

Empowerment

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 12, 1993

MEMORANDUM FOR Economy and Jobs Issue Group

FROM: Bonnie Deane

SUBJECT: Meeting with the Empowerment Network

As part of the welfare reform outreach, Jeremy Ben-Ami has suggested that our issue group should meet with the Empowerment Network. The Empowerment Network is described in the attachments that follow.

Where: OEOB room 440

When: 5:00 to 6:00 on July 15

Please call Sandy Mancini at 456-2801 if you are interested and need clearance into the OEOB.

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DATE: July 12, 1993

TO: Bonnie Dean
Office of Domestic Policy
The White House

FROM: David Caprara
The Empowerment Network

We have invited the following leading welfare reform advocates to attend a meeting with members of the Welfare Reform Working Group, Paul Diamond and Bruce Reed on Thursday, July 15 from 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM. Each presenter would take no more than 5 minutes to brief the working group on their particular area of welfare reform. This would be followed by Q's and A's and discussion. Please let me know if this is convenient and what information is needed to obtain clearance in to OEOB.

- I. Conference Synopsis
David Caprara, President
TEN-F
- II. Family and Responsibility
Robert Woodson, Sr.
National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise

Charles Ballard, President
National Institute for Responsible
Fatherhood and Family Development
(featured in the William Raspberry column last week)

Irene Johnson
LeClaire Courts Resident Management Council

III. "Full-Employment" Models / State Initiatives
Charles Hobbs, President
The Hobbs Company

Sam Brunelli, Executive Director
American Legislative Exchange Council

Sam Black
Consultant

Ramona Younger
Alexandria Tenant Council

IV. Asset Models
Bob Friedman
Corporation for Enterprise Development

Kathy Keeley
Corporation for Enterprise Development

Audley Evans, Executive Director
Tampa Housing Authority

Gussie Livingston
Family Day Care Homes
Tampa

Staff: Sharron Lipscomb

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The Empowerment Network Foundation (TEN-F) focuses on the development of strategies to help people achieve economic independence. While welfare reform and demonstration projects involving waivers effect important short-term goals, we believe there must be a fundamental revolution to replace the present welfare system with a new "earnings and asset-based" system which fosters support for individuals who exert responsibility for themselves and their families.

The Empowerment Network Foundation is bringing together a diverse group of people including welfare recipients and grassroots activists, leading scholars from the left and right, and state and federal decision-makers. From this working seminar, TEN-F will publish a journal on conference findings and papers presented and develop an implementation strategy for grassroots driven local, State and Federal actions.

The Washington Post

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1993

Espy Urges 'Empowerment' As New Anti-Poverty Policy

By Guy Gugliotta
Washington Post Staff Writer

Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy yesterday called for an anti-poverty policy that goes beyond traditional welfare and subsistence programs to promote independence and initiative among poor people, signaling that "empowerment" is an idea whose time has come—even for Democrats.

"We need to come to a better understanding about how poverty can be eradicated," Espy said. "Poverty has adamantly outlived the 'War on Poverty,' the New Deal and the Great Society; it has defied the 'Reagan Revolution' and Bush's 'kinder, gentler.' Poverty is here and it is strong. . . . We have got to do it better."

Espy's remarks opened a three-day conference held by The Empowerment Network, a newly formed nonprofit organization that promotes strategies to mobilize poor people to make their own decisions and create their own opportunities in housing, jobs and social action.

Empowerment was a watchword for a Bush administration intent on nurturing market forces and individual initiative in the nation's slums. But it was a buzzword for Democrats suspicious that conservatives wanted to use empowerment as an excuse to cripple government-mandated welfare, housing and social assistance programs.

Policies typically described as empowerment include tenant management and home ownership for low-income families, granting tax breaks and other advantages to companies willing to settle in "enterprise zones" in poverty-stricken areas, promotion of small business "micro-enterprises" among low-income entrepreneurs and active efforts to stimulate training, education and asset formation among welfare recipients.

President Clinton embraced many of these ideas during his campaign, treating them as if they had become part of a universal menu of anti-poverty alternatives rather than a Republican call to arms. His program to "end welfare as we know it," co-written and announced by Espy at the Democratic National Convention, incorporated many elements of the empowerment agenda.

And with a Democrat in the White House, there are increasing signs that empowerment is becoming politically correct for Democrats. The House Tuesday announced formation of a bipartisan "Congressional Empowerment Caucus," and Rep. Charles B. Rangel (D-N.Y.) has scheduled an "empowerment briefing" today with experts invited from around the country.

