

Opinion: Whole nation is on government plantation

By Star Parker

Here's free advice for Mitt Romney.

Before bringing up the poor again, read my book "Uncle Sam's Plantation."

Romney has been taking a drubbing about his remarks in a CNN interview that he is "not worried about the very poor ... we have a safety net there...If it needs a repair, I will fix it." And then going on to say it is "... middle income Americans ... that are really struggling..." that are his concern.



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What the now Republican presidential frontrunner missed in his off-the-cuff economic analysis of American class is that the cause driving the struggle among both low and middle income Americans is the same.

Economic stagnation and social breakdown caused by welfare state socialism.

As I explain in "Uncle Sam's Plantation," America's inner cities offer laboratory results for what is wrong today with the whole country.

If you want to know why America is failing, look at why our inner cities are failing.

Gov. Romney is incorrect to label as a safety net welfare state programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training, Emergency Assistance to Needy Families with Children, Section 8 Housing, and Food Stamps.

A safety net is what is provided when a free person, acting on their own initiative, falls and we offer assistance to help them get back up and start again.

The welfare state amounts to wholesale takeover of individual lives. As opposed to government stepping in to soften the blow, the welfare state assumes from the start that individuals won't make it without government managing their lives.

It is not an accident that despite some ten trillion dollars spent on anti-poverty programs since the 1960's there is little discernable change in our poverty rate.

The problem was made worse because the broken families and broken spirits resulting from government plantation dependence have institutionalized inner city poverty.

If America is going to get back on track, we must appreciate that we are doing to our whole country what we did to America's poor.

Seventy percent of government spending today consists of transfer payments – government redistributing funds from one set of individuals to others.

Even before the Obamacare government takeover, our health care market was already dominated by government. About ten percent of our healthcare expenditures today are out-of-pocket expenditures by individuals. About half of health care expenditures in 1960 were individual out-of-pocket expenditures.

Despite the central role that government sponsored enterprises – Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac – played in the recent housing collapse, their role in the housing market today has become even greater.

In 2011, 95 percent of all new mortgages were bought or guaranteed by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, or FHA.

And, of course, just about every working American is part of Social Security and Medicare, both of which are now fiscally untenable.

Now layer on to all this Obamacare, a trillion dollars in spending on stimulus programs, and bailouts of banks and auto companies. And five trillion in new debt, a 45 percent increase, over the last four years as a down payment on it all.

The bigger role government plays in our lives, the more America resembles the post office rather than FedEx.

And the bigger role government plays, the harder it is to fix the problem because individuals become used to these programs and fear fundamental change.

Mitt Romney touts his business experience as his qualification for the presidency.

That business experience amounted to turning companies around, improving their performance by making more efficient use of their assets.

This is exactly what our country needs today. A reallocation of our assets from government to private sector efficiency.

Getting off Uncle Sam's Plantation is no longer a problem limited to our poor. It is a problem and challenge for the whole country.

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Urban Renewal and Education, a 501(c)3 think tank which explores and promotes market based public policy to fight poverty, as well as author of the newly revised "Uncle Sam's Plantation: How Big Government Enslaves America's Poor and What We Can do About It".