Thank you. It’s an honor to be a part of this tribute to my friend and former undergraduate classmate, Lewis Walker. I remember in my undergraduate days at Wilberforce how we competed for the attention of our mentor, Dr. Maxwell Brooks. Of all of the students that Dr. Brooks taught, I viewed Lewis as my major competitor. And we tried to outdo each other in Dr. Brooks seminars. And it is so great to see him again after all of these years.

In my talk this evening I would like to reflect on some of the more recent research on the nature of concentrated poverty and whether the response of the policy community has sufficiently addressed the challenges posed.

My talk comes a few months after the 25th anniversary of my book The Truly Disadvantaged, which of course addressed the issue of concentrated urban poverty. And last fall there were two conferences celebrating the 25th anniversary of the book, one at Harvard sponsored by the Department of Sociology, the Harvard Inequality Program, and the WEB DuBois Institute. And one held in Washington DC, sponsored by the Century Foundation.

Also, last summer The University of Chicago Press published a second edition of The Truly Disadvantaged, which includes my long afterword reflecting on many of the major empirical studies that support, extend, and challenge arguments advanced in the book.
I pointed out in the afterword of the second edition, that 25 years later, the economic processes emphasized in the book have continued—the loss of manufacturing jobs, the movement of jobs from cities to the suburbs and overseas, and even greater internationalization of the economy, especially through trade liberalization facilitated by free trade agreements in the 1990s.

Moreover, given the expansion of low-wage jobs lacking fringe benefits, and the polarization between high-wage and low-wage occupations, higher education is even more critical for social advancement in the labor market today. Furthermore, the adverse effects of deindustrialization on inner-city black employment continue to be a major problem.

By and large, the conditions described in *The Truly Disadvantaged* are not qualitatively different twenty-five years later, even though when I wrote the book urban conditions had been in decline for roughly fifteen years (i.e. since the early 1970s). There are still major racial differences in concentrated poverty. Although the country experienced dramatic declines in concentrated poverty in the 1990s, including declines in urban black neighborhoods, the substantial decreases seems to have been blips of the economic boom in the 1990s rather than permanent trends.¹

Unemployment and individual poverty rates have increased since 2000, and there is every reason to assume that concentrated poverty rates are on the increase again, although complete data on concentrated poverty will become available only after a more thorough analysis of the 2010 census.

The problems of joblessness have continued and have even gotten worse for low-skilled blacks. The racial employment disparities have persisted. The
black/white unemployment ratio seemed essentially fixed at 2.0 or greater, which means that even through economic upturns and downturns the black unemployment rate has been at least twice that of the white unemployment rate—although during this recent economic crisis the rate dipped below 2.0, because of the sharp increase in joblessness among whites.

There have also been some important changes that should be noted. There is greater class polarization among African Americans. The out-migration of middle-class blacks from the inner city continues, but more have moved to the suburbs, including suburban black neighborhoods. And a growing number of poor blacks now live in the suburbs rather than the cities, many in older inner-ring suburbs that feature poverty rates approximating those in the inner cities.

Immigration has been very consequential in reshaping cities and urban labor markets, especially low-wage labor markets. Incarceration has sharply increased in the twenty-five years since The Truly Disadvantaged was published and has had profound consequences for the urban black poor. There is of course the Great Recession and its aftermath—the current period of high unemployment, long-term joblessness, and foreclosures. These changes notwithstanding, the basic arguments in The Truly Disadvantaged are as relevant and important today as they were when the book was published in 1987.

As I pointed out at the Harvard conference last fall when I began writing the book in the mid-eighties I was motivated to explain the sharp increase in concentrated poverty in black inner-city neighborhoods between 1970 and 1980. I argued that this increase could not be explained by purely racial factors, even
though the current black inner-city ghetto is one of the legacies of historical racial subjugation in the United States.

I regret that I did not make this point clear because even today many people interpret *The Truly Disadvantaged* as denying the importance of race in the formation of the ghetto. However, the book is not about factors that led to the formation of the ghetto, which obviously implicates race. Rather, the book was designed to explain the sharp increase in concentrated urban poverty after 1970, an increase, I argued, that was mainly due to fundamental changes in the economy and the outmigration of working-class and middle-class blacks from many inner-city neighborhoods to other neighborhoods in the city and the to the suburbs, leaving behind a higher proportion of poor families in these neighborhoods.

In further elaborating on this thesis, I developed a theory of the social transformation of the inner city, which highlighted the effects of growing concentrated poverty and social isolation on individuals and families, effects that were exacerbated by changes in the economy.

