

Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Oh, hey, I'm good. Thank you. Great. Thank you for taking the dodge. Sure, no problem. I don't know if you use the headset. Oh, sure. Yeah. The way I only get, okay. I've got you on a headset, so, so good. Can I do, you can just let, will know that your levels sound good. So I will set my levels. Sound good and we're ready to go. Okay, great. Hi, I'm here. I hear, I hear a little feedback. Oh, it's gone now. Okay. Yeah, no, no, I'm good.

Speaker 2: [01:13](#) [inaudible] Yup.

Speaker 1: [01:46](#) Well, you know, it, it was interesting for us and the promise neighborhoods because before that it was promised neighborhoods. We got a call from Senator Barack Obama's office saying they weren't interested in our strategy and they wanted a lot of data, a lot of evaluation data and other things. Uh, and it became pretty clear to us that a decision was going to be made to announce as part of his campaign. This is the first time he was running for president, that they were going to replicate our work in 20 communities across the country. Uh, and this was really early in the campaign. This was before Super Tuesday. Uh, everyone at that time assumed that Hillary Clinton was going to be the president. Only a few people thought Barack Obama was going to be president. And I was thinking to myself, oh, just my luck, the one person who's not going to be president, it's interested in our work.

Speaker 1: [02:41](#) Uh, and so we said, sure, what a shame. You know, that someone else is not really interested in it. So it shows you how good I am at handicapping presidents. Uh, but, uh, once, uh, he announced it, I, there wasn't a lot of press coverage by the way, on the day he announced it, I think a manhole cover blew up in New York City the same day and all the press, uh, there was someone who was killed in all the press covered that, uh, once he announced it and no one paid any attention to it. And it wasn't until after the election that it really became clear that promise neighborhoods, which still wasn't a term I was going to be part of the president strategy for fighting poverty. Uh, and it wasn't just me, it was Angela Blackwell from policy link. Uh, and a number of other folks really began to work really hard on trying to make sure we could give the president and his team our best thinking on how to replicate our work at the Harlem Children's zone.

Speaker 1: [04:05](#) So they were a couple of important steps. I think that happened. The first was before there was even an announcement are both Angela Blackwell from policy link. And I met with a team of folks from the administration to talk about what we thought were the essential elements of this strategy.

The first was it had to be a public private partnership because we really felt local buy in from local communities would drive accountability. Uh, the government supporting something was not going to be as powerful as private dollars supporting it also. And therefore we thought that it was going to really push communities to, uh, deal with data and accountability and a much more stringent fashion than had been previously. I think attempted the second was we felt like the grant had to be significant. They had to be lodge. Uh, this was a big idea and it was going to in comp is a fairly large area with a significant numbers of very, uh, disadvantaged young people.

Speaker 1: [05:13](#)

And so we really pushed that, uh, these grants be significant and that we not end up with a dollar amount that, uh, suggested, uh, it could not deliver on the promise a promise neighborhoods. Uh, and so we wrote up some, uh, basic ideas. We submitted them to the administration or uh, just, uh, you know, confidential. We, the Harlem Children's own was not going to be competing for one of these grants. So we really wanted to make sure that it was no sense of inside a sort of baseball on, on this. Uh, and, uh, we try to deal with what we thought were going to be the tricky issues. Uh, one was evaluation data collection and how that gets handled. And the other was whether or not there was going to be a set of strategies which we're using, uh, you know, tested evidence based methods. They didn't have to be what we did. Just had to have evidence behind them for creating what we called a pipeline of services. So we were very involved in that. Uh, after the announcement, the promise neighborhoods institute was set up at policy link to provide direct support to communities. And my personal role was that I did some direct work with the CEOs around accountability and data collection and creating, uh, I think, uh, a new culture of high achievement and what that looked like from our perspective at the Harlem Children's zone.

Speaker 2: [07:13](#)

Yup. Okay.

Speaker 1: [07:26](#)

Well, I, I think, I think it was a real disappointment that the president would propose a significant dollars, a 100 million, 200 million a dollars and the congress would authorize a much smaller amount. Uh, then that, and I think that, uh, there are two challenges. One was whether or not you could really, um, you know, have enough resources to do this work on the ground and the web. And the second was whether or not there would be a funding stream that would last over time that communities could really count on for being there year in and year out to get this work done. What it's meant for promise neighborhoods is that, uh, you know, there've been some

implementation grant, but, uh, if you look at the quality of the proposals from communities, uh, we could only fund a small fraction of the communities that actually had a really strong proposals.

