSPERITY

The room represented the goal, diversity of backgrounds and interests, gathered together willingly and eagerly to advance a common agenda.

The agenda of opportunity.

"I am in a room with folks who have truly been change agents in your local communities," said Julian Castro, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. "The first step in this journey, to empowerment, is that precious commodity that this organization knows very well. And that is hope."

Castro said the agenda of opportunity has bedrock pillars in its foundation that must be fortified in order for opportunity and hope to rise. A responsive government that puts people first. A quality education because "brainpower truly is the new currency of success in the 21st century global economy." And financial empowerment.

"We know there is still a lot of work to do... a lot of folks still to lift up," he said. "And the fact is, the only way that our nation can fulfill its full potential...in this 21st century, is if all of its citizens have a chance to fulfill theirs."

A path of prosperity for all Americans remains a goal of the Obama administration, despite the ridicule of some critics who suggest the idea of broad prosperity is a fantasy, not a reality, Castro said.

"Let there be no doubt, that this is real," he said. "Folks are looking to the future with renewed optimism."

Yet Castro noted that the challenge now is to instill the same drive, determination and dexterity that soars among those at the Operation Hope conference in creating jobs and opportunity into those sitting in corporate board rooms, in city halls, , in state legislatures and in Washington, D.C. Only then will (we) "ensure now that everyone in our nation can take part in the prosperity," he said.

"We believe in people, in their potential, in their possibilities," Castro said. "We know the folks we serve has have the same aspirations as everyone else."

Castro said HUD, which celebrates 50 years of work this year, takes a big picture approach to community building and that public housing can be a spring board to success/.

He said business need to be involved in creating opportunities for hiring in low income areas instead of outsourcing jobs, to keep dollars in the local community. . And he said education needs to be better linked to boost access to knowledge needed in job training.

"Many feel like they are running in place," Castro said.

But Castro vowed that "We are going to keep at it until every single public housing resident has the opportunity to do better and step up and move out." He said that "Nobody should be born at a disadvantage" and have their future decided by the zip code where they live.

“Making level the playing field is our top priority,” he said. Of HUD. “That is what our nation is all about. It’s about lifting each other up.”

Those living in public housing, like many others elsewhere, have the brains and talents to be the next great entrepreneurs, teachers, community leaders and public officials, Castro said. “They just need to opportunity to get there.”

As agenda of opportunity acolytes, Castro reminded listeners that the mantra of mission includes fighting for one another, investing in one another and working for one another. And tapping into one of the undercurrent themes of the conference, Castro quoted the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in reminding that “change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability but comes through continuous struggle.”

To move forward means creating a path to success and providing the tool needed to succeed, he said.

“It is creating a better future where we all can contribute and thrive,” Castro said. “All of us in this room have got to finish this job.”

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TURNING YOUR OWN TABLE

Ricardo Semler says the things that are deep in our minds we really know, says the things that make sense and says the things we just cannot seem to do. Even though we nod our heads in agreement

He stirs, he makes sense and his actions have supported his theories. And Semler’s mantras come with doses of humor and pathos with a common focused core: How can we break barriers without asking the guy who has it to give it back?

“Is there really a chance,” he asks.

Semler, who gave the opening keynote address, is known for his people-centric approach to management. As an advocate for rethinking and championing relationships between people, Semler’s vision is one that rewards the wisdom of workers, promotes work-life balance — and leads to some deep insight on what work, and life, is really all about.

Even among the true believers, he is in a class by himself. As the CEO and majority owner of Semco Partners, a Brazilian company that makes industrial machinery like giant oil pumps and restaurant dishwashers, revenue has grown from \$4 million in 1982 to \$212 million US dollars in 2003 and his innovative business management policies have attracted widespread interest around the world. Semco is now a \$400 million business with additional minority interests in companies that add up to \$9 billion in market value.