As some of you know, *The Truly Disadvantaged* created a paradigm that led to hundreds of empirical studies, across social science disciplines, in response to my arguments, particularly my arguments dealing with the causes and effects of Increased concentrated poverty. These included studies on neighborhood effects, economic restructuring and spatial mismatch, persistent poverty and depopulation, social isolation and concentration effects, and the male-marriageable pool hypothesis.
Following the recent conference at Harvard, James Quane, one of my colleagues, stated that it’s amazing how my short book stimulated so many major research topics. And I was reminded of President Clinton’s remarks on *The Truly Disadvantaged* at his economic summit conference in Little Rock, Arkansas shortly before he took office in 1992.

In a panel discussion chaired by President Clinton—a panel that included myself, Hillary Clinton, and several others—President Clinton briefly discussed and highly recommended *The Truly Disadvantaged*, and then said that it was only 187 pages of text, so it won’t take long to read. And the first thing that I did when I returned home from the summit conference was to pull the book off the shelf, and yes Clinton was right, the first edition of *The Truly Disadvantaged* is only 187 pages of text.

However, despite the succinct coverage of topics *The Truly Disadvantaged* did leave researchers with a lot to chew on. And today, I would like to briefly discuss some of the important research on neighborhood effects, a topic that received a good deal of attention from scholars across social science disciplines.

The concept of neighborhood effects refers to the impact of various social, cultural, and demographic neighborhood conditions on the residents. And the research on neighborhood effects suggests that concentrated neighborhood poverty increases the likelihood of social isolation from mainstream institutions, joblessness, dropping out of school, lower educational achievement, involvement in crime, unsuccessful behavioral development and delinquency among adolescents, non-marital childbirth, and unsuccessful family management.⁴
In general the research reveals that concentrated neighborhood poverty adversely affects one’s chances in life beginning in infancy and lasting well into adulthood. However, some scholars have been concerned that these studies reached conclusions about neighborhood effects based on data that do not address the problem of self-selection bias, a term used in research to describe the effect of people grouping themselves together based on common characteristics. These scholars argue that the effects we attribute to poor neighborhoods may instead be caused by the characteristics of families and individuals who end up living there.

In other words, they feel that disadvantaged neighborhoods might not be the cause of poor outcomes, but rather that families with the weakest job-related skills, with the lowest awareness of and concern for the effects of the local environment on their children’s social development, with attitudes that hinder social mobility, and with the most burdensome personal problems are simply more likely to live in these types of neighborhoods.

For example, as the economists John Quigley and Steven Raphael pointed out, “in interpreting . . . data on the isolation of low-income workers from job concentrations it is likely that those with weaker attachments to the labor force will have chosen to locate in places where employment access is low [e.g., inner-city ghetto neighborhoods]. This is simply because monthly rents are lower in these places.”

Indeed, some scholars have maintained that neighborhood effects disappear when researchers use appropriate statistical techniques to account for self-selection bias. However, the issue of individual self-selection into neighborhoods was
addressed in the publication of the research on the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) experiment, a housing pilot program, undertaken by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) between 1994 and 1998.

The MTO experiment was framed as a test of the arguments presented in my book *The Truly Disadvantaged* about whether neighborhoods matter in the lives of poor individuals. HUD’s MTO demonstration program conducted a lottery that awarded housing vouchers to families living in public housing developments in high-poverty neighborhoods in five cities—Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.

Over 4,600 Families entered the lottery, thus indicating their desire to move, and were randomly assigned to one of three groups—one was awarded housing vouchers that could be used to rent in the private market in any area, one was awarded housing vouchers that were restricted to private rentals in low-poverty neighborhoods, and one did not receive either voucher in the lottery and was therefore treated as a control group to be compared with the other two groups.

The MTO interim evaluation studies were considered superior to other research on neighborhood effects because they were based on data from a randomized experimental design that eliminated the self-selection bias “that had made it difficult to clearly determine the association between living in poor neighborhoods and individual outcomes.”

In other words, by comparing randomly selected groups with the same socio-economic characteristics—those who received vouchers, which enabled them to move—the experimental groups—and those that did not receive vouchers—the
control group, the MTO studies effectively removed individual self selection as an explanation of the findings.

