

The Thurgood Marshall Plan

Renewing America's Promise To Our Urban Centers



*Creating Sustainable Economic Opportunities with the
American Renewal and Reinvestment Act*

Proposal of the DuBois Bunche Center at Medgar Evers College





“The measure of a country’s greatness is its’ ability to retain compassion in times of crisis...” - Thurgood Marshall-

The late Justice **Thurgood Marshall** is widely considered one of the major architects of Americas Modern Civil Rights and Human Rights covenants. Many of the rights and opportunities celebrated by African Americans and others can largely be attributed to the work of this great jurist.

Marshall was born following the sunset of the aborted reconstruction period, an era that revealed the calcification of institutionalized racism within the labor markets, capital markets and education system of the United States.

Ironically Marshall’s birth also occurred during the dawn of the 20th Century Civil Rights Movement. **Thurgood Marshall** drew his first breath on this planet a few months after the launching of the **Niagara Movement** and a few months before the founding of the **NAACP**, an organization which would become the future vessel for his landmark legal victories on behalf of equal opportunity.

The recent election of **the first African American President of the United States** calls upon the advocates for expanded justice to acknowledge that this historic victory is in part a result of **Thurgood Marshall’s** lasting legacy and transformative impact on the social history of the United States.

Indeed, **the election of Barack Obama occurred during the centennial birthday of Justice Marshall. The inauguration of President Barack Obama coincides with the 100th anniversary of the founding of the NAACP.** The man and the organization are representatives of all the icons for justice and equal opportunity who dared to believe and to conceive of the historic inauguration that took place on January 20, 2009. Ten decades following the birth of the 20th Century Civil Rights Movement and the birth of Thurgood Marshall, the heirs of this **historic** movement are challenged to imagine a new future.

Today those who believe in justice and equal opportunity are compelled to ask the question **“Where do we go from here?”**

After progressively harvesting some of the gifts of equality and justice that were bequeathed to us by the patron saints of the Freedom Movement, we now ponder “What would Thurgood do?”

The Dubois Bunche Center believes that the election of **Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States** necessitates a renewed commitment to develop new laws and policies that will depose the last vestiges of inequality and systemic racism within U.S. civil society. **These actions will be in keeping with the legacy of Thurgood Marshall.**

While we acknowledge the evolution of equality within our nation’s body politic our popular culture and our public spaces we also observe the **longstanding obstacles to economic justice** that continue to beleaguer people of color and to diminish Americas promise.

The DuBois Bunche Center has concluded that a priority for our contemporary human’s rights movement must be **the development of a comprehensive program of action** that will save the African American community and other people of color from the crippling impact of asset and wage disparities.

The day after Barack Obama was sworn into office the unemployment rate for African American men and Latino men in New York hovered near fifty percent. Following President Obama’s inauguration many African American owned businesses were crippled as a result of the global financial crisis, and the policies of the previous president which failed to support African American businesses.

The DuBois Bunche Center believes that the resolution of this crisis must be embraced as a moral imperative for all advocates of justice and equal opportunity.

In this spirit we offer a proposal entitled the **Thurgood Marshall Plan an initiative that complements President Barack Obama’s stimulus recovery program**, by creating new localized systems for employment opportunities and business development within urban centers. The **Thurgood Marshall Plan** creates a model for economic recovery that is grounded in the values of **equity and economic justice**. To this end we respectfully urge our State lawmakers, City lawmakers and all advocates for economic justice to embrace the core principles inherent in the following **Thurgood Marshall Plan**:

CORE PRINCIPLES OF THE PLAN...

A Plan that Celebrates Sustainable Economic Opportunities

Named in honor of the late Thurgood Marshall; the plan calls upon New York State and New York City lawmakers to create a state and local implementation program for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that will reverse the negative impact of wage disparities and asset disparities that harm African American and Latino neighborhoods within New York City.

The Thurgood Marshall Plan is a workforce development and business development initiative that encourages State and City lawmakers and advocates for economic justice to insure that appropriations from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will enhance sustainable economic opportunities in urban neighborhoods.

A Plan that Recognizes the Disproportionate Unemployment and Business Development Trends in Urban Centers

Prior to the collapse of the global financial markets and the emergence of the U.S. recession, the **New York Chapter of the National Urban League** issued a report entitled “**The State of Black New York**” which documented that the unemployment rate among African American and Latino males was nearly fifty percent (50%) throughout New York City.

In 2004 the **New York City Council** Commissioned and released a ground breaking report, authored by the **DuBois Bunche Center and the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College** which assessed the status of African American and Latino businesses in New York City.

The report known as the **Disparity Study** documented how discriminatory contracting and bidding practices by New York City government had undermined the stability of African American and Latino businesses while contributing to asset disparities in neighborhoods predominated by people of color.

