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Our economic comeback and the cure industry

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At Risk for Huntington's Disease

HD is a genetically caused brain disorder that causes uncontrollable bodily movements and robs people's ability to walk, talk, eat, and think. The final result is a slow, ugly death. Children of parents with HD have a 50-50 chance of inheriting the disease. There is no cure or treatment.

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SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 2009

Our economic comeback and the cure industry

As the unemployment lines grow and our economic crisis deepens, America's leadership of the world comes into question. Can a country that literally gambled on its financial future make a comeback?

Bankers, business people, and politicians must honestly correct the mistakes that took us to the brink of financial collapse.

But America also needs to plan for the future in a way that renews our leadership and inspires confidence.

President Barack Obama has spoken frequently of rebuilding the nation's infrastructure and developing green technologies that make us less dependent on oil and other pollutants. The government has already committed massive sums to these goals.

The president has also identified health care reform as essential for our future. There is huge potential in this area, but in order to realize it, but we need to look at health care in a new way.

From innovation to obesity

For a long time, we Americans were a nation of innovators. From people who tinkered in the garage at night to the great inventors and scientists working in the world's best laboratories, we created a cornucopia of new products and solved a myriad of problems. *Flash of Genius*, a movie released in 2008, captures the spirit of individual creativity still present in the 1950s and 1960s. Americans always had a "can do" attitude. No challenge seemed insurmountable.

But as the also film shows, large corporations helped snuff out that spirit.

And our wealth went to our heads, making us complacent, arrogant, and, in many cases, literally obese. Like the people in the animated film *Wall-E*, which I watched recently with my eight-year-old daughter, we have moved into an oasis built on ignorance and a total disconnect from reality.

Instead of innovating and producing, we became a service economy dominated by the financial sector. We have been living off the fat of the land.

In a world where so much of our work has been outsourced to China, India, and elsewhere, what will there be left for America to do? Will we become, as one influential congressman once sarcastically declared, a nation where everybody just delivers pizza to one another? How can we possibly lead the world again with vigor and vision?

A new industry

One way is to use our ingenuity to create new products that the whole

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[Huntington's Disease Lighthouse](#)
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world will want to buy. In the past we did this with cars, airplanes, computers, and a whole assortment of other inventions and goods that people everywhere wanted.

This new array of “products” should be treatments and cures for diseases and the procedures and medications that go along with them.

While much of the debate about our health care system promises to follow the old paradigm of public versus private, American versus European, we need to expand our vision of health care to include a *cure industry*. In this broader view health care is not a drain on society, as it is currently seen, but the motor that generates new wealth.

Thus the president and our leaders need to expand our vision of health care beyond the idea of simply controlling costs.

Seeking the end of disease

America’s call to action today should focus on the *elimination* of disease.

America proclaimed a war on poverty and another one against drugs. What we need now is a mission to find treatments and cures for *all* diseases.

Strangely, no leader in more than a generation has stepped forth to declare a campaign against disease, even when we had federal budget surpluses and a booming economy in the 1990s.

To carry out this mission, we need once again the same "can do" spirit that brought us the Marshall Plan, the construction of the Interstate Highway System, and the Apollo space project. And we need a new generation of tinkers and dreamers to provide the solutions.

Our leaders need to help create this vision by focusing on what has always been America’s great plan: the pursuit of a quality life for all people.

Leadership and accountability

Sadly, in our recent history the presidency has meant a flight from leadership rather than the willingness to assume it bravely. President Bill Clinton squandered the opportunities of the post-Cold War peace dividend and, instead of resigning in the wake of the Monica Lewinsky affair, stayed on and devalued the office. Instead of calling Americans to volunteer for the armed forces or other new initiatives after the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush sheepishly asked Americans to shop and take a vacation.

Focused as they are on the economy, President Obama and our legislators should boldly announce a plan to eradicate diseases, from AIDS to Huntington’s. Our university laboratories, biotech companies, and pharmaceutical industry should collaborate to invent new treatments and drugs that will form the next generation of products “made in America” and desired around the world.

Educators and government officials at all levels must rekindle our youths’ interest in science, math, and engineering, so that a new generation of Americans can take charge of the cure industry and pursue many other worthy goals in the fields of science and technology.

Public-private partnership will be crucial in this initiative, as it was in so many of the great achievements of our past. This will require greater accountability and productivity on both the part of government and industry and especially of the National Institutes of Health and the large pharmaceutical companies, both of which have suffered a loss of prestige in recent years. All the players involved need to be more agile and innovative.

This new mission will require us to retool America economically and morally. And, instead of borrowing our way out of our economic crisis, it provides a way to *create* our way out.

Posted by [Gene Veritas](#) at [12:30 AM](#)      

2 comments:



 **[lba said...](#)**

Great Commentary! How do "we" get your ideas to the legislators for consideration? It HAS to be done. Lou

[3:54 PM, April 19, 2009](#)

 **[Relenza said...](#)**

Great idea with dedication words so we should work to make it eligible and make the work move on so that we can have a great life with less risk, enjoy life with great pleasure

[3:50 AM, May 07, 2009](#)

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