

Ideas for Life

One of the amazing things about this writing project is this: it's been bringing all sorts of interesting and inspiring people into my life. Another of the many, many benefits of putting yourself out there, I guess! The idea behind this new section of the newsletter is to share with all of you some of the coolest things that come across my desk each month. So, without further ado:

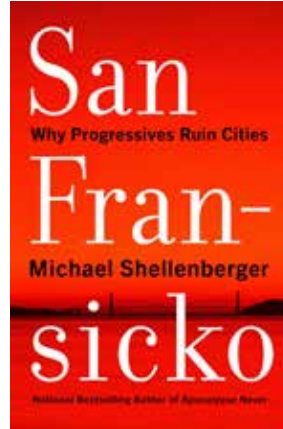


1. An App – Samaritan.city

I cannot imagine a better place to start than here. I learned of the Samaritan App when an employee of the company reached out to me on LinkedIn. Apparently, she found me by looking for “thought leaders” in Los Angeles on Google. Imagine that! Anyway, the Samaritan App is an innovative new tool designed to empower ordinary citizens to offer effective help to individuals experiencing homelessness. After running a very encouraging pilot program in Seattle, they decided to take-on the beast that is Los Angeles. As the name suggests, the app is designed to tap into the vast reservoirs of latent good Samaritan energy in the community by providing a practical, effective means of engagement. One of the big problems with the homelessness crisis is that it's so complex of an issue that well-intentioned people just don't know what to do. Samaritan's app tries to solve that problem.

Samaritan partners with an established homeless services provider to onboard and manage the process with individuals in need. Then it creates a virtual support network for people experiencing homelessness made up of ordinary citizens like you and me. As a member of this virtual support group, you can do something simple like offer encouragement via text message (your identity is completely private) or provide financial support, even in very modest amounts. The program is goals based and your role as a concerned citizen is simply to be a piece of a larger virtual social safety network to help individuals make their way back to housing stability.

Who knows how effective this will be. But it's a great idea and I encourage anyone who is even remotely interested in helping out in the fight against homelessness to try it out!



2. A Book – “San Fransicko” by Michael Shellenberger

“San Fransicko” is a powerful contrarian examination of the forces behind the homelessness crisis. Shellenberger examines the history of the policy response to rising homelessness and crafts a compelling case for why well-intentioned policies like harm reduction and housing first might be actually making things worse. The author's willingness to talk about the things we aren't supposed to talk about reveals something that policymakers should pay close attention to: we have developed a system that isn't adequately structured or funded to deal with the devastating new drugs that have emerged on our streets. While housing affordability certainly has played a role in fueling this crisis, it's not simply a matter of housing.



3. A Workout – Heart Check

As many of you know, I consider working out as one of the absolute non-negotiable necessities in life. For the last 5 years, my workout routine has involved daily visits to the Reebok Lab—clearly the best gym in Los Angeles, run by my amazing friend and coach Yumi.

If you want to get a sense for what I'm doing every day at 6am, here's a workout (in slightly modified form) from the Reebok Lab worth trying. I've named this “Heart Check” because if you do it right, you'll get a good sense of just how strong your heart is (and in every sense of the word!):

Every 90 seconds for 5 sets do 5 Front Squats (with a moderate weight, maybe 50% of max)

Then

For 3min do as many Reverse Alternate Lunges as possible, while holding 50lb dumbbells in each hand

Rest 1min

For 3min do as many Kettlebell Goblet Squats as possible with a 70lb kettlebell (look this one up if you don't know how to do it).

Rest 1min

For 3min do as many Air Squats as possible

Your score is the total number of repetitions completed in all 3, 3-minute sessions. The idea is to work as hard as you possibly can to get as many repetitions in in the allotted time. If the weights listed here are too heavy, scale accordingly.

In case you were wondering, my score was 175.



4. A Website—The Red Hand Files

Nick Cave is a creative genius, best known for his work as a singer-songwriter, composer and screenplay author. The Red Hand Files project is Cave's unique approach to interacting with his followers. He invites people to submit questions and responds with a short writing, in letter format, to the one that inspires him the most. This experiment has produced incredible results, both in terms of quality of the questions that come in and in Cave's thoughtful and artistic responses. So, if questions like this sound interesting to you:

"If you could live forever (and remain healthy in body and mind) would you do it?"

"What is the utility of suffering?"

"Do you have hope?"

"I'm 17 years old, what can you tell me about love?"

...

Check out the site!

Fun Fact. In my research, I discovered that Cave wrote a wildly imaginative sequel to "Gladiator"—by far my all-time favorite movie, by the way. The script, written at the urging of his friend Russell Crowe, involves Maximus being resurrected by the Gods, living through vast parts of history and even leading modern day armies. As crazy as it sounds, I would love to see something like that! □