The Thurgood Marshall Plan calls upon State and City lawmakers to develop policies for the local implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that acknowledges these disparities and guarantees outcomes that advance the principles of **equity and sustainable opportunities**.

A Plan that Guarantees Sustainable Economic Opportunities with Public Dollars

The **Thurgood Marshall Plan** calls upon State and City lawmakers to formulate local policies that will mandate that tax levy dollars from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act; will help grow the African American and Latino working class through sustainable employment and business development.

Specifically, State and City lawmakers should develop a local implementation program that links public spending to quantifiable outcomes that would increase employment and grow business development within neighborhoods predominated by African Americans and Latinos.

A Plan that Promotes Economic Recovery for Urban Neighborhoods

State and City lawmakers should replicate the Urban Sustainability initiative that is currently coordinated by the leadership of **The New York City Council Committee on Community Development**, The Mayor's Office of Comprehensive Neighborhood Economic Development, The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Plan N.Y.C.

Specifically, resources for the short term and long term goals of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act should be delivered through a neighborhood development program that empowers local actors to engage in sustainable green rehabilitation, adaptive reuse and new construction practices, including broadband telecommunications. This neighborhood development program should be identified as **Recovery Neighborhoods**. These **Recovery Neighborhoods** would emphasize smart growth in the areas of green spaces, transportation, workforce development and "minority" business development and sustainable community economic development.

A Plan that Encourages Education Reform

The **Thurgood Marshall Plan** recognizes that the largest human service component of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act are organized around education and workforce development initiatives.

In this spirit the **Marshall Plan** urges State and City lawmakers to create local implementation policies that will harness the resources from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for a fundamental reform of the traditional vocational technical education that is provided to students within our urban neighborhoods.

Resources for school innovation, subsidized training, education technology and the renovation or new construction of school buildings should be orchestrated to create innovative learning models that will provide students with sustainable employment in a new economy.

A Plan that Embraces Transparent Oversight

The **Thurmond Marshall Plan** urges State and City lawmakers to protect the taxpayer's investment in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act by enacting State and City laws that provide oversight, transparency and guaranteed opportunities for **chronically unemployed populations and minority businesses**.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY ACTIONS FOR THE PLAN...

Step 1. Recovery Neighborhoods

State and City lawmakers should create policies establishing a local delivery system for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that would be identified as **Recovery Neighborhoods**. These **Recovery Neighborhoods** should have the following indices:

- High rates of long term chronic unemployment.
- Large concentrations of disconnected youth.
- Older public and private buildings in need of retro fitting.
- Disproportionate low performing schools.
- Under developed minority and local business infrastructure.
- Under developed commercial corridors.
- High rates of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated persons.

Step 2. Recovery and Opportunity Trust Fund

State and City lawmakers should create a budget amendment that would establish a **Recovery and Opportunity Trust Fund**. This **Recovery and Opportunity Trust Fund** would be modeled off of the **State of Massachusetts Workforce Development Fund**. State and City lawmakers should harvest a minimum of 200 million dollars from the Federal WIA, TANF, and GREEN COLLAR workforce development programs for a one time appropriation. **The Recovery and Opportunity Trust Fund** would finance the following:

- Job training for residents living within the proposed **Recovery Neighborhoods**.
- Subsidized pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship training that would be linked to energy conservation, renewable energy, the rebuilding of core infrastructure, and the installation of broadband telecommunications networks in recovery neighborhoods throughout the city.
- **The Recovery and Opportunity Trust Fund** would provide a 50% match for “trade unions and employer partnerships”; and individual employers contracted to work on behalf of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.
- **The Recovery and Opportunity Trust Fund** would have a special set aside for “minority” owned businesses that are contracted on behalf of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. These businesses would provide apprenticeships or internships to trainees emanating from the **Recovery Neighborhoods**.

Step 3. Amend the 1947 Apprenticeship Training Law

State and City lawmakers should amend the old apprenticeship training laws that have traditionally served as a poor entry point to the unions and for job placements. The New York State apprenticeship law should be amended to enable the City of New York to reverse the chronic long term unemployment within **Recovery Neighborhoods**. The following principles should be incorporated within this legislation:

- A separate pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship program for New York City.
- A mandate that links the apprenticeship to the conservation, renewable energy, broadband installation and construction work inherent in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.
- A mandate that requires that the pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs in New York City should enroll a defined percentage of trainees from the **Recovery Neighborhoods** suffering from long term chronic unemployment.
- A section of the legislation should allow the New York City Department of Education to operate and sanction year round pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs within existing career/technical schools and public charter schools organized to advance the training opportunities within the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.
- A section of the bill should include enhanced equal employment opportunity mandates with authorized transparencies, oversight and fully funded compliance officers within the New York State and New York City Department of Human Rights.
- Students who demonstrate a mastery of their Regent's requirements and their trade skills should receive a Regent's diploma and a union card upon graduation. A legally binding memorandum of agreement between the trade councils and State Ed/DOE should establish the standards for a "certificate of mastery" for industries representing the **green** economy and trades involved with the building of the core infrastructure.

