

One out of every four of us

That's how many people in this country are not able to live for a sustained period of time without assistance. No matter where you live, you don't have to look far to find a substantial number of your neighbors who are struggling - unnecessarily, persistently, and in ways that are easily solvable.

We can do this better. We can stop doing the same things year after year, expecting that we will get different results. That custom has characterized our approach to poverty since the U.S. declared a *War on Poverty* in 1964.

At that time, 33 million Americans did not have enough to get by without assistance. **Today, that number is 82 million.**



A fundamentally new approach

For too long, we have considered band-aids to be solutions. It is time for a different approach - one in which we better identify and address the causes of economic instability in our *local communities* instead of just treating the symptoms.

It is time to move beyond our traditional approaches, starting with the way we define and measure poverty. For example, if you have a family of three - the most common family size in the U.S. today - the government counts you as being in poverty only if you make less than \$24,860/year? How many families of three are doing okay at \$25,000/year?

For that matter, how many families of *two* are okay at that level? Heck, how many families of one - just you - would be okay at \$25,000/year? (In fact, for a household of one, the government sets the poverty line at \$14,580.)

Worse yet, the measurement is applied equally everywhere in the contiguous 48 states, no matter the cost of living from one town to the next or from one state to the next.

Further, a large portion of the safety net system, which includes food assistance, home energy assistance, Medicaid, and 40 other assistance programs, is tied to this measurement. People receive benefits and, more importantly, lose benefits, based on it. This ultimately leads to people never being able to break the cycle of poverty.

We do not help people get out of poverty. **We help them stay in it.**

But we can change all of this...

... and we can start in the coming year, a year that marks the 60th anniversary of the War on Poverty. It is a year in which The Shared Humanity Project will partner with people and organizations in every corner of the country, and hopefully with you.

We don't need a war to do this right; we need a resurgence of community.

In 2024, we will also work tirelessly to connect solutions to problems, because there are some great solutions around this country. Organizations like [Dig Deep](#),

which gets clean, safe drinking water to people who do not have it (and there are millions who don't). And [The Institute for Nonviolence Chicago](#), which produces *measurable results* in some of Chicago's most violent neighborhoods.

We will introduce you to many more of our country's top programs and the leaders who work with an urgency and an insistence on getting real outcomes for those they serve. They know what happens to children and adults in poverty when we don't achieve necessary outcomes.

[Click Here to Make Your End-of-Year Gift!](#)

Poverty Forums: Building coalitions across America



Baltimore Poverty Forum participants listen to the opening panel.

In 2024 we will also continue to introduce our plan to people from every sector and in every part of the country. One such way that we will do this is through our poverty forums. Our first poverty forum of the new year will be held on February 7 at The University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill.

Speaking of the Carolinas...

...we will also explore implementing our National Plan in the Upstate South Carolina region, the region I now call home. Just a week from now, I will relocate permanently to the region and a home at the foot of Paris Mountain, just north of Greenville. Some mountain air, a lot of quiet, and maybe a few bears. If you are ever in the area, let me know.

The Greenville area, like many parts of our country, has urban, suburban, and rural poverty fairly close together. We will support work being done there and also

utilize our plan to engage every sector in solving issues that I have discussed with folks there on my numerous trips to the region.

Creating what is possible

I have never been more determined to change what we see today in our cities, suburbs, and rural areas. I hope you will consider an [end-of-year gift](#), and perhaps more so, that you will connect with us so we can work together to create a new and more effective approach to poverty.

Bring us to your town, your company, or your school. Ask us how to use [our data](#) to better understand your community. I believe the way we measure economic need is more logical and more insightful than our country's current approach.

Let's make 2024 the year in which we make the necessary commitment in our communities, the year in which we finally achieve meaningful outcomes. Our neighbors deserve that we try. My email is mark@sharedhumanityproject.org. I'd love to hear from you.

With determination and thanks,



Mark Bergel, Ph.D.
Co-founder

The Shared
Humanity Project

Donate Now

National Plan to
End Poverty

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