Espy, a former congressman from the Mississippi Delta, recalled his days as a "renegade Democrat" supporting empowerment policies among hostile colleagues, but showed the game had changed by promising to be "a consistent voice within the Clinton administration for an empowerment agenda." As agriculture secretary, Espy has control over food stamps, school lunches, feeding programs for pregnant women and new mothers, and a host of housing, lending and development projects for rural areas.

Espy also espouses the empowerment tenet that the effectiveness of anti-poverty policy should be measured in asset accumulation rather than income and consumption.

"We spend billions of dollars to help poor people subsist," he said. "But unless they can accumulate assets, the poor will always be poor."

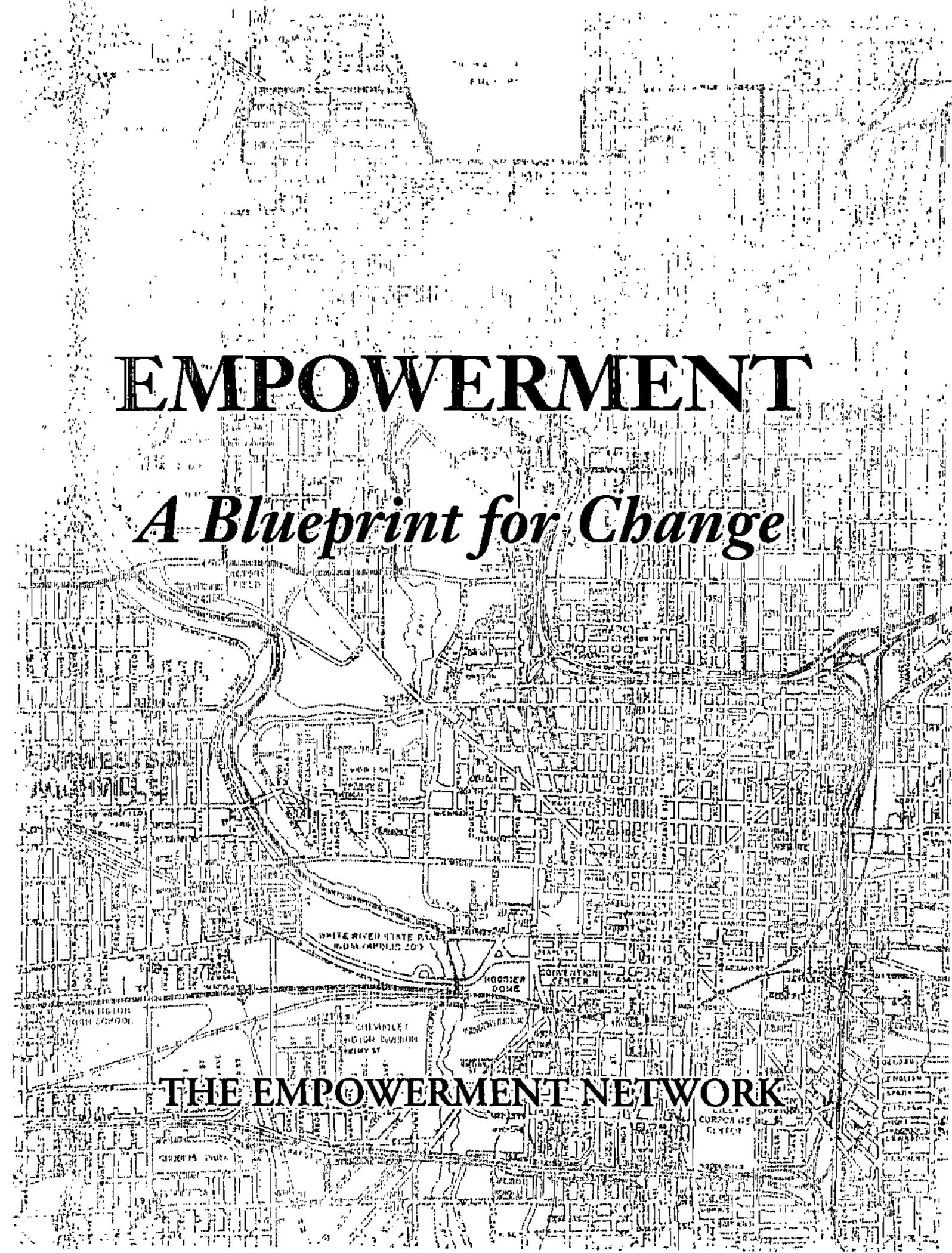
Owning your own home, he said, "is not a Republican idea; it is an American idea." If nothing else, he added, last year's Los Angeles riots showed that "you don't burn down what you own."

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EMPOWERMENT

A Blueprint for Change

THE EMPOWERMENT NETWORK