The reports and publications on the interim evaluation, which was finalized in 2003, provided mixed evidence for neighborhood effects when comparing the group whose MTO vouchers were restricted to low-poverty areas with the group that did not receive vouchers. On the one hand, during the five-year period following random assignment the MTO movers who relocated to low-poverty areas were more likely to experience improvements in mental health and less likely to be obese, and girls experienced a significant reduction in “risky behavior” (that is, drinking, taking drugs, engaging in sex, and so on).

On the other hand, research investigators found no evidence of an impact on employment rates and earnings, or of any marked improvement in the educational or physical health outcomes of children and young men. These mixed results have led some, including reporters, to question whether there really are enduring negative effects of living in poor segregated neighborhoods. And they seem to reinforce the view among some scholars that when studies effectively control for self-selection bias, neighborhood effects are weak or disappear.

But, one of the criticisms of the MTO interim evaluations is that they really did not address the problem of the long-term effects of living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. However, in the most recent study of the effects of the MTO, the study published last fall in the journal Science, the researchers were also able to gauge the longer-term effects (10 to 15 years) of moving from high poverty to
lower-poverty neighborhoods, and these effects significantly improved mental health and subjective well being (i.e., happiness).

More specifically, although the finding on improvements in subjective well being is certainly not surprising, when one considers the dangerous-distressed neighborhoods from which many of the voucher holders migrated—neighborhoods with high violent crime rates and other rates of social dislocation—the finding is nonetheless important because it provides rigorous scientific evidence for the assumptions that many of us have made about the effects of living in distressed neighborhoods on mental health and subjective well being.

Indeed, many of the voucher holders expressed feeling of relief because of their move to less distressed neighborhoods. However, the researchers also found that although the residents perceived their new neighborhood on average to be safer, moving to these neighborhoods did not significantly affect economic self-sufficiency (e.g., employment and welfare receipt), a finding that once again raises questions about the ultimate power of neighborhood effects. This finding was not really surprising to those of us familiar with the design of the MTO experiment.

Although the research on the MTO experiment is rigorous, there are serious issues with the design of the experiment that limit the extent to which one can generalize about neighborhood effects on issues such as economic self-sufficiency. First of all, many MTO movers, who experience difficulties in moving and obtaining apartments in areas of lower poverty, relocated to neighborhoods that were not significantly different from the ones they left. For example, three-fifths of MTO
families entered highly segregated black neighborhoods. Such neighborhoods tend to be considerably less advantaged than integrated areas.

Harvard sociologist Robert Sampson analyzed the neighborhood attainment of all Chicago MTO families and found that after approximately seven years, although the voucher winners resided in neighborhoods with poverty rates somewhat lower than the neighborhoods of control families, both groups clustered in segregated black neighborhoods that were still considerably poorer than what an overwhelming majority of Americans will ever experience (neighborhoods with poverty rates of roughly 30 percent).

Furthermore, as pointed out by the economists John Quigley and Steven Raphael, the experiment did not improve accessibility to employment opportunities for MTO movers, because their new neighborhoods were no closer to areas of employment growth. And Lawrence Katz, the Harvard economist and one of the co-authors of the article in Science, told the New York Times that “the preference for educated workers [in this country] was so strong that changing neighborhoods did not do much to improve job options for the participants, who were mostly African American women without college education.”

For all of these reasons, these neighborhoods were highly unlikely to provide the resources for significant improvements in economic sufficiency, despite being safer and less distressed.

Finally, the adults who entered the program had been exposed all their lives to the effects of severe concentrated disadvantaged, and no matter how long they
are followed in their new neighborhoods, the effects of those earlier years are not easily erased.

This I take to be the most serious problem with the MTO experiment—namely, it does a poor job of capturing the long-term cumulative effects of concentrated poverty, especially concentrated poverty in racially segregated neighborhoods.

In this connection, it is important to highlight recent longitudinal studies that do capture the problem of the long-term cumulative effects of concentrated poverty. And I would like to take a few minutes to highlight some of the important findings from this research.

In an impressive study that analyzes data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) with methods designed to measure intergenerational economic mobility, Patrick Sharkey found that “more than 70% of black children who are raised in the poorest quarter of American neighborhoods will continue to live in the poorest quarter of neighborhoods as adults.”

He also found that since the 1970s, a majority of black families have resided in the poorest quarter of neighborhoods in *consecutive generations*, compared to only 7 percent of white families. Thus he concluded that the disadvantages of living in poor black neighborhoods, like the advantages of living in affluent white neighborhoods, are in large measure inherited.

