



## The government alone cannot solve poverty.

In nearly every conversation about poverty I have had in the last two decades, talk of how we can end it goes immediately to what the government should do - local, state, or federal. Nearly every time. It is a myth that the government alone can solve poverty. And that is why we have not made more progress in this country.

I recognize that government programs serve a lot of people. I recognize that many people in poverty depend on the government for their lives, yet high rates of poverty persist in our country. **Shouldn't that tell us something?**

## What it tells me is that we have been looking in the wrong places for the wrong answers.

This is not a piece about the whimsical nature of government support, though whimsical it can be. This is not about government inefficiency or waste, though I have seen up close too much of that. This is, however, about **our connection to one another** - and the responsibility that comes with that. Let's embrace our interconnectedness; let's see our responsibility as our opportunity. And when it comes to poverty, we will see that the answers are simple: Remove obstacles and create opportunities.

Rather than argue over whether the government should just give people money, what if our businesses, faith communities, and educational institutions partnered to make the pathway to employment an easier one? What if these sectors partnered to bring innovative solutions to child care, for example, removing a major obstacle for parents seeking to work hard to build their savings. ***You may be part of one of those sectors; you can lead this.***

What if our philanthropic organizations, health care providers, and nonprofits partnered with individuals experiencing poverty in urban and rural neighborhoods to increase safety, and in doing so, employed

residents who might otherwise be involved in the violence? Community centers, early mentor programs, and entrepreneurship training would replace neglect and the need to engage in a survivalist lifestyle.

The types of initiatives noted above are happening in small ways throughout the country. **But the needs are still outpacing the solutions.**

**Why? What's missing?**

**YOU.**


Whether or not you are in one of the sectors mentioned above, you likely check off the most important box needed to take action. **You live somewhere near poverty.** And you can help. Even if all you do is find a way - on your own or with friends and family - to connect with a school and help it to obtain the same resources utilized by children in our well-resourced schools.

Sure, the government has a role in helping those in poverty, just like these other sectors do, but it is only *a* role, not *the* role. **That is reserved for you**, and if you choose to accept that responsibility, we have a chance to eradicate poverty for our neighbors.

***It is not a fantasy to believe we can end poverty, it is the reality we can create. To me, it is what being human is all about.***

I appreciate that you took the time this past week to read about the myths that sustain poverty in our country.

We will send these newsletters just once a month in the new year; not wanting to contribute to the noise of your inbox. But we will **blog** more often and travel to speak around the country more frequently than we have been doing. I hope you will engage with us. You can always email me at [mark@sharedhumanityproject.org](mailto:mark@sharedhumanityproject.org). I would love to hear your ideas and see what is possible in communities across our country.



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