

Stuart J Mitchell III, PathStone CEO Emeritus

Remarks to NWA on the occasion of receiving the 2024 Founders Award
April 11, 2024 at the celebration dinner embedded in the
NeighborWorks Executive Symposium.

I am honored and humbled to be acknowledged by NeighborWorks America with the 2024 NeighborWorks Founders Award. NWA honors our Founders of NWA by annually recognizing our transformative leaders who reflect the values and spirit that led to the founding of NWA. We are all indebted to those early visionaries. It is a huge privilege to share in the annual celebration of our NWA founders!!

I am CEO Emeritus of PathStone Corporation, organized in the late 60s to serve migrant and seasonal farmworkers in upstate New York, and I was there!! Today under the visionary leadership of our CEO Alex Castro, we operate in nine states and Puerto Rico with a budget of \$100 million a year serving more than 45,000 people yearly.

PathStone was founded under the auspices of Pres. Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty through the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO)

OEO which was birthed out of our national civil rights and anti-poverty movements of the 60's

57 years ago, A powerful speech was delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 14, 1967 at Stanford University.

King highlighted the civil rights struggles of the 60s and stated "it is much easier to guarantee the right to vote than it is to guarantee the right to live in sanitary, decent housing conditions. It is much easier to integrate a public park than to make genuine quality integrated

education a reality. And so today we are struggling for something which says we will demand genuine equality”

NeighborWorks America, established by Congress in 1978 was created to address the growing disinvestment in our local communities.

PathStone under the name Rural Opportunities, Inc. became a chartered member in 1996. For 28 years PathStone has been and continues to be committed to the mission of NWA.

Like every charter member of NWA, PathStone attempts to confront Dr. King prediction in 1967 “I can see no more dangerous trend in our country than the constant developing of predominantly Negro (African-American) center cities ringed by white suburbs. This is only inviting social disaster”

Thanks to the seminal work of Richard Rothstein through his book “The Color of Law” we are beginning understand and come to terms with the impact of decades upon decades of government sanctioned housing discrimination against African-Americans. Redlining segregated our communities throughout the country.

NeighborWorks America is a beacon of hope in our collective efforts to break down those insidious racial barriers that stand in the way of community integration and economic security for all.

As a founder and one who has labored in the vineyards of social and economic justice and wealth building for more than 50 years, (actually 59 years this summer) I know firsthand, that whatever success we have experienced AND will experience is not simply there for the asking or taking.

We've had to struggle, advocate, stretch resources, take enormous risks, and develop the entrepreneurial drive to do our best, and then a little more, each and every day. NWA with its unique congressional charter is an enormous national resource which absolutely cannot be taken for granted!!

As King said in his 1967 speech at Stanford "now let me say finally that we have difficulties ahead but I haven't despaired. Somehow I maintain hope in spite of hope. And I talked about the difficulties and how hard the problems will be as we tackle them. But I want to close by saying this afternoon I still have faith in the future. And I still believe that these problems can be solved. And so I will NOT join anyone who will say that we still can't develop a Coalition of Conscience."

For NWA I believe our Coalition of Conscience is strong and will remain strong as long as we will make a collective commitment to:

- Work every day to build our own Coalitions of Conscience in every community, urban, suburban and rural, throughout OUR great country.
- Do whatever is necessary to convince our congressional delegations across this country that we are worthy of their trust and confidence in NWA as a partner and ally in the call for genuine equality.
- Commit whatever resources, including personal resources, that are necessary to ensure that National NeighborWorks Association (NNA) leadership has whatever they need to effectively advocate for the NWA mission and have an effective daily presence in the Halls of Congress

- Speak and act with unwavering commitment to full and unfettered Integration within every nook and cranny of our communities; there is no compromise worthy of consideration.
- Ensure that the board, staff and volunteer leadership of our organizations reflect the values and culture of the communities we serve.
- Continue to grow our leadership from within the ranks of our movement and create the institutional structures that have the capacity to demand genuine equality that will eliminate structural racism and poverty.
- Most importantly: do an extraordinary job each and every day: together we can Achieve Excellence.

Tonight, I am exceedingly proud to share this NWA founder's recognition with each one of you. As we collectively commit to join Coalitions of Conscience we will create the Will Power to fulfill Dr. King's call for universal sanitary, decent housing conditions and genuine, quality integrated education.

I still have faith in our collective future!! And, after a half-century and more of hard work I still believe the issues we confront every day WILL be addressed through Coalitions of Conscience and Communities of Excellence we wholeheartedly embrace within our beloved NWA network.

May it be so!!