An old, staggering man stumbles up crooked stairs and onto a poorly lit porch. He unravels his worn out mat reflecting countless years of struggle and distress. He is hungry, tired, and alone. He is living in poverty. Poverty is a condition in which individuals lack security and are hindered from assuming basic responsibilities and enjoying fundamental human rights. We must end it, but how? There is a quote that reads, "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day, but teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime." As this bit of wisdom recognizes, to end the injustice of poverty and the hunger, stress, and oppression it creates, we must teach people to provide for themselves through asset-based career development and quality education for all.

Too often, high-poverty communities from the South Bronx to rural South America are perceived as worthless, places where people are ignorant and unable to offer anything of significance to society. This is simply not true. There is a rural village in Kenya named Umoja where women live in community with one another and utilize their skills as artisans to work against the tide of poverty. The trailblazers of Umoja sell their exquisitely-crafted jewelry twined with beautiful beads of multiple colors forming amazing eye catching patterns. They sell this jewelry to tourists that come to visit the now well-known village in Kenya. Using their localized skills, the women earn their income and support themselves, keeping the village clothed, sheltered, fed, and safe. These women are able to live well because they were able to tap into their existing banks of knowledge and make a sustainable living off of something they have been doing for years. Similarly, StartUp Box is a tech-based company in Hunts Point that provides video game testing jobs for men and women with experience in this field. Like the all-female village of Umoja, StartUp Box embraces a distinct skill set of a local population, including many unemployed and undereducated youth in the South Bronx, and creates an entry point for career development. What other valuable skills and bodies of knowledge do our high-poverty communities have that we are overlooking? The possibilities are endless. As governments and leaders around the world, we must seek to understand our vulnerable
populations, identify the abundance of strengths they possess, and create programs and systems that value their existing skills.

We cannot stop there. Building a strong education system is essential to the future of young individuals. Around the world, some 100 million children of primary school age do not attend school. This is unacceptable. In an ever-evolving global community we must provide quality education to all people, empowering them to lives of opportunity and economic freedom, and developing skills they don't have YET. It is no secret that additional academic achievement corresponds to higher earnings. To simplify this, more education equals less poverty. The Robin Hood Foundation, the largest anti-poverty organization in New York City, projects that high school graduates in the United States earn $6,500 more per year than those who don't graduate from high school. This amount increases even further for college graduates, and it is the difference between individuals barely scraping by and individuals thriving. We must invest in quality schools and educational programs all over the world to provide a sustainable solution to poverty. Global Potential and Hyde Leadership Charter School are examples of organizations that combat poverty through education and social action. Global Potential is a program that empowers youth to bring change to not only their community, but also to other countries like the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Senegal. As a member of this organization, we work with people from these countries in hopes of figuring out their problems and finding a solution. Similarly, our school, Hyde Leadership Charter School, is located in the highest risk community for children in New York City. Only 1 in 2 children from our district graduate high school on time. However, with hardworking students, dedicated teachers, extracurricular opportunities, learning resources, and family support, over 90% of students from Hyde graduate each year. As world leaders, I urge you to continue investing in great schools, and to eliminate any and all barriers that prevent children from learning. You sit where you sit because someone gave you a chance and an excellent education. Use your privilege and your power to empower others.

Do not underestimate the skills, ideas, and potential residing in high-poverty communities worldwide, and do not stand idly by while that potential is squandered. With asset-based career development programs and quality schools around the world, we can end poverty, and we must.
Believe in the brilliance of our brothers and sisters in high-poverty communities. Teach them to fish. We can eliminate poverty forever.