- Speaker 1: [08:29](#) And I think the program has really suffered from being underfunded, uh, and we just could not take this to scale. Uh, you know, the, the one thing that I was really, uh, pushing and I think the administration accepted this was if we were going to do 20, uh, these were going to be sort of the minimum number of the country needed to do. If we were going to really test out, uh, the proof of concept, uh, out of that 20, you would have some, I thought that would be great. You'd have some that what I thought would be good and some would be fair in a few that would probably end up being lousy and we could learn how to do a better job, uh, from reaching that number. I think the fact that we've struggled to really provide the funding for promise neighborhoods has really hurt the effort.
- Speaker 2: [09:30](#) Okay.
- Speaker 1: [09:30](#) Um, so what, then I will, um, I'm not trying to be coy because of our role in supporting all of the communities, uh, that are interested in promise neighborhoods. I intentionally will not publicly name a city that I think is doing a great job or a city that I think is doing a lousy job. Uh, but from what I have seen, uh, there are a couple of places that I have personally gone to where I have seen really good on the ground work. I think there are examples of what promise neighborhoods looks like when they're really working well. Uh, there are a couple of places that have really struggled, uh, and, uh, I think have learned and I've gotten better over time and a couple of places that I think, uh, probably, uh, have not been able to do the work and they need a reset.
- Speaker 1: [10:22](#) A, I would say the current structure does not suggest to me that they're going to be successful. Uh, and, uh, you know, I think that the doe, which is a department of Education, which is responsible for promise neighborhoods, uh, sort of has the data on each one of these communities and, uh, probably could more accurately say which of the communities fall in these three categories. The one thing that's made me really happy, there were a lot of people who said, you know what? This is so complicated. Only the Harlem Children's zone could do it. Only Jeff could do it. That has proven not to be the case. Uh, the places that it's working, they're really doing solid work. The work is strong and all of the early evidence suggests that we're

actually going to do a really, really good job of replicating our work. So that makes me excited.

- Speaker 1: [11:12](#) And the places that are, uh, you know, I think somewhat mediocre and not as good as we would hope, I still think there's a lot of hope for those cases. It just takes some communities longer to develop the team, uh, and to, uh, put in place the strategies necessary to be successful. The places that aren't doing really well and have not, I think a really adhered to the, uh, sort of bottom line, uh, strategies around this work. Uh, you know, I don't think that those places should continue to receive funding unless they can demonstrate very clearly that there, uh, prepared to meet what I considered to be the high standards for being a promise neighborhood.
- Speaker 2: [12:05](#) Yeah. Yup, Yup, Yup. Yup.
- Speaker 1: [13:04](#) Well, that's a great question about sustainability and, and uh, here's what I fundamentally believe this nation has under invested, uh, in communities that are struggling and they've done so for decades. Uh, the total budget of promise neighborhoods does it for the whole nation is not the budget, uh, of the Harlem Children's zone. Our budget is actually larger than what the country is spending on all of these troubled neighborhoods put together. It's a disgrace. And I really mean it. It is a disgrace. Uh, the fact that a community should be a sole starved for resources, uh, at a time like this in our country is something that I think both the Democrats and the Republicans have to be held accountable for. And I'm going to be yelling about this issue on both sides of the aisle. Uh, because, uh, I'm happy, uh, to have a better idea, right?
- Speaker 1: [14:04](#) If this is not the way to tackle poverty and inequality in this country, if this is not a way to rebuild our, uh, struggling communities, uh, I'm happy to step aside and say, well, let's, let's do it another way. But we can no longer, in my opinion, allow, uh, hundreds of communities, not just the brand name ones to Detroit and the camdens enough. But there are hundreds of communities, folks I've never heard of that are being absolutely decimated by a lack of a strategy would resources to really deliver outcomes for young people. Uh, and I think that we've got to change that. Uh, so, uh, while I share the concern of that principle, I will tell you, I care whether they call it promise neighborhoods or they call it, you know, urban centers or whatever they call it, it the fact that we've got to invest in these community serious dollars, not two or \$3 million.