His real-world laboratory for his radical approach to leadership was transferred to Operation Hope’s environs in the bottom line of reality: how to create a system a method, to make it possible to break though these formats that are very solidly in place and getting stronger.

“A lot of what we promised (through democracy and the past economic boom) was opportunity for everyone, just go believe in yourself” is not the reality, Semler said. “People return to where they were with very little statistical chance of it (their economic escape) ever working out.”

And while we are not to ask that guy who has it for anything, there are many questions Semler asked us to think about and perhaps answer for our own benefit, to begin the steps in a new more fruitful direction. Such as why do we choose the paths we do and what does upward mobility mean

That is the challenge. While Semler was given a company to run, one that was launched and made successful by his father, most do not have that opportunity. While he was in a position to implement his ideas, that opportunity is a reality limited to a very small percentage.

“The world is becoming less democratic,” Semler said. “If this power is transferred to so few people and so few companies, we can’t be making heading in democracy and we are not.”

Semler said he runs his company through his philosophy of the “Three Whys.” That is asking one question, then asking “why” to the response, then asking “why” to that response and then finally “why” to the third response.

“There are a lot of things that will not resist three “whys” in a row,” he said.

For example, “we have not had a headquarters for 15 years,” Semler said, because when he asked himself the best way to get productivity and flow he realized employees can go to the office closest to them or where they needed to be. Yet he mockingly pointed out how Apple spent billions to build a new headquarters “and this company is about mobility. What the hell are they doing?”

It is time to “free people” from all that kind of thinking, he insisted. Why where suits and ties, to look like each other? Why force people to get up early and drive through heavy traffic? Why force people to work all week if they complete their tasks early and can go to the beach?

“We should be...trying to undo all of the issues that don’t do anything,” he said.

One example he offered was education. The school systems today are organized like Henry Ford’s first assembly line – to churn out lots of stuff to look the same and can be interchanged. That is what kids are put through in most school system – and thus fail to retain 93.7 percent of what is told to them.

“We are not stopping to think about the most elementary thing,” he said – which is getting people interested and invested in what is being said.

In cases like education, it is possible to implement improvements in existing systems by finding ways to hear where students have interested and finding outside experts to augment instruction.

As an example of creative instruction, Semler suggested World Cup soccer, which many students expressed interest.

Students learn about geography through what teams are playing, instead of regurgitating national capitals. They learn about physics by discussing how many watts it take to light up a stadium or why it takes one or two seconds for a player at one end of the field to hear a referee’s whistle at the other end of the field. They discuss why Holland’s team is 43 percent blacks and when the wives of those black players who moved to the Netherlands to play soccer have babies, who will pay for that.

“There is no end to the chemistry and biology and of course geography you can learn,” Semler said. “So we will go out and look for masters who are passionate of any aspect of that” and bring them in to teach.

Semler said there is little to be championed in the current education methods. “We have to teach them a little about how to understand to put things together, a little on how to understand (how to) find things,” he said and not much else.

Crucially, he noted that it takes a juncture of a passionate teacher and an interested student. “What made you remember this person,” Semler asked. “They were passionate about something. You were paying attention. These two things happen rarely. All the rest is a waste of energy and did away with the magic of knowledge, which is still there.”

In that sense, Semler proved his point. Holding the audience’s interest for almost an hour, he became that teacher with passion and we became the interested students. We retained and now, as with any education, must implement when we can.

“A lot of what we promised...you can make it if you believe in yourself,” Semler said. “Opportunity for everyone.”

It will not be easy because a small minority holds the power and the money and will not cooperate, he said. And he was blunt in his assessment of many of these elite. “If you are giving back, it is because you took too much,” he said.

“If I have a party for 85 people, and if we chose the right people, they will be making the same amount of wealth as 1.4 billion of the planet,” he said “In this domain, democracy is not an issue. We cannot be making headway as a democracy” when those with such insular financial wealth and power have the ability to do as they please.

