

Republican Perspective
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by Ed Manning

THE RIGHT APPROACH TO LEFT'S FAILURES

"We can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone." Ronald Reagan

America's "Endless War" on poverty (Republican Perspective 2/11/15) continues with Progressives seeking more of the taxpayers money to fund programs that have done very little to improve the plight of the poor. There is a better way and Republicans should be taking a leadership role.

In 1981, the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE) was founded to help residents of low-income neighborhoods address the problems of their communities. The founder, Bob Woodson, was a 1960's civil rights activist and former head of the National Urban League's Administration of Justice.

After participating in failed Federal & State social programs, Woodson realized that government's approach was wrong. Woodson suggests that the American public is "desperate for solutions that transcend the ideological divide." He says, "the Civil Rights movement has abandoned the high ground on which it was founded. It has morphed into a race grievance industry. It has been hijacked by the Democratic Party. It has sold its soul to the highest bidder."

CNE's differing approach to solving issues facing the poor is highlighted in its Founding Principles. First, low income individuals and community-based organizations should play a central role in the design and implementation of programs that address their problems. Second, an effective approach to improving societal problems must be driven by the same principles that function in a market economy - competition, entrepreneurship, cost efficiency and an expectation of return on investment. Third, value generating and faith based initiatives are uniquely qualified to address problems of poverty that are related to behavior and life choices.

Woodson argues that 70% of the money spent on poverty programs does not go to the poor. Government administrators ask not which programs are working but which programs are fundable. Woodson believes that do-gooders have created a commodity out of poor people and are perplexed why poverty expands as funding increases.

There is a growing concern about the class divide among African-Americans. Woodson said, "6 out of 10 blacks with a college education work for the government. This makes a lot of middle class blacks part of what I call the Poverty Pentagon." His argument is that with the government's social programs perverse incentives, many middle class blacks prosper at the expense of their low-income counterparts.

These governmental incentives has led to the growth of social workers and welfare rights activists who manage their success on increased funding and the number of “clients” they have signed up for benefits. If there is no improvement in the community, the administrators ask for more money. This is no different than a failing school saying that more money will improve student results. Woodson believes that “we built a system where the more you fail, the more you get paid.”

So what does CNE do different? They seek out families’ that have persevered and prospered despited the odds. They learn from these families’ successes and teach their lessons to others. They place a high premium on personal dignity that comes from work. One of their programs enables mothers to earn volunteer credits that are used to purchase Christmas gifts for their children and avoid the shame of watching social workers distribute gifts to their kids.

CNE has created the Violence-Free Zone (VFZ), a national model of a youth violence reduction and high-risk student mentoring program. The VFZ mentoring program is designed to address behaviors that result in truancies, suspensions, violent incidents, involvement in drugs and gangs and poor academic performance in public middle and high schools.

Baylor University did a four year case study of high-risk high and middle schools in Milwaukee, WI and Richmond, VA that had instituted the VFZ program. Results were very favorable, showing: a 44% reduction in number of behavioral incidents per student/month; 79% reduction in average number of suspension days per student/month; 23% reduction in truancy incidents per student/month; 9.3% increase in GPA per student; a 24% higher graduation from high-school; and a 64% increase in the number of students reporting a more positive school climate.

It is time that principled Republican politicians start dismantling failed social programs and allocate funding to local organizations that have improved the plight of the nation’s poor. Bob Woodson’s CNE is one such organization. Woodson is the only person ever to have received both the liberal and conservative world’s most prestigious awards – the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation Prize, as well as the Presidential Citizens Medal.

Note: Republican Presidential primary debate is August 6th at 6:00 pm and will be shown in the Club Room, Creekside. Call 945-7211 to sign-up. Please visit the Contra Costa Central Committee’s website: www.contracostagop.org and www.rossmoor-republicans.us to stay current on candidates views and fundraisers.