What is O

and why is it so important?

A little bit of backstory

- **I'm not from a good place**

- Orangeburg was at one point both the "**crack capital**" and the "**murder capital**" of the United States… **simultaneously**.

- Crime rate is **higher** than **99%** of all US cities.

- Columbia, South Carolina was recently listed in the **top 25 most dangerous** cities in the country by the **FBI**.

- I went to more **funerals** in high school than most people go to in their entire lives. They call it "**Killumbia**" for a reason.

- I would **much** rather spend a **whole night** on the streets of **Oakland** than a **few hours** on the streets of **Columbia**.

CRIME INDEX

1

(100 is safest)

Safer than 1% of U.S. Cities

In **Orangeburg**

- Many of my friends are **poor**

- **Drug abuse** is rampant

- I make **much** more money than most of them

- I want to **help** people

This is a bad combination.

In the **Bay Area**

- Many of my friends are **poor**

- **Drug abuse** is rampant

- I make **much** more money than most of them

- I want to **help** people

This may sound familiar…

Poverty, injustice, and racism continue

I could show pictures of **anywhere** in America and they would look **identical**.

Poverty is **systemic**.

Poverty will not **stop**.

Poverty will get **worse**.

More money does not solve the problem. It makes the problem

worse

O is my **response**

What I **did**

- I found opportunties to help as many people as I could and never turned down chances to help even if I thought it might not work.

- Believing in people is free.

What I **did**

- Gave away my entire savings account and more

- Put 15 people (including children) into homes

- Helped 7 people get off meth or heroin
  (with mixed results)

- Trained people in tech, acting as a mentor or a coach, sometimes playing tech support to help them get better jobs than they would have been able to otherwise.

- Guided people toward making healthier life choices

None of these were bad ideas.

What I **did**

- When I ran out of money I decided to form an organization to start addressing poverty as a system instead of a symptom.

- Created a series of proofs of concept for an automated system to collect data.

None of these were bad ideas.

Systemic **problems** call for systemic **responses**

What I learned about **poverty**

- Parts of my social circle had almost **no view** of poverty while other parts had virtually **no access** to people who were *not in poverty*.

  Wealth gaps *are* social gaps.

What I learned about **poverty**

- Poverty creates a mindset, a way of thinking. It can be learned and it can be unlearned.

  Social gaps *are* **wealth gaps.**

What I learned about **poverty**

- Social relationships are worth cash money. When someone's back is against the wall any social relationship that can help is worth using even if it costs the relationship.

" Running out of money is running out of trust."

Killu Sanborn, Managing Director of Oxford Finance

What I learned about **people**

- Most people are honest most of the time, even dishonest people.

- A little goes a long way. The less I give the more grateful they feel. Conversely, the more I give, the less grateful they feel.

Homeless people want homes

Helping **helps**.
If it *doesn't* help,
it **isn't helping**.

What I learned about **addiction**

- Relapses happen. They should be forgiven.

- Shame does not help recovery

- It is absolutely my responsibility to secure my own stuff around addicts. They are not in control of their decisions

If someone is addicted do not give them money.

What I learned about **homelessness**

- Almost all of the people you see on the streets are "visibly" homeless

- Most homeless people are **not** visibly homeless.

- Invisible homelessness is **invisible.** It happens on couches, in squat houses, in shelters, in tents, hotels, vans, cars, boats, illegally parked RVs, etc

What I learned about the government

- 84% of people don't believe that government services currently meet the needs of the people.

- Fraud is perceived to be rampant and accountability is low or often misdirected.

- "If they give it to rich people, they call it a subsidy. If they give it to poor people, they call it a handout." MLK

What I learned about the **system**

- If your home was **repossessed**, your credit is shot and you can't buy another house, so you rent an apartment.

- If you then get **evicted** from that apartment, you can't get another apartment.

- What are you **supposed** to do?

What I learned about rich people *100k - 200k income bracket

- They give **very little** to their friends, family, church or really anybody until something similar happens to them.

- They feel **justified** in doing this, sometimes even **virtuous**

- Many know they're not doing the right thing and feel that they should be doing **more** to help people but the previous slides talked them out of it.

Poverty is scary.

Money reduces
empathy