

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY CONVOCATION
"MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE:
CITIES AND CITY PEOPLE, 1967-2007"

REMARKS BY
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WASHINGTON HILTON
WASHINGTON, : D.C.
MAY 21, 1987

NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

THANK YOU AND GOOD EVENING.

TODAY HAS BEEN A FULL DAY, AND IT HAS BEEN

A PRODUCTIVE ONE THE 14 FORUMS WHICH END

TOMORROW PROVIDE ALL OF US WITH AN AGENDA OF ACTION ON URBAN ISSUES TO PURSUE OVER THE COMING YEARS.

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SO TONIGHT IT IS ONLY FITTING TO TAKE A
FEW MINUTES TO REFLECT ON WHAT THE URBAN
COALITION HAS CONTRIBUTED TO OUR SOCIETY
DURING THE PAST TWO DECADES AND 'WHY WE
NEED ITS CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE FUTURE.

FOR MOST OF US, THE COALITION WAS THE
FIRST NATIONAL ORGANIZATION THAT SOUGHT TO
INVOLVE THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN SOCIAL
ISSUES IN A SUBSTANTIVE WAY. THE IDEA IS
COMMONPLACE NOW. IT WAS NOT SO
COMMONPLACE IN 1967.

BEFORE THE COALITION CAME INTO EXISTENCE,
THE PREVAILING VIEW IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

WAS THAT POVERTY AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS WERE
THE PROVINCE OF GOVERNMENT, THAT SOMEHOW
THE REST OF US WERE NOT RESPONSIBLE --
PRECISELY THE KIND OF THINKING THAT HELPED
GET THIS NATION IN TROUBLE IN THE FIRST
PLACE.

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WORSE YET, MANY PRIVATE SECTOR INSTITUTIONS
WEREN'T EVEN SURE THAT GOVERNMENT SHOULD
BE INVOLVED IN SOCIAL PROBLEM SOLVING.

OTHERS, HOWEVER, KNEW THAT OUR SOCIETY
COULD NOT FLOURISH IF ITS KEY INSTITUTIONS
REMAINED APART AND INSENSITIVE.

SO A. PHILIP RANDOLPH AND ANDREW J.
HEISKELL, A LABOR LEADER AND A CORPORATE
EXECUTIVE, A BLACK MAN AND A WHITE MAN,
ACTING LARGELY IN THE WAKE OF THE RIOTS
AND DISORDERS THAT ERUPTED IN CITY AFTER
CITY DURING THE SO-CALLED "LONG HOT SUMMER
OF 1966," WENT TO WORK.

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O THEY FORMED AN ORGANIZATION THAT

 WOULD GIVE LIFE TO THEIR VISIONS OF

 A SOCIETY WORKING TOGETHER FOR ITS

 OWN GOOD.

3 THEY CALLED THEIR ORGANIZATION THE

 URBAN COALITION.

 FOR 20 YEARS, THE COALITION HAS

 REPRESENTED WHAT WAS BEST IN

 AMERICAN SOCIETY.

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IT HAS HELPED ARTICULATE OUR GOALS AND
VALUES. IT HAS TAUGHT US, BY ITS OWN
EXAMPLE, HOW DIVERSE INSTITUTIONS CAN WORK
TOGETHER AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL AND THE
LOCAL LEVEL. IT HAS REMINDED US THAT THIS
SOCIETY FUNCTIONS BEST WHEN WE LOOK BEYOND
OUR OWN PERSONAL WELL-BEING AND FOCUS
INSTEAD ON THE WELL-BEING OF THE LARGER
COMMUNITY.

WHEN WE HAVE PAID TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO
THE DOLLAR SIGN AS THE SYMBOL OF THE
BOTTOM LINE, THE NATIONAL URBAN COALITION
HAS REMINDED US THAT PEOPLE, NOT DOLLARS,
ARE THE REAL BOTTOM LINE.

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TIME AND AGAIN, THE COALITION HAS
DEMONSTRATED THAT, WHEN GIVEN THE
OPPORTUNITY, OUR SOCIETY IS INDEED DECENT,
CARING, RESPONSIVE AND GENEROUS.

AND NOW, AS WE CELEBRATE THE 20TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE URBAN COALITION THE
NATION'S CITIES ARE AGAIN FACED WITH
ISSUES --. WITH PROBLEMS NO LESS INSIDIOUS
THAN THOSE OF 1967 -- THAT MAKE CLEAR TO
THOSE WHO CARE TO LOOK JUST HOW MUCH WE
NEED THE VISION AND THE LEADERSHIP THE
URBAN COALITION CAN PROVIDE.

NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

HIGH ON THAT LIST OF CONCERNS IS THE PROSPECT OF OUR BECOMING A SOCIETY WITH A PERMANENT AND GROWING UNDERCLASS OF AMERICANS.

DURING THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES WE USED TO LOOK FOR YEAR-TO-YEAR SHIFTS IN THE POVERTY LEVEL. DID IT RISE, OR DID IT FALL? WERE THERE MORE PEOPLE IN POVERTY, OR WERE THERE FEWER?

IF IT ROSE AND THERE WERE MORE PEOPLE IN POVERTY, WE WERE IN TROUBLE. IF IT FELL AND THERE WERE FEWER, WE WERE ON THE RIGHT TRACK.

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IN THE EIGHTIES, WE BEGAN TO REALIZE THAT
THE YEAR-TO-YEAR SHIFTS WERE ALL GOING IN
THE *SAME* DIRECTION THE WRONG WAY.

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THIS IS AN OMINOUS TREND.

IT SUGGESTS NOT JUST AN UNDERCLASS, BUT A
SOCIETY IN WHICH MORE AND MORE PEOPLE HAVE
NO ROLE, A SOCIETY WITH WHICH MILLIONS
FEEL NO IDENTITY AND NO CONNECTION, A
SOCIETY IN WHICH, IF THIS TREND CONTINUES,
IT WILL BE INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES TO
FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY.

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NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

THESE ISSUES COME INTO SHARPER FOCUS WHEN
WE LOOK AT SOME RECENT DATA ABOUT
CHILDREN. WE SEE, FOR EXAMPLE THAT:

- 0 NEARLY 25 PERCENT OF AMERICAN
CHILDREN LIVE IN HOUSEHOLDS WHOSE
INCOMES ARE BELOW THE POVERTY LINE.

- 0 NEARLY HALF THE BLACK CHILDREN IN
AMERICA UNDER THE AGE OF SIX LIVE IN
POVERTY.

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0 NINETY PERCENT OF THE INCREASE IN
CHILDREN BORN INTO POVERTY IS IN POOR
HOUSEHOLDS HEADED BY A BLACK OR
HISPANIC WOMAN.

THERE ARE SOME POSITIVE SIGNS IN THE DATA
ABOUT OUR URBAN YOUTH. THE NUMBER OF
BLACK MIDDLE-CLASS STUDENTS IS INCREASING.
BUT THE OVERWHELMING MESSAGE OF THIS DATA,
ACCORDING TO NEARLY ALL THE EXPERTS, IS
THAT THE CHILDREN COMING INTO OUR SCHOOL
SYSTEMS ARE INCREASINGLY POORER, MORE
ETHNICALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE, AND
HAVE MORE HANDICAPS THAT AFFECT THEIR
LEARNING.

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WE HAVE HEARD QUITE A BIT RECENTLY ABOUT
HOW THE CHILDREN OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS MAY
NOT DO AS WELL AS THEIR PARENTS IN THE
YEARS TO COME. BUT HOW MANY OF US EVER
THOUGHT THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR WOULD BE
WORSE OFF THAN THEIR PARENTS?

THERE IS NO MISTAKING THE TASK BEFORE US.
WE FACE LONG-STANDING PROBLEMS THAT ARE
MORE COMPLEX AND MORE INTRACTABLE THAN WE
MAY HAVE REALIZED. AND WE ARE NOT GOING
TO BEGIN SOLVING THEM UNTIL WE INVOLVE NOT
JUST SOME OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF SOCIETY
BUT ALL THE INSTITUTIONS OF SOCIETY.

POVERTY, ALIENATION AND LACK OF
OPPORTUNITY, FOR EXAMPLE, DO NOT BEGIN IN
OUR SCHOOLS. BUT THEY DO BECOME MORE
VISIBLE IN OUR SCHOOLS, BECAUSE THE SCHOOL IS
WHERE THE REALITY OF POVERTY AND THE IDEA OF
OPPORTUNITY COME INTO CONFLICT
MOST DIRECTLY AND MOST FREQUENTLY AMONG OUR YOUNG
PEOPLE.

