

REIGNITING THE FLAME

By Mark E. Bowser

The American dream has always been about being your best, going for our dreams, and reaching for the stars. But lately, this hasn't been the case. For the last 30 years or so, the liberals have been in the business of creating dependence, severing the self-esteem, and stomping on the American dream. I am talking about The Great Society or otherwise known as welfare. Our welfare system is not only a drain on the American economy but is a clogging up the artery leading to the American spirit.

In the next few moments, you and I are going to discuss a different path. A path we as a nation need to unite behind. I am going to talk about four specific changes we need to make to our welfare system. Changes I believe will reignite the flame of the American spirit and the American success story.

1. THE BALLS IN OUR COURT! ARE WE GOING TO HIT IT? Whose responsibility is it for the poor? Is it the government? Is it us? The answer is us. Not us as a government but us as neighbors, family, friends, and churches. You may not like what you are about to hear, but the truth of the matter is that when Uncle Sam began trying to pick up the tab for the poor, then the rest of us got lazy. What happened to neighbor helping neighbor in time of need? What happened to family taking care of its own? What happened to being with your best friend through thick and thin? Sure, these things still happen but not enough. **WE MUST HIT THE BALL AGAIN!** It is in our court.

4. INCOME SUPPORT AND TRAINING. I am not against the government helping out people in need. What I am against is the government creating an entire new class of people. The government has created the Dependent Class. We have families with generations on welfare. This is ridiculous and destructive. We have people collecting welfare (mind you yours and my tax money) who don't want a job. They would rather sit home and mooch off you and me like a leech around our necks. This is wrong and the government has to take part of the responsibility for teaching this. Individuals have to take responsibility for their attitudes and actions. The government has begun to see the errors of its ways and is starting to come up with new ideas. What I suggest is that the government does give limited funds to people in need to help them during an interim period so they can get back on their feet. We also must help pick them up, dust them off and put them on the right track through training and job placement.

3. MENTORSHIP. Another big part of success training is mentorship. I have mentors in my life who have helped teach me what I need to know to succeed. A mentor is someone who is willing to give his or her time, knowledge, contacts, etc...To help someone else succeed in life. Some programs are already in place such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters. I am also familiar with a retired executive program. These retired business leaders help the next generation follow in their footsteps. We need to help connect people with mentors. We need to be mentors! Is there someone in your life who you could take under your wing?

4. LETTING THEM FLY WITHOUT A SAFETY NET. Eventually every mother bird has to urge her young out of the nest. They must learn to fly on their own if they are to truly succeed. Now, that doesn't mean we aren't there to help and support them but it does mean we give them the chance to succeed or fail. We eventually have to cut off the apron strings and let them move out of the house. In other words, we have to get them off welfare. We have to quit sending them a monthly check. You might be saying, "Mark, this is harsh!" Maybe you're right, but we have to have tough love. The mother bird believes in her children so much that she won't allow them to stay in the nest. We must do the same if we truly want to help people. It's hard but it is necessary if we truly love them.

I believe this is the direction we must pursue if we want to reignite the flame. In closing, let me remind us all of the words of Alex Hailey, "The way to succeed is never quit. That's it. But really be humble about it.... You start out lowly and humble and you carefully try to learn an accretion of little things that help you get there."