

*Healing Politics: a Doctor's Journey into the Heart of Our Political Epidemic* by Abdul El-Sayed. Notes by Marcia Bailey; edited by Trude Diamond. Part II.

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Abdul El-Sayed is an epidemiologist, a son of Egyptian immigrants, and a Muslim who ran for governor of Michigan because he hoped to use the problem-solving skills of an epidemiologist to generate solutions for some of the difficulties in his state. Achieving these desires is hampered by the huge epidemic of insecurity that is facing our country. Insecurity exists because society has not provided basic services needed for everyone to live a dignified life. He writes about problems and proposes solutions in eleven areas. **Here are the topics not covered last week.**

### **Finances**

#### Problem:

- Two-thirds of Americans are extremely or somewhat anxious about finances. According to a 2018 study by Ramsey, the average consumer debt for Americans is \$34K. The consumer debt increases with the increase of household income.
- Ten percent of seniors live below the poverty line, especially POC, women, and single seniors.

Recommendations: Public banking with a *federal* pension plan

### **Families**

#### Problem:

- Thirty-three percent of families are providing care to adults for 20 hrs/week. Seventy-eight percent of adults needing long-term care

depend on family or friends; two-thirds are women; half say care uses up their savings.

- Ten percent of elderly suffer neglect, or physical, emotional, sexual, or financial abuse. Senior abuse is often not reported.

Recommendations: Real Family Values

- Comprehensive family planning, including abortion.
- Institute family leave, childcare, and care for the disabled and elderly.

**Housing**

Problem:

- Twenty percent of kids live below the federal poverty line. Another 20% are considered low income. Thirty-nine percent of children live in homes with one or no parent (another guardian).
- From 1995 – 2018 median asking rent went up 70%. Upper middle class Whites moved back to cities which drives up rent and displaces POC.

Recommendations: Housing Reform – Enact a National Renters Bill of Rights and rent control legislation.

**Inequality**

Problem:

- Diseases result from social factors like racism, poverty, or neighborhoods with insufficient resources (food and Medicare “deserts.”)
- Social circumstances affect length of life overall, especially how often and how young children, the most vulnerable, die.

### Recommendations: Reparation and Equal Rights

- Reparations for Blacks and Indigenous peoples
- Equal rights for women and other non-cis/hetero individuals across gender, sex orientation, and gender identity lines

### **Immigration**

Problem: Reduced immigration reduces the labor strength and intellectual competitiveness of the country.

- Every percentage point increase of immigrants with college educations raises the average number of patents/person by 12/3%.
- Each percentage point increase of immigrants with advanced degrees raises the average number of patents/person by 27%.

### Recommendations: Values-Driven Immigration and Foreign Policy

- Oppose White nationalism.
- End law enforcement raids on immigrant households, abolish ICE, and create a pathway to citizenship
- Reduce the bloated American war machine: stop spending on useless military equipment.
- Support Veterans and create a 21<sup>st</sup> Century GI Bill of Rights.
- Reconsider alliances with countries with poor human rights records.

### **Media**

Problem: Communications inequality

- Nearly one third of rural communities have no wireless connection, and a tenth have no access to broadband Internet.
- American media is the most polarized of 36 countries studied. Conservative media play up racial stereotypes to people who rarely interact with POC.
- More than two-thirds of Americans get their news on social media, much of which are false narratives.
- FB tailors our news-feeds to whatever we have recently clicked on the most and pages/groups like those on which we have lingered the longest time, narrowing our view of the full spectrum of available information.
- Fear mongers fix attention on small relative differences in access to wealth, power, resources, or treatment between poor and materially insecure groups that include all categories of people. They attribute White poverty to these small differences (e.g., minorities getting advantages over “oppressed poor whites” through equal opportunity regulations), rather than the broader system that created it – including poverty among Whites. Fear mongering is meant to distract us from the systems that actually cause oppression, dividing and conquering us.

#### Recommendations: Social Media Reform

- Break up the FB and Amazon data-sharing partnership.
- Establish an FCC bureau to regulate social media for false content and false user identities (bot networks that amplify the number of followers and false identities established by foreign governments and domestic terrorists).
- Protect user data privacy.

## **Food**

### Problem:

- One in eight people suffer food insecurity.
- Thirty percent of Americans 20-39 are obese, with high blood pressure and cholesterol and type two diabetes, partly because of insufficient access to healthy food at affordable prices.
- The poor always suffer more and worse in epidemics, including our current widespread food insecurity.
- In the 1990's the real price of fruits and vegetable went up 40% while the price of a can of Coke went down 80%. Cause: corn syrup, a key factor in obesity and downstream diseases.

### Recommendations: Food Reform

- Attack obesity, the single most impactful intervention for the state of American health.
- Improve food processing for healthier outcomes with subsidies for healthy foods.
- Reform and support SNAP, WIC, and the National School lunch program.
- Tax sugar-sweetened beverages.

### **The Bottom Line**

The root cause of the problems described above is economic inequity, expressed in different aspects of each problem. Psychological manipulation from broadcast, cable, and social media entities

exacerbates those problems. But the core of that psychological manipulation is also economic inequity – false narratives driving the impression of White victimhood among poor and middle-class whites, distracting them from the truth. The truth is that middle-class and poor people of all colors (and other superficial differences) would improve their opportunities for real, measurable success in their personal and financial security by finding common cause with each other to demand economic equity through federal and state laws and regulations.