WE NEED TO ASK OUR SCHOOLS TO PLAY A ROLE
IN BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY. BUT
THAT DOES NOT MEAN WE SHOULD EXPECT THE
SCHOOLS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF POVERTY,
ALIENATION AND LACK OF OPPORTUNITY BY
THEMSELVES. ALL THE INVESTMENTS IN THE
WORLD IN EDUCATION WON'T BE AS EFFECTIVE
AS THEY SHOULD BE IF THERE ARE NO JOBS
AVAILABLE FOR THE GRADUATING CLASS.

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CAN MAKE IN ITS OWN RIGHT.

WE CANNOT PLACE UPON ANY ONE INSTITUTION A
BURDEN THAT NO INSTITUTION, NO MATTER HOW
WELL EQUIPPED, HOW WELL STAFFED, HOW WELL
FUNDED, CAN HANDLE BY ITSELF WITHOUT
UNDERMINING, IN A FUNDAMENTAL WAY, THE
CONTRIBUTION THAT INSTITUTION LEGITIMATELY

AS A NATION, WE HAVE TO STOP LOOKING FOR
THE EASY WAY OUT. WE HAVE TO STOP SEARCHING
FOR THE ONE NEW PROGRAM, THE ONE *NEW* IDEA,
THE ONE INSTITUTION THAT SOMEHOW WILL
PROVIDE US WITH THE "ANSWERS" THAT SEEM TO
HAVE ELUDED US FOR SO LONG.

NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

**THE TRUTH, AS WE SHOULD HAVE LEARNED BY
NOW, IS THAT THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS.**

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**IMPROVING THE LIVES OF THE POOR, AND THE
QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR CITIES, IS A**

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**CONTINUOUS JOB THAT REQUIRES A CONTINUOUS
EFFORT. AND WE ARE NOT GOING TO FIND THE
SOLUTIONS WE SEEK ON A BUMPER STICKER.**

**THE CHALLENGE WE FACE IS NOT FINDING THE
ONE IDEA, INSTITUTION OR PROGRAM THAT CAN
SOLVE ALL OUR PROBLEMS. IT'S LEARNING HOW
TO USE ALL THE IDEAS, PROGRAMS, RESOURCES
AND TOOLS THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO US.**

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URBAN COALITION

THE CHALLENGE WE FACE ISN'T CHOOSING
BETWEEN SELF-HELP AND PROGRAMS OF
ASSISTANCE. IT'S LEARNING HOW WE CAN
PROMOTE SELF-HELP WITHOUT DENYING PEOPLE
THE ASSISTANCE THEY NEED.

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THE CHALLENGE WE FACE ISN'T DECIDING
WHETHER INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS CAN DO MORE
THAN ORGANIZATIONS. IT'S LEARNING HOW WE
CAN TRANSLATE THE REMARKABLE SENSE OF
COMMUNITY THAT EXISTS ON AN INDIVIDUAL
LEVEL SO' THAT IT WORKS ON A BROADER
INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL.

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AND THAT IS WHERE THE URBAN
COALITION COMES IN.

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WE NEED THE COALITION BECAUSE THE PROBLEMS OF OUR
SOCIETY ARE THE ISSUES IN WHICH THE
COALITION ALREADY IS DEEPLY INVOLVED.

WE NEED THE COALITION BECAUSE IT HAS A
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TRADITION OF ARTICULATING THE CHALLENGES
WE FACE AS A SOCIETY, OF HELPING US SET
OUR SOCIAL AGENDA AND DEVELOPING
INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS THAT POINT US IN NEW
AND PROMISING DIRECTIONS.
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NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

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WE NEED THE COALITION BECAUSE, AS MUCH AS ANY OTHER ORGANIZATION IN OUR SOCIETY, IT HAS THE CAPACITY TO BRING TOGETHER NOT JUST THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, BUT ALSO LABOR, THE CLERGY, VOLUNTEER GROUPS, EDUCATORS, HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS AND A WIDE RANGE OF OTHER INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS WHOSE PARTICIPATION CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

THE COALITION, THOUGH, IS IN A SOMEWHAT IRONIC POSITION.