Accordingly, this persistence of neighborhood inequality raises serious questions about studies on neighborhood effects. Many of these studies substantially underestimate the racial inequality in neighborhood environments,
because they use a single point in time, generation, or measure of neighborhood poverty or income.\textsuperscript{11} Whereas living in the most impoverished neighborhoods is a temporary state for white families, most black families who lived in the poorest neighborhoods in the 1970s continue to live in such neighborhoods today. Sharkey suggested therefore that the focus of the research on neighborhood effects might be shifted to an examination of how the effect of living in poor neighborhoods over two or more generations differs from short-term residence in such neighborhoods.

We should also consider another important study that Sharkey co-authored with senior investigator Robert Sampson and another colleague, Steven Raudenbush, that examined the durable effects of concentrated poverty on black children’s verbal ability.\textsuperscript{12} They studied a representative sample of 750 African American children, ages six to twelve, who were growing up in the city of Chicago in 1995, and followed them anywhere they moved in the United States for up to seven years.

The children were given a reading examination and vocabulary test at three different periods. Their study shows “that residing in a severely disadvantaged neighborhood cumulatively impedes the development of academically relevant verbal ability in children,” so much so that the effects linger on even if they leave these neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{13}

Children’s verbal ability certainly has consequences for school performances, including the completion of high school. Geoffrey T. Wodtke, David J. Harding, and Felix Elwert’s important recent study used the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) to examine the effects of long-term exposure to disadvantaged
neighborhoods on high school graduation. They tracked 4,154 children by measuring their neighborhood context once each year from age one to seventeen and found that continuous exposure to disadvantaged neighborhoods—featuring high rates of poverty, unemployment, single-headed households, and welfare receipt, as well as few well-educated adults—throughout “the entire childhood life course has a devastating impact on the chances of graduating from high school.”

The authors stated that their findings are “consistent with Wilson’s foundational arguments regarding the consequences of spatially concentrated poverty, which motivated nearly all recent studies of neighborhood effects.”

It is important to emphasize that these studies suggest that neighborhood effects are not solely structural. Among the effects of living in segregated neighborhoods over extended periods is repeated exposure to cultural traits that emanate from or are the products of racial exclusion.

As Patrick Sharkey points out “when we consider that the vast majority of black families living in America’s poorest neighborhoods come from families that have lived in similar environments for generations . . . continuity of the neighborhood environment, in addition to continuity of individual economic status, may be especially relevant to the study of cultural patterns among disadvantaged populations.”

Thus, in addition to structural influences, exposure to different cultural influences in the neighborhood environment overtime has to be taken into account if one is to really appreciate and explain the divergent social outcomes of human groups. And the two are often inextricably linked.
The ongoing social science debate over the role of social structure versus culture in shaping the social outcomes of African Americans has really done little to educate Americans on the importance of a relationship between structural inequities and culture.

Ideological inclinations often predict the position one takes. Whereas Liberals tend to focus on structural conditions, especially racialist structural factors such as segregation and discrimination, conservatives tend to emphasize cultural factors, such as individual attitudes and behavior.

Over the years I have reflected on this debate. However, it wasn’t until I attended a panel discussion at the University of Chicago in 1995 on Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray’s controversial book, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class in American Life*, that I saw the most compelling reason for combining cultural arguments with structural arguments.

In *The Bell Curve* Herrnstein and Murray found differences in the test scores of blacks and whites even after they included social environmental factors such as family education, father’s occupation, and household income in their analyses. They used this difference in test scores to support the argument that the social and economic outcomes of blacks and whites differ at least in part because of genetic endowment—a position that suggests that African Americans are innately inferior. To my mind, none of the panelists gathered that day at the University of Chicago provided a satisfactory rebuttal.

And I left the discussion thinking that Herrnstein and Murray’s argument for the importance of group differences in cognitive ability was based on an incredibly
weak measure of the social environment. In other words, simply controlling for differences in family education, father’s occupation and household income hardly captures differences in cumulative environmental experiences. Herrnstein and Murray did not provide measures of the cumulative and often durable effects of race, including the effects of prolonged residence in racially segregated neighborhoods.

Unfortunately the cumulative structural and cultural effects of concentrated poverty, revealed in the more recent studies that I just discussed, had not been adequately captured in the quantitative research on race and poverty that dominated debates at the time *The Bell Curve* was published.

Paradoxically, although liberal social scientists rejected the book’s “inferiority thesis,” they were in effect playing into the hands of Herrnstein and Murray by not conducting research that would illuminate all the dimensions of the social environment. By ignoring the impact of culture and how it interacts with structural forces, they were not able to capture all the important features of the social environment.