Semler admitted he has no answer for the ultimate question of “why do we exist?” Yet by being the questioner, the challenger" and the catalyst, Semler hopes to encourage people to bring things down to the simplest level in making key decisions by challenging the status quo at every turn and allowing people to come up with appropriate solutions. The message: take a realistic look at what works, what’s possible, and what makes sense in today’s world.

“You can always find good explanations for keeping what you have,” Semler said. “We have find a way, a thinking process, to break the status quo (and when that happens) we will find a little bit of progress.”

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DRIVING REFORM FROM THE INSIDE

Yes, it is true. He is from the government and he is here to help.

Richard Cordray, the director of the freshly-minted Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), made clear his mission to those who carry the torch for Operation HOPE and for hundreds of thousands

throughout America: this G-man and his agency will help all “be informed and to take control (and) to make the right decisions.”

Since the CFPB was formed, direct assistance has been provided for 500,000 people – with 250,000 of those in the last year. That does not include thousands of others who have been helped by guidance on the Bureau’s website and through other venues, such as shared experiences with other consumers.

“We are building a fair market place characterized by responsible business practices,” Cordray said. “These are resources that are only valuable if people use them. I urge you to use them yourself and recommend them to others... so that people can benefit from the work we are trying to do, to be of service to them.”

The CFPB is a 21st century agency that helps consumer finance markets work by making rules more effective, by consistently and fairly enforcing those rules, and by empowering consumers to take more control over their economic lives. The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010 (Dodd-Frank Act) established the CFPB and in January of 2012, President Obama appointed Cordray to be its first director.

As Cordray noted, the CFPB’s mission fits well with one of the top goals of Operation HOPE – to make middle and lower income individuals and families more financially wise, secure and pro-active. This means ensuring that consumers get the information they need to make the financial decisions they believe are best for themselves and their families—that prices are clear up front, that risks are visible, and that nothing is buried in fine print. In a market that works, consumers should be able to make direct comparisons among products and no provider should be able to use unfair, deceptive, or abusive practices, he said.

Key areas in the forefront of CFPB’s efforts that benefit those served by Operation Hope include options on handling student debt, new rights on remittances and money transfers, smart shopping for mortgages, seeing how complaints have been handled by others, fixing errors on credit reports, relief from harassing debt collectors, and dealing with the “huge problem” of financial fraud against the elderly, Cordray said.

Financial fortitude is a foundation of Operation HOPE’s empowerment strategy. Cordray’s comments dovetailed with ongoing Operation HOPE activities, such as the award-winning Banking on Our Future program -- the largest youth urban delivery system in America for financial literacy education and financial dignity empowerment tools, programs and services – and the Gallup-HOPE Financial Literacy Index, a first of its kind index that measures youth’s relationship to financial literacy, how they envision their future and provide them with targeted, impactful training so that they ultimately achieve their aspired financial goals.

“We are trying to level the playing field for American consumers...to make the right decisions for themselves and their families” Cordray said. He said the CFPB wants all Americans “to be informed and to take control, to make the right decisions.”

One area where it is blatant that Americans fail to do just that is in seeking a mortgage. Cordray said Americans spend “more time shopping for a computer than looking for a mortgage.” Almost half of

Americans do not shop around for a mortgage, he said. He said the CFPB can work with Operation HOPE and others to give consumers more knowledge about mortgages – and thus have more confidence to shop around.

In short, Cordray said Operation HOPE must help change the mindset of potential homeowners from “getting a mortgage” – and thus taking what is given to them – to “shopping for a mortgage.”

“Consumers can use their power to take control of the financial outcomes (and) cast a wide net early on,” he said.

The CFPB offers great tools to help prospective home owners, such as a rate checker to help consumer understand the true rates available to them in their unique financial circumstances, he said. The bureau also provides clear facts, such as how shopping around for a mortgage – which is strongly recommended – will not affect a credit scores, a concern of many, he said.