Step 4. Create Educational Opportunity Academies

State and City lawmakers should harness the resources for educational innovation, education technology, school construction and workforce development within the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. These resources should create new models for career/technical education linked to energy conservation, renewable energy, rebuilding of core infrastructure and broadband installation. Legislation and policies enabling the founding of these schools should contain the following principles:

- **Opportunity Academies** should be organized around an education and training curriculum framework that offers an extended school day and extended school year for students. This model would be in keeping with the 4000 hour minimum requirement of the New York State Apprenticeship Law.
- **Opportunity Academies** should receive appropriations from WIA, TANF and GREEN COLLAR workforce development programs to operate year round subsidized pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship training programs linked to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.
- **Opportunity Academies** should be allowed to operate a new grade 9-13 graduation cycle, as compared to the traditional 9-12 graduation cycle.
- **Opportunity Academies** should enable students to enroll in advanced placement courses and/or early admission to community colleges. These opportunities will encourage social mobility through life long learning, and prevent the current trend that traps some students into marginalized labor markets.

Step 5. Create an Opportunity District for the Academies

State and City lawmakers should enact legislation creating a special “virtual” school district entitled the **opportunity district**. The **opportunity district** would be organized to enhance educational innovation and to advance reforms for career/technical education. The legislation creating the **opportunity district** will have the following features:

- **Opportunity Districts** will have education and training councils comprised of representatives from NAACP, Urban League, Community Service Society, Urban Agenda, United Federation of Teachers, Professional Staff of Congress, The Trade Council, Department of Education and parents.
- The education and training councils will develop local pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs consistent with the goals of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the proposed amended state apprenticeship law.
- Legislation creating the **opportunity districts** should have language with an incentive for employer and labor union collaboration in the development of curriculum frameworks, pedagogical leadership, graduation standards, graduation outcomes and union/job placement.
- The **opportunity district** would create a formal articulation with those community and senior colleges that offer degrees linked to the Green Economy and the rebuilding of the cities infrastructure.

Step 6. Recovery and Opportunity Executive Order

The Governor should create an executive order that would initiate the appointment of a special secretary who would be responsible for managing progressive outcomes for equal employment and minority business development goals linked to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (**see article 15a**). The special secretary would also be responsible for the development of shovel ready, interim and long term appropriations for **Recovery Neighborhoods** (i.e. neighborhoods represented by the “**caucus**”). The Governor should appoint a Deputy Commissioner for contract compliance within the Department of Human Rights. This Deputy Commissioner would have the power to collect data, coordinate compliance for the proposed New York City Apprenticeship Law and the minority business participation laws (**i.e. article 15a**) in association with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The executive order should have goals and timetables consistent with the economic crisis that challenges minority businesses and people of color emanating from **Recovery Neighborhoods**.

Step 7. Neighborhood Recovery and Investment Development Bank

State and City lawmakers should work with our congressional representatives and the minority business leaders within the financial services industry to create a Development Bank that would be entitled the Neighborhood Recovery and Investment Development Bank. This Development Bank would provide the following services:

- Manage a revolving loan fund for “minority” owned businesses.
- Manage a development fund for “minority” real estate developers.
- Manage a venture capital fund for “minority” businesses seeking opportunities with **green** industries (weatherization, renewable energy).
- Manage a capital expansion fund for minority businesses seeking to secure contacts linked to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.
- Provide technical assistance and money management services for the U.S. Treasury and Federal Reserve in response to TARP initiatives directed at the proposed **Recovery Neighborhoods** (*see Congresswoman Maxine Waters amendment*).
- Provide financial services to homeowners, businesses and institutions within **Recovery Neighborhoods** who have been impacted by the prime mortgage crisis and the global financial services crisis.

Step 8. Non-Profit Recovery and Opportunity Fund

State and City lawmakers should create a **Non-Profit Recovery and Opportunity Fund** that would provide resources to protect and build capacity for non-profit community based organizations located within **Recovery Neighborhoods**. The appropriation for this fund should adhere to the following principles:

- Applicants must have demonstrated a previous commitment to provide services within **Recovery Neighborhoods**.
- The fund will establish a revolving loan instrument for those non-profits who are operating within the **Recovery Neighborhoods** and who are seeking bridge loans to continue their operations.
- The fund would be administered by a chartered community foundation (i.e. The Fund for New York City, Medgar Evers Community Foundation).

Note: The DuBois Bunche Center concludes that the policies proposed in the Thurgood Marshall Plan for New York City are applicable to the challenges faced by other urban centers within New York State (i.e. Buffalo, Rochester etc...).

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