Culture provides tools (habits, skills and styles) and creates constraints (restrictions or limits on outlooks and behavior) in patterns of social interaction. These constraints include cultural frames (shared group constructions of reality) developed over time through the processes of *meaning making* (shared views of how the world work) and *decision making* (choices that reflect shared definitions of how the world works).
If culture is the sharing of outlooks and modes of behavior that are sustained through social interaction within a community and often transmitted from generation to generation, then patterns of behavior in racially segregated inner-city neighborhoods often represent particular cultural traits that emanate from or are the products of racial exclusion.

Take, for example, repeated experiences of discrimination and disrespect that a lot of blacks share in common. Parents in segregated communities who have had such experiences may transmit to children, though the process of socialization, a set of beliefs about what to expect from life and how one should respond to life circumstances.

In other words, children may be taught norms of resignation—they observe the behavior of adults and learn the “appropriate” action or response in different situations independently of their own direct experiences. In the process, children may acquire an inclination to interpret the way the world works that reflects a strong sense that other members of society disrespect them because they are black.

Obviously, some of these traits may impede successful maneuvering in the larger society. Let me provide a few other examples. Research by the sociologist Elijah Anderson, in his book *Code of the Streets*, shows that in a context of limited opportunities for self-actualization and success, some individuals in poor segregated communities, most notably young black males, devise alternative ways to gain respect that emphasizes manly pride, ranging from simply wearing brand-name clothing to have the “right look” and talking the right way, to developing a predatory attitude toward neighbors. Anderson calls this the code of the street.
A related informal but regulated pattern of behavior was describe by Sudhir Venkatesh in his study of the underground economy in ghetto neighborhoods. Like Anderson in his effort to explain the emergence of the code of the street, Venkatesh, in his monograph, *Off the Books: the Underground Economy of the Urban Poor*, argues that the code of shady dealing is a response to circumstances in inner-city ghetto neighborhoods, where joblessness is high and opportunities for advancement are severely limited.

Both Anderson and Venkatesh clearly argue that these cultural codes ultimately hinder integration into the boarder society and are therefore dysfunctional. In other words, they contribute to the perpetuation of poverty. In this connection, Venkatesh maintains that adherence to the code of shady dealings impedes social mobility. The “underground economy enables people to survive but can lead to alienation from the wider world” he states. For example, none of the work experience accrued in the informal economy can be listed on resume for job searches in the formal labor market, and time invested in underground work reduces time devoted to accumulating skills or contacts for legitimate employment.

And research by Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas, in their book, *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*, reveals that poor inner-city women who have children out-of-wedlock often feel that their future would be even bleaker without children, so they look forward to having children even when they are not married. But they fail to recognize the disadvantages that will ultimately affect their children's chances in life.
Accordingly, to fully explain or understand the divergent social and economic outcomes of racial groups, in addition to structural influences, cultural influences in the environment have to be taken into account if one is to truly appreciate and explain the divergent social outcomes of human groups.

However, I hasten to point out that even though culture matters, I would have to say it does not matter nearly as much as social structure. From a historical perspective, it is hard to overstate the importance of racialist structural factors that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. fought so hard against. Aside from the enduring effects of slavery, Jim Crow segregation, public school segregation, legalized discrimination, residential segregation, the FHA’s redlining of black neighborhoods in the 1940s and 1950s, the construction of public housing projects in poor black neighborhoods, employer discrimination and other racial acts and processes, there is the impact of political, economic and policy decisions that were at least partly influenced by race.

In contrasting the combined impact of the structural factors with cultural factors, it would be very hard to argue that the cultural factors in the black community are equally as important in determining life chances or creating racial group outcomes. For example, if one attempts to explain rapid changes in social and economic outcomes in the inner city, there is little evidence that cultural forces have the power of changes in the economy. We only need to consider the impact of the economic boom on the reduction of concentrated racial poverty in the 1990s to illustrate this point.

Policymakers who are dedicated to combating the problems of race and poverty and who recognize the importance of structural inequities face an important challenge—namely, how to generate political support from Americans who tend to place far more
emphasis on cultural factors and individual behavior than on structural impediments in explaining social and economic outcomes.

After all, beliefs that attribute joblessness and poverty to individual shortcomings do not engender strong support for social programs to end inequality. Nonetheless, in addressing the problem of structural inequities it would not be wise to leave the impression in public discussions that cultural problems do not matter. Indeed, proposals to address racial inequality should reflect awareness of the inextricable link between aspects of social structure and culture.

