

The Opportunity Agenda: A Bold Democratic Plan to Grow the Middle Class

Winston Fisher

Sly James

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The Opportunity Agenda is a practical, persuasive blueprint for refocusing the Democratic Party to serve the concrete needs of the people.

NYC real estate executive and social advocate Winston Fisher and former Kansas City mayor Sly James's *The Opportunity Agenda* draws from experience and is concerned with growing the middle class. It includes a convincing plan to reorganize the Democratic Party's goals so that they support the financial health of US citizens.

Asserting that the Democrats could increase the public's trust by refocusing the party's messaging and changing its actions to increase opportunities for all, this political text proposes various places to focus political energy. Its topical chapters cover Pre-K childcare to support working parents, education that leads to employment, health care reform, strategies for building infrastructure, and small business growth, demonstrating that the party has significant room for improvement on all fronts. Each topic is explored in a thorough manner, supported by excellent discussions of the past and current needs of the American people, with historical context, as with notes on the decreased focus on vocational education in high schools.

The book also contrasts previous and current needs in its discussion of healthcare, showing that young people entering the job market are now less likely to find a full-time job with benefits than previous generations were, and asserting that most contemporary career paths involve more employers than did those of the past. These comparisons help to highlight the failures of the current system. The book is persuasive in asserting that concrete change is necessary. General goals are suggested for each topic, with examples of local and statewide solutions to obstacles that keep Americans in poverty.

Focused on renewing the mass appeal of the Democratic Party, and on rebuilding trust, the book's coverage favors topics that have already been shown to help people and to engage voter interest. It shows that most Democrats don't prioritize progressive ideals, and argues that focus should be put on developing and strengthening programs that train and support workers and their families, on making medical bills more manageable, and on improving the safety of the roads, topics that do appeal to many left-leaning voters. Such claims are strengthened by data, and the changes that the book proposes are further bolstered by success stories from social programs and individuals who benefitted from similar changes around the US, with examples from Canada included for contrast. The included anecdotes have real, human appeal, infusing big ideas with pathos; they help to make the book accessible as well as authoritative.

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MEREDITH GRAHL COUNTS (July 29, 2020)

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