- Speaker 1: [15:04](#) Uh, and, and you know, and hope we can save thousands of kids, but real money with real strategies that have real evidence that delivers is something that's country must do a, and I think we've got to fight for it. Uh, everything I've seen indicates to me that, uh, right now, uh, if we don't fight for this, we'll be trying to reinvent a new strategy three years from now for what we're going to do about poverty in this country. And we have a strategy that right now on needs to be given a fair opportunity to be successful. So we should be concerned. Ah, this is not a money issue. Uh, there's no one in, uh, you know, no economist in, in this country that can convince me that if we had invested at two or \$300 million in promise neighborhoods, it would have undermined the economy of America.
- Speaker 1: [15:57](#) Oh, that's just ridiculous. Uh, and so the fact that people keep suggesting this is a money issue and we can't afford it off, are the most desperate people in this country to me is something on that makes me very upset. And I think as Americans, we've got to stand up and say, look, it doesn't have to be this, but we've got to come up with a strategy and has got to be at scale and it's got to lift folks out of poverty and it's got to help the most vulnerable children in this country. And it has to be something that has evidence behind it. Uh, and, uh, I'm open for a better plan if one has one. But until then, I think we need to fund the strategy, uh, and funded adequately.
- Speaker 1: [17:11](#) Well, it, it, it very frustrating to me that, uh, you know, why we're doing what, uh, I think lots of folk who have spent time working in these communities understand, you go into any poor community. I don't care if it's Apalasia. I don't care if it's the delta in Mississippi. I don't care if it's in a city, uh, Detroit. And you say, do you believe that we need a comprehensive strategy that reaches significant numbers of our kids and provides health and education and social service and recreation and arts and culture. Uh, and it does it draw out their entire life. I will guarantee you will not find one person who says, no, I don't believe that's what we should do. I mean, we know that's what's necessary. Uh, and we should do it. The idea that we now have evidence that it works because we have the evidence at the Harlem Children's zone at doing this actually provides a, a way for young people to get through those pipelines and into college.
- Speaker 1: [18:15](#) I'll just remind you, we have a over 850 of our kids in college right now, uh, that, that and we've graduated over a hundred with college degrees last year. We'll do so this year that there is a way to end persistent poverty. Uh, and uh, I don't think we need to go out searching for more complicated answer. This is

pretty basic and pretty straightforward. Start with them young, help their parents become better parents, provide supports that poor kids need. Give them a quality education and stay with them through college to make sure they get those degrees. Uh, that's what we need to do. That's what the Harlem Children's own does. It's not rocket science. It is hard work. It doesn't mean you have to have the resources. You do have to work with these kids for a long period of time. Uh, but every parent knows that you can't stop, uh, you know, with your kids when they turn 12 thinking it's all going to be great. A lot of this is a pretty straightforward,

Speaker 1: [19:52](#) so here's one of the biggest misunderstandings about the Harlem Children's zone. I just mentioned that we have over 850 of our kids in college. Only 120 of those kids went to my charter schools. The vast majority of the kids we work with, out of the 12,000 kids we work with, the vast majority will never attend promise academy. Our Charter School, our program is designed to work with kids who go to traditional public schools. This is not a charter school strategy. It just so happened we've run a charter school. It makes our work somewhat easier, but it doesn't mean that we expect any difference between a kid who's in a traditional public school here in the zone and one who's at our charter school. Uh, in terms of outcomes, we expect the same outcomes and we get the same outcomes with those kids. So people have latched on to the charter school issue will be cause it's, it's sort of sexy and it's, you know, don't get the bait going and people can take one side or the other.

Speaker 1: [20:56](#) Uh, 80 to 90% of our kids will never set foot in our charter school and I will guarantee you we will get those kids to elementary school through middle school, into college and we're going to get those kids through college at the same rates we do for our kids in the charter school. Uh, this is a concept which is full communities. We'd godless to whether or not are they actually run their own schools. Uh, it does not suggest that charter schools are not important. I am a huge charter school fan and support charter schools. That is not what this is. This is not a charter school strategy. It's a community rebuilding strategy for all the kids who live in a community regardless to what schools they go to.