Public Policy Responses

Let me conclude by discussing whether the response of the policy community has been sufficient to the challenges posed by concentrated poverty. If we focus only on Congress, the answer is obvious. However, in the time remaining, I would like to restrict this question to a discussion of the actions of the Obama Administration.

Quite frankly, I think that Obama’s programs have prevented poverty, including concentrated poverty, from rapidly rising, considering the terrible economy. For example, Obama’s stimulus package (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) earmarked $80 billion dollars for low-income Americans, which included such things as an extension of unemployment benefits, a temporary increase in the earned income-tax credit, and substantial additional funds for Food Stamps (what we now call Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). It also
included nearly $4 billion in job training and work force enhancement programs and two billion for neighborhood stabilization efforts.

Moreover, I consider the Health Care Legislation as an antipoverty program. Over the long term the health care legislation will significantly benefit lower-income Americans. Indeed the share of Americans who are uninsured declined between 2010 and 2011. And this improvement was in part due to a provision of the Health Care Bill that allows children to remain on their parents’ health plan until they reach age 26. Over the long term the health care bill will have a huge positive impact on blacks and Latinos, two groups who are seriously underrepresented among those with private health insurance.

Furthermore, Obama worked out a deal with Republicans to address the impact of the recession on lower-income Americans, a negotiation, which, although resulting in an extension of the Bush-era tax cuts, led to a 13-month extension of federal unemployment benefits for more than seven million jobless workers, as well as the continuation of programs that benefit the poor and working classes, including (a) the earned-income tax credit, (b) the refundable component of the Child-Tax-Credit, and (d) the 2 percent reduction in the Social Security Payroll tax for one year, all of which put more money in the hands of ordinary Americans.

Now when you consider how these policies fit in with the broader sweep of policy changes over the last few decades, one has to acknowledge that the legislation enacted was in response to the extraordinary economic situation that now plagues this country. Taken together, they far exceed any legislation beneficial to low-
income Americans passed during either the Carter, Ford, Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Clinton, or George W. Bush administrations.

In addition to this legislation, much of it in response to the Great Recession and continuing economic challenges, the Obama administration has also promoted some noteworthy programs aimed directly at addressing concentrated poverty. I specifically have in mind two programs—the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Choice Neighborhood program and the Obama’s administration’s Promise Neighborhood program, which is patterned after the Harlem Children’s Zone—a 97 block laboratory in Central Harlem that combines two reform-oriented charter schools with a web of community services designed for children from birth to college graduation to provide a supportive and positive environment outside the schools.

The Choice Neighborhood Program, which in effect is designed to replace HOPE VI—launched in the early 1990s to help overcome the adverse effects of public housing projects in blighted neighborhoods—goes beyond the rehabilitation of physically deteriorated public housing neighborhoods, which was the focus of HOPE VI, and includes comprehensive neighborhood investments ranging from early childhood education to employment, safety, and transportation components.

Under Obama’s Promise Neighborhood initiative hundreds of organizations across the country applied for planning grants. And, in 2011, 20 were awarded between $300,000 and $500,000. These planning funds are intended to help communities to better position themselves when applying for the full Promise Neighborhood implementation grants. The budget for Promise Neighborhoods has
been severely cut by the current Congress, but the program is indicative of the Obama Administration’s awareness of the problems of concentrated poverty.

Now given all of this action during Obama’s first term, is there any solid reason to feel that he will not attempt to address some of the problems of concentrated poverty that I have discussed in this lecture and in *The Truly Disadvantaged* during his second administration? My answer, partly based on a meeting I had with Obama officials at the White House last spring, is a resounding “yes.” Just think what the prospects for poor people would have been if Romney had been elected President. Thank you.

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**Endnotes**


Sharkey, “Intergenerational Transmission of Context.”

Ibid.


Ibid., 846. Sampson and his colleagues created a composite measure of verbal ability based on results from two widely used tests given to their subjects—the Wide Range Achievement Test reading examination and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children vocabulary test.


Ibid., 731. Wodtke, Harding, and Elwert stated, “By measuring neighborhood context throughout childhood, we are able to isolate the total effect of
sustained exposure. Second, this study draws on novel methods that were specifically developed to resolve the difficult statistical problems related to dynamic selection into time-varying treatments” (ibid.).

16 Ibid., 732.