

Set Up For Success

How Not To Live In Poverty

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In my commentary, I'd like to follow Mike Ford's lead in aiming my commentary today toward young people. The rest of you can listen in and see how well you did.

These days, it is cool/hip/woke (whichever your generation is) to advocate for socialism. Many of the Democrat candidates for President in 2020 are campaigning on socialist policies like the Green New Deal and Medicare for All and some of the other ones that have been proffered for consumption here in election season. Teachers in high school and college—probably a lot of them in college—often have a socialist bent or even a hard-left communist bent, and they are the ones who are teaching our children about economics. Many of the young people are voting for socialism at the ballot box.

Not all economists these days are socialists. Two of the best economists, in my estimation, are Drs. Thomas Sowell of Stanford University and Walter E. Williams of George Mason University. Both of them, I believe, started out as Leftists—socialists—and ended up taking a hard turn right. If you want to get a quick grasp of their economic stance, all you need to know is that they both have been guests or fill-in hosts on The Rush Limbaugh Program multiple times. They are free-market capitalists.

Dr. Williams wrote the following, “A Simple Formula for Avoiding Poverty,” in his syndicated column published on July 31, 2018:

Socialist Sen. Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign garnered considerable appeal from millennials. These young people see socialism as superior to free market capitalism. Capitalism doesn't do well in popularity polls despite the fact that it has eliminated many of mankind's worst problems, such as pestilence and gross hunger and poverty.

One of the reasons capitalism doesn't fare well in polls is that it is always evaluated against the nonexistent, non-realizable utopias of socialism or communism. Any earthly system, when compared with a utopia, will not fare well.

Indeed, socialism sounds good but, when practiced, leads to disaster. Those disasters have been experienced in countries such as the USSR, China, most African nations and, most recently, Venezuela. When these disasters are pointed out, the excuse is inadequacies of socialist leaders rather than socialism itself.

For the ordinary person, free market capitalism, with all of its warts, is superior to any system yet devised to deal with our everyday needs and desires.

So, that is his opinion, and he has had 60 years or so of his life in the economic field to have that opinion.

But we still have poverty, don't we, even though we are kind of a capitalist system in this country? We still have inequality. We still have injustice. None of these, though, are capitalism's fault. Instead, they are ethical/moral failures that economic philosophies tend not to deal with. Despite its own shortcomings—and it does have some—capitalism provides the freedom, both personally and

economically, for the *individual* to make his own decisions and produce his own wealth. Let's put that up against socialism on the other end of the spectrum. Socialism gives the state/government control over wealth. It makes the decisions for its own purposes, and distributes the wealth as it deems fit. As we have seen in most socialist or communist nations, the wealth goes to the rulership and not to the people.

We've had this introduction—obviously a long one, like I like to do—so, what does a person—particularly, a young person—do to keep his nose above water financially in a system like ours?

Dr. Williams has a four-point, practical strategy: Complete high school; get a job, any kind of a job; get married before having children; and be a law-abiding citizen.

That is pretty simple, isn't it? Four very quick, very simple, very basic points. Complete high school; get a job, any kind of a job; get married before having children; and be a law-abiding citizen. I think that is within the grasp of just about everybody on Planet Earth.

His points highlight four fundamental principles of successful living: education, work, relationships, and personal responsibility. That is really not all that difficult. Those are things that you're expected to have somewhat of a grasp on, and be able to use and to build. It should be obvious that, if a person covers these basic things, he should—barring disaster or other unforeseen circumstances—have what it takes to build a successful life. Maybe even a comfortable life. Maybe even a life that others will want to emulate. The person who does these things may not be a millionaire, grace the cover of a magazine, win a Super Bowl, or change the world in any way, but he has at least set himself up not to fail.

That's the problem with those who are impoverished. They will likely not admit it. If you sat him down in a chair and said, "What was the cause of your poverty and these problems you have?" he would certainly not point the finger at himself. These days, the finger is pointed at society, or pointed at The Man. Oftentimes in this country, it is "the white man," or "old white men," or "the government." Very infrequently does the person say, "Well, I messed up."

Most of the time, even though they won't admit it, they have set themselves up for failure. They have fashioned the stick with which they are beat. Many of them drop out of school and thus can't get or can't keep a job. Many have children out of wedlock and thus they have no help—physically, emotionally, or financially—in raising their kids. And too often, such people steal or do drugs or get involved in other illegal activities that incur heavy fines or jailtime and a black mark on their records. Then they have a hard time getting a job, keeping a job, finding a wife, and all those other things. It just goes in this vicious circle. Those things are hard to rebound from.

Dr. Williams advice is sound:

If you want to set yourself up not to fail, and perhaps to succeed quite well, complete your education—and continue to learn as you get older, not just for financial growth but also for personal growth.

Find as good a job as you can and stick with it. Stay there, make money, and work hard to move up the ladder and up the pay scale. People are not loyal these days, and employers love loyal employees, and they will reward them.

Find a good man or woman, marry him or her, and THEN start a family. Do it in the proper order. God intends sex to happen only within marriage, and when it happens before marriage or with someone not your spouse, big problems ensue—and not just financially. It affects every facet of life.

Live within the law, and not just the big laws; live within the little laws, too. I'm talking about traffic laws. People say that the drug laws should be done away with—live within those too. And especially, live within God's laws. They are there to provide boundaries within which we can have fulfilling, comfortable lives. Things start to get tense and a little iffy once we start getting toward the boundaries and we start pushing those boundaries. We need to be inside them to make sure that our lives are not filled with the presence of police, judges, and those sorts of things. When you break those laws, even if you think they are unfair, you are just penalizing yourself. What's a law supposed to do, but to tell you what is right and wrong? And then there is always a penalty that will hit you right between the eyes if you are not careful.

So, young people—old people—cover these bases, and the odds of a satisfying life skyrocket in your favor. Why don't you give it a try?