Speaker 1: [21:57](#) Yes, that's right. If you look at, if you look at our charter school kids and our non charter school kids, uh, you will not see that they are going into a college or graduating from high school or graduating from college. We don't have the data file. Kids graduated from college right now. Kids are just turning into their junior years right now from the charter school. But you

won't, you won't find a, a big difference, uh, between our huddles, kids are performing and if there is a big difference in, we haven't done our job at the Harlem Children's zone. Uh, so is it more complicated? Yes, it is. It, does it take a different set of strategies when you don't run the schools? Yes, it does. Um, but, uh, our work was designed with that challenge in mind. Uh, that's why we created dissolve. We assume that our schools would stay as struggling schools and nine, I'll charter schools, but the traditional public schools and they have, they're still struggling in public schools that looked like most inner city public schools get our kids who in our zone ended up having much higher outcomes than kids who are not

Speaker 1: [24:02](#) well, I would be concerned that the, let me tell you what I have said to communities. Every community that come to us for help in designing a promise neighborhood. I said one thing, which one of you are going to be able to fire the ones of you who don't deliver for kids? And everybody chuckles because they think I'm kidding. And then they get really nervous when they realize I'm not kidding because I said it has been my experience that if you get eight providers in the room, only probably 30 or 40% of them are going to be able to deliver at the high levels of standards, uh, that we need to be successful with the young people. The others aren't. And we have to get rid of them and replaced them with folk who aren't going to deliver. And if you don't solve that problem right now, you will not be successful in running a promise neighborhoods.

Speaker 1: [24:58](#) And a lot of folks who've never come back after hearing that from me. Uh, but that's fine because this idea that simply wanting to do good and hoping to do good, but not being able to hold people accountable, uh, is not going to be successful in my opinion, in any community. So if there is not a structure in place that holds organizations accountable, uh, for outcomes, um, my belief is that you're not going to be able to drive the outcomes in the way that you need to. Uh, here at, uh, the promise neighborhoods, uh, institute or at a, I think a program like the Harlem Children's zone. Now let me tell you why. Every year we look at the data and the data is always troubling right here at the Harlem Children's zone. We'll look at the data this year, we'll find troubling, uh, sets of data that we say, this is unacceptable.

Speaker 1: [25:53](#) Uh, now we've got to go and see who's at fault off of this data being lousy. And if any of our team comes back and start saying, oh, the kids, you know, they are gangs and old, you know, this one's mother is on drugs and all, yeah, this one lives in the house and they can't work with us. This is about what are the

adults going to do to make sure these kids get an education and they're on the right pathway to go to college. And so, uh, it's not just getting the data, it's going through the data and seeing what's not working. And I will guarantee you in every place in America that has a promise neighborhoods, there's lots of things not working just like this. Lots of things not working here at the Harlem Children's zone. It's the commitment to comb through that data, find out what's not working and hold people accountable that end the end, drive your results, uh, over time. Uh, and if there's not a procedure for doing that, uh, I don't think you're going to be able to get the same kinds of outcomes that we're going to get here. So, uh, is it possible that this might be the exception to the rule that I've seen every place else? It could be a, but I wouldn't bet on it.

Speaker 1: [27:19](#) Uh, it's, it's a real challenge. Uh, it is an absolute real challenge. And, and it's, uh, one of the, when we began to talk about what could undermine success for these, um, programs, uh, we felt like this was a, one of the most complicated issues. It's so here, here's the challenge. People go out and they work really hard, right? They actually do, they show up. They work hard, but the results aren't there. Uh, it is very hard for someone to come in and say, I know you tried really hard. You didn't give me my results. I'm removing you on replacing you with someone else who actually I believe can get the result. People just don't want to do it. Uh, now, uh, and our business, uh, we have allow there to be a set of, built in excuses about why we don't get results. Right.

Speaker 1: [28:15](#) And people have the excuses in the inner city and the oldest schools, one lousy and the community. And this and you know, the parents, the family, there's all of this stuff, which is okay. Yeah, yeah. I know why it's hard. The promise neighborhood says, given that all of that is a given, how are you going to drive results for these kids? And that's what you have to hold people responsible for. So I think at the point where you look at the data, it does not move. And you say, thank you so much for working in trying hard. Uh, but you can't deliver. I need someone else who can deliver for these kids. If you don't see that happening on a regular basis, and one of these promise neighborhoods is probably not doing as good a job as it could be. A, we find we have to do it all the time with our own team, with other folks.