As Cordray noted, part of the bureau’s mission is to give consumers the information they need to understand the terms of their agreements with financial companies. He said the CFPB is working to make regulations and guidance as clear and streamlined as possible so providers of consumer financial products and services can follow the rules on their own.

To that end, he also said “guardrails” have been put into place so lenders do not once again “stray into dangerous areas” that were a cause of the financial crisis a few years ago. “As memories of the crisis may fade, we are taking important steps to ensure that history does not repeat itself,” Cordray said.

Cordray said his follows the urging of President Theodore Roosevelt in focusing on a piece of work worth doing and then doing it well. While much remains for the CFPB to do to meet that goal, he said they are on the right path.

“We help people find ways to raise their voice, to see if we can help them,” he said. “Give us a chance to do that.”

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LIGHTS, SWING SETS, AND ACTION

This is not talking the talk. This is not even walking the walk.

This is socking it out of the park – at your first plate appearance. And then looking like you are going to hit for the cycle.

There are those who came to the Global Forum to talk of the paths we need to take, inspiring us and focusing us. Then came Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, who talked about how in this present moment, he is crushing out the sad, recent past of Detroit and returning it, park by park, neighborhood by neighborhood, to the Detroit of a far more glorious, much farther back past.

His version of Back to the Future. His version of taking much of what Operation HOPE has embraced as the pathways to financial betterment for millions of Americans and putting the ideas into practical application and solid success. As solid as the foundations of housing stock retooled and occupied by families and as sweet as the neat grass in dozens of reopened public parks.

Duggan was elected mayor in 2013 after winning a write-in campaign in large because of his visits at people's homes. He knew he had a tough political challenge running as a candidate who is white in a city with an African-American majority. So he told people he would come to their homes to talk issues and let them meet him and see what they thought, to hear what they wanted the city to be like. He wound up at more than 250 such house parities – sometime starting with 10 to 15 people, but then growing so large they had to hold them in churches.

"You invite me to your home, I show up and talk to you," Duggan said. "When you sit in the living room with people, eat with them and talk to them about issues... what divides us fades into the background."

He carried 93 percent of the precincts.

Before running for mayor, Duggan had found ways to join with others to improve parts of Detroit. Right before his campaign he partnered with workers and unions to lead the Detroit Medical Center out of near bankruptcy and back to profitability in his first year at the helm. Today, the DMC is undergoing \$850 million in new construction as part of a deal Duggan negotiated as CEO.

Duggan ran his 2013 mayoral campaign on a platform that "every neighborhood has a future." During the campaign he spoke directly with nearly 20,000 Detroiters at the 250 gatherings he attended in living rooms, coffee shops, barbershops and salons, as well as church halls. It was out of these intimate meetings that Duggan's vision for the city crystallized.

Duggan says that as mayor, he will continue to be accessible and will host frequent community conversation to help him keep in touch with Detroit residents, their needs and their evaluation of the city's progress.

Detroit's population is 82.7 percent African-American and Duggan is the first white mayor since January 1974. He served as the deputy County Executive and prosecutor for Wayne County, and was president and CEO of the Detroit Medical Center from 2004-2012. He resigned to run for Detroit mayor. After failing to qualify for the primary ballot, he waged a successful write-in campaign to qualify for the run-off election -- which he won -- to face a myriad of challenges including major decline and dangers in schools, a bloated payroll, and ongoing population decreases.

And now, he noted, he has "an extraordinary responsibility because people are expecting me to implement that plan that I promised.

In his case, it has been lights, cameras and action. As in lighting the neighborhoods.

When Duggan took office, more than half of the 88,000 neighborhood light fixtures did not work, despite the lighting authority have \$180 million in financing. The authority kept arguing over where to start and what kind of lights to use.