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**TWENTY YEARS AGO, IT WAS FORMED IN ORDER
TO INVOLVE THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN SOCIAL
ACTION. TODAY IT'S THE PUBLIC SECTOR --
,AND MORE SPECIFICALLY, THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT -- THAT HAS TO BE BROUGHT BACK
INTO THE GAME.**

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**As A NATION, WE SEEM TO HAVE DRIFTED AWAY
FROM AN UNDERSTANDING OF OUR OWN HISTORY
AND THE ROLE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS
PLAYED IN IMPROVING THE LIVES OF ITS
CITIZENS.**

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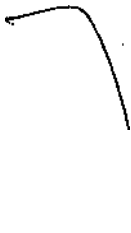
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NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

WE HAVE, PARTICULARLY IN THE LAST FEW
YEARS AND DESPITE ALL THE EVIDENCE TO THE
CONTRARY, ACQUIESCED TO THE VIEW THAT
GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS OF THE PAST HAVE
CAUSED THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF TODAY.

MORE AND MORE, WE SEEM TO LOOK AT
GOVERNMENT AS A NEGATIVE FORCE IN OUR
LIVES, AN INSTITUTION THAT WEAKENS OUR
SOCIAL FABRIC AND LIMITS OUR POTENTIAL AS
INDIVIDUALS.



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IT'S JUST NOT TRUE.

NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

LOOK AT HEAD START AND OTHER PROGRAMS OF
EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION.

LOOK AT CHAPTER I AND THE IMPROVED TEST
SCORES OF THE CHILDREN FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO
RECEIVE ITS BENEFITS.

LOOK AT MEDICAID AND MEDICARE,

LOOK AT THE CHILD IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM.

LOOK AT WIC, FOOD STAMPS, SCHOOL LUNCHES
AND OTHER NUTRITION PROGRAMS.

LOOK AT ALL THESE AND THINK HOW MUCH
WORSE OFF PEOPLE WOULD BE IF THESE
PROGRAMS DID NOT EXIST AND HOW MUCH
BETTER OFF THEY
WOULD BE IF EVERYONE ELIGIBLE FOR
THEM COULD PARTICIPATE IN THEM.

WE NEED TO RESTORE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE
IN GOVERNMENT.

WE NEED TO CARRY THE MESSAGE THAT
GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY AND INVOLVEMENT
DOES NOT DIMINISH OR DETRACT FROM
THE

CONTRIBUTIONS OF OTHERS. IT
ENHANCES THEM, EXPANDS THEM.

NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

WHEN GOVERNMENT IS INVOLVED IN A
MEANINGFUL AND SUBSTANTIAL WAY, THEN THE
WHOLE OF OUR EFFORTS CAN INDEED BE GREATER
THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS.

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IF WE ARE GOING TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE
EIGHTIES AND NINETIES, WE HAVE TO KNOW
WHAT HAPPENED IN THE SIXTIES AND
SEVENTIES.

IF WE MISUNDERSTAND WHAT WE ACHIEVED
IN THE PAST, WE ARE LIKELY TO ASK FAR
TOO LITTLE OF OURSELVES IN THE FUTURE.

THERE IS ONE MORE TREND I WANT TO MENTION.

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IN 1982, THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTED
\$1 MILLION TO THE URBAN COALITION. LAST
4 YEAR, IT CONTRIBUTED \$600,000 -- A 40
PERCENT DROPOFF.

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THE COALITION HAS BEEN AROUND SO LONG THAT
PERHAPS TOO MANY OF US TAKE IT FOR
GRANTED, ASSUME IT WILL CONTINUE WITH OR
WITHOUT OUR SUPPORT, WITH OR WITHOUT OUR
INVOLVEMENT.

NONE OF US SHOULD TAKE THE COALITION FOR
GRANTED. THE COALITION IS IMPORTANT BOTH
AS A SYMBOL AND AS AN INSTRUMENT. IF IT
'DID NOT EXIST, WE WOULD HAVE TO INVENT IT.

NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

I DON'T KNOW THE REASONS SOME COMPANIES
HAVE REDUCED OR WITHDRAWN THEIR SUPPORT
FOR THE COALITION. PERHAPS IT IS BECAUSE
CORPORATE AMERICA HAS CUT BACK ON A HOST
OF DISCRETIONARY EXPENDITURES. BUT I DO
KNOW THAT BUSINESS CANNOT AFFORD NOT TO BE
INVOLVED IN THOSE ISSUES THAT ARE CENTRAL
TO THE COALITION.

NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

WHERE WILL CORPORATE AMERICA

RECRUIT ITS WORKERS FROM IF THE

UNDERCLASS CONTINUES TO GROW?