Speaker 1: [29:01](#) We just say, you know what? Thank you. You tried hard, you didn't move the needle for Ross and we need to bring somebody else in who can. Uh, and I think it's that commitment to using data and holding people accountable. That ends up,

you end up building a team that can guess what they can drive to data. That's what you need. And I will tell you, uh, we've been doing this longer than anyone else as a strategy of a promise neighborhood strategy cause we would original model and we will spend as much time answering that question this year as we did year one, maybe more. What's not working, why, who do we hold accountable? Who needs to be replaced? How do we make sure we build the right team can continue to drive these numbers forward? I think until we have ended this, meaning that there are no more poor kids in Harlem, uh, that are, that process has to stay in place. And when you don't see an active process where you say last year they were 12 groups, uh, we had to get rid of three of them because they didn't deliver for kids. So now we're replacing them with you. If you don't hear that conversation going on, I will guarantee you it's not an effective program.

Speaker 2: [30:33](#) [inaudible] [inaudible]

Speaker 1: [30:42](#) yeah, I, until he is, here's where I think, uh, having a plan and sticking to the plan make sense? No, you're not going to turn things around overnight. And we didn't. And if someone had looked at sort of how our kids were performing in the sixth grade, they might've said, hey, that thing's not working. You look six years later, you say, oh my goodness, uh, look at the results. So each year we got better. Uh, and we had data that suggested we were getting better and the data really has to deal with whether or not we're preparing kids for college. Uh, so that the fact that maybe you've got kids feeling better and attending more regularly and even graduating at high a number, that's all great. But that to me, or all interim sets of data points, we need to say based on that, what do we expect to improve next year and what do we expect to improve for the next five years?

Speaker 1: [31:38](#) And then that's what we hold people accountable for. So I'm happy to say we've got some interim data that looks promising. Uh, we need to, uh, really, you know, uh, give credit where, you know, I think things are going in the right direction, but the real question is how are we going to improve next year and how are we going to hold ourselves accountable? Uh, I believe in a five year strategy that really leads you from where you are right now to better outcomes for young people when it comes to measurable results. Those could be a test scores, sat a state exams, uh, college entry, first year, uh, completion of college. You can, you can do lots of things to a sort of say the data suggest the cumulative effect is having, uh, you know, uh, showing real promise. Even if we see, I don't see sort of a, you

know, year by year, uh, increases that suggest we're moving in the right direction, uh, to the degree that you get stuck there, right? You get, some people are feeling good, people are showing up, but you don't start seeing real, uh, hard, uh, data sets. That show was you kids are going to college and being successful, we've got a problem and it needs to be addressed quickly. Uh, and what we can't do is keep saying that interim data is good enough because it's not good enough in the end. You've got to meet that goal. If that goal is college completion, that's what we got to hold ourselves accountable for.

Speaker 2: [33:31](#) Okay.

Speaker 1: [33:34](#) Oh, I absolutely think that that we've under funded these neighborhoods. Uh, you know, when, when I tell you our 97 blocks, 12,000 kids are asked to do a reasonable job is costing us slightly more than a hundred million dollars. That gives you an idea of what I think it actually cost. When I say that's larger than the entire federal budget for promise neighborhoods, it's shows you how underfunded I think these efforts are. Uh, and while, uh, you know, there's lots of ways that money can be wasted and, and you know, it's used inefficiently and all them, I'm all for that. Uh, but I also don't believe in these communities. You can drive the outcomes without having the resources in place that's necessary, uh, to make sure all the kids are having a fair chance to be successful.

Speaker 1: [34:36](#) Yeah. The one thing I will say about promise neighborhoods is that, you know, I've talked to my friends and colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle and I've talked to my friends and colleagues on the democratic side of the aisle. Uh, both of them love the program for different reasons. Um, the, what I have not heard from either one of them is that we actually think there's a better way we have of dealing with income inequality, of fighting poverty in this country. Uh, and I would hate to see promise neighborhoods become a partisan issue, uh, where, uh, just because President Barack Obama, uh, you know, created a, you know, it's something that the next administration be, they democratic or Republican will have to say, you know what, let's start all over to solve poverty. I think this hasn't been given a fair chance because it's been underfunded, uh, and it needs to be fully funded and it needs to be given a chance, which means the time to drive, uh, for these poor children in this country and too much is at stake for us to play politics with this now.

Speaker 2: [35:58](#) Okay.

Speaker 1:

[36:00](#)

That, that's exactly what my fear is, that in the end, uh, folks will have underfunded a program, uh, haven't given it the time and say, oh, it doesn't work. You know, finding poverty doesn't work. There's nothing you can do about that. Uh, that's absolutely not the case. Uh, but it is the case if you don't put the resources where they're needed. Okay, great. Okay, so mad. He says he's done. He's going to ask me a separate question.