"You got to light the neighborhoods," Duggan said. So the plan was launched: replace the 75 watt bulbs with 150 watt LED (Light Emitting Diode) bulbs at a pace of more than 1,000 a week. The city was

assisted in the effort by leveraging federal tax credits available through the United States Department of Energy (DOE), which has recognized Detroit as a leader in replacing its street lights with LEDs to achieve a lower carbon footprint.

The entire city should receive the lights by June 2015, 18 months ahead of schedule, Duggan said – using photos to highlight the newly lighted neighborhoods. He boasted that Detroit will be the first major city with all LED lighting on city streets and will have “main streets lit to a standard to read a newspaper.”

And then there are how things would look better for a camera.

When Duggan took office, only 25 of the city’s 275 parks were open. Many of the others would have a lone path cut by a resident through shoulder high grass in order to reach swing sets.

“It broke your heart,” he said. “What it says in the way you value your kids.”

Duggan found funds to clean up and open 188 parks, and convinced churches and businesses to adopt the remaining ones. Now the parks are open and thriving.

And from the good camera shots of manicured, opened parks are the more harsh photos of trash – but still photos of progress.

There were illegal dump sites all over Detroit as trash was not picked up. “In most communities you probably take this for granted,” he said. Now 650 tons of trash are collected each week and the legal dump sites are filling up. Ugly photos of dump sites to be sure yet photos underscoring action.

“People are starting to raise their expectations” Duggan said. “They realize they don’t have to live like this.”

Next was dealing with horrid police response times of 18 minutes, far above the national standard of eight minutes. Duggan said changes have lowered response times to an average of 11 minutes, all while crime was dropping by six percent.

“You are starting to see why I got elected,” Duggan said. “We are confident (we)...are doing a better job.”

And then the big action, is dealing with abandoned homes. As Time magazine once wrote, “In Detroit, vital neighborhoods are not contiguous; they’re scattered across the map like meaty morsels in a pale, thin broth.”

Duggan knew why. “The city had only one strategy, demolish,” he said. But he noted that the real the problem is not that the house is not valued but “people have lost confidence in the neighborhood.”

So working with Operation HOPE, Duggan developed a plan to save the good houses and to come up with ways for people who are renters to become home owners.

Under the plan they devised, houses that could be saved were saved. They would go into a full neighborhood at once, telling the owners of the abandoned structure they would have lawsuits filed against them unless they did one of two things: fix up the property or deed the property to the city. The city filed about 1,000 lawsuits, with 320 owners signing court orders to do repairs, another 180 giving their property to the city to sell.

At least 20 neighborhoods have been improved and auctions are held to sell off the rehabbed houses. All bids start at \$1,000. Dugan said he wanted to move aggressively to take these abandoned homes and get families living in them again, believing there are a lot of people who would love to move into many of the neighborhoods and that knowing that other people are going to be buying and fixing up the other vacant homes at the same time will make it a lot easier for people to make that commitment.

“Driving through the neighborhoods, neighbors stop me,” Duggan said. “It is the most powerful thing, to have people come out and tell you what is happening.”

He said Detroit neighborhoods are coming back and that midtown and downtown are also roaring again with occupancy in former empty office buildings and new energy in the city. “We are making sure that as Detroit comes back, everyone in the city participates,” Duggan said, his arms moving excitedly.

This is what Operation HOPE is about- -helping people move forward and upward, with respect, dignity and by working together. Duggan joked about being placed on the program placed between the dynamic young success entrepreneur finalists in the Business-in-A-Box competition and the vision and eloquence of President Clinton -- yet his successes in practical, quality of life, opportunity areas was a vital tonic for the forum.

Urban blight and the others are practical problems that can be solved through direct and determined leadership, some money, partnership, civic vigor and creativity. Other problems – ranging from job creation and improving a devastated school system to launching urban farming in areas where housing has been removed – require more substantive efforts. Or as many said during the forum, rethinking the rules as one moved toward Detroit 2020.

“Our partnership with John Hope Bryant and his team is critical,” Duggan said. “If you have not partnered with us, I hope you will think about.”

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