WHERE WILL OUR CUSTOMERS COME

FROM IF POVERTY LEVELS KEEP GOING

UP? HOW CAN WE RECONCILE DRAMATIC

SURGES IN CORPORATE PROFITS WITH

EQUALLY DRAMATIC INCREASES IN

CHILDHOOD POVERTY? HOW CAN AMERICAN

INDUSTRY COMPETE IN THE WORLD

ECONOMY IF, FOR STARTERS, WE WRITE

OFF A LARGE SEGMENT OF OUR OWN

POPULATION IN

TERMS OF JOBS, INCOME AND ECONOMIC GROWTH?

NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY ONCE RECOGNIZED
THAT IT HAD A SIGNIFICANT LONG-TERM STAKE
IN HOW THE NATION RESPONDED TO DOMESTIC
SOCIAL PROBLEMS. I BELIEVE WE CAN
REAWAKEN THAT KIND OF THINKING.

IN THAT CONTEXT, I INVITE ALL THOSE
MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY WHO HAVE
LEFT THE COALITION -- AS SUPPORTERS OR AS
BOARD MEMBERS -- TO COME BACK IN AND
BECOME FULL AND ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS ONCE
AGAIN. THE COALITION NEEDS YOU, AND YOU
NEED THE COALITION.

NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

IT IS SOMEWHAT POINTLESS TO ARGUE
WHETHER ONE TYPE OF POVERTY IS BETTER
OR WORSE THAN ANOTHER. BUT IN THE
SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES, THERE WAS A
SENSE AMONG THE POOR AND THE NON-POOR
ALIKE THAT THINGS WOULD GET BETTER,
THAT THERE WAS A WAY OUT, THAT FUTURE
GENERATIONS WOULD NOT LIVE IN POVERTY.

NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

THIS SENSE OF EXPECTATION AND HOPE SEEMS GREATLY DIMINISHED TODAY. TALK ABOUT TODAY'S POVERTY AND YOU ENCOUNTER A MUCH MORE FATALISTIC ATTITUDE, A SENSE OF THIS-IS-THE-WAY-IT'S ALWAYS-BEEN-AND-THE-WAY-ITS ALWAYS-GOING-TO-BE. IT'S ALMOST AS IF THE WHOLE COUNTRY HAS LIVED WITH POVERTY SO LONG THAT IT NOW HAS DEVELOPED AN IMMUNITY. THOSE WHO ARE POOR DON'T EXPECT MUCH CHANGE, AND THOSE OF US WHO ARE NOT POOR HAVE LEARNED TO TOLERATE A CONDITION WE ONCE FELT WAS INTOLERABLE.

NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

IN THAT SENSE, THE POVERTY OF 1987 IS
FAR WORSE THAN THE POVERTY OF 1967.

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AND BECAUSE IT IS, THE CHALLENGE THE
URBAN COALITION FACES IN 1987 IS MUCH
GREATER THAN THE ONE IT FACED IN 1967.

WHICH IS ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING THAT
OUR REAL WORK IS JUST BEGINNING.

TWENTY YEARS AGO, IN RESPONSE TO
PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP, THE PUBLIC
AND PRIVATE SECTORS BEGAN WORKING ON
SOME MAJOR PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES.

NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

PERHAPS THE NEXT PRESIDENT, WHOMEVER HE
HAPPENS TO BE AND REGARDLESS OF THE PARTY
HE REPRESENTS, CAN BE PERSUADED TO
MOBILIZE THE INSTITUTIONS OF SOCIETY ONCE
AGAIN. A NATIONAL CONFERENCE, HELD
BETWEEN ELECTION DAY AND INAUGURATION DAY,
COULD HELP EVERYONE FOCUS ON WAYS THE
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS CAN WORK
TOGETHER TO HELP SOLVE SOME SERIOUS
NATIONAL URBAN PROBLEMS. THE URBAN
COALITION'S ACTION AGENDA COULD SERVE AS
THE STARTING POINT FOR SUCH A FORUM
CONVENED BY THE PRESIDENT-ELECT.

NATIONAL URBAN COALITION

AS IT HAS DONE THROUGHOUT ITS
PROUD HISTORY, THE URBAN COALITION AGAIN
PROVIDES US WITH THE MODEL FOR ACTION.
IT'S UP TO ALL OF US TO TAKE THIS MODEL
AND USE IT FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE NATION

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AS A WHOLE.

THANK YOU.

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