



Global Pathfinder Summit

Charlottesville, VA

May 20-24, 2019

Welcome Remarks

Neal Piper, Executive Director of the Presidential Precinct

Neal Piper:

Hello everybody. Welcome to Charlottesville, Virginia. So good to see so many familiar faces. It's like family. It's like a big family reunion this week. I'm really excited to see everybody. Thanks for making the journey and many of you long journeys. I've heard stories of 30-hour flights. We also have our local Virginians that are here that traveled across the state. It really means a lot to us all that you're here with us.

My name is Neal Piper. I'm the executive director of the Presidential Precinct. I'm really honored to be here with you all to kick off the 2019 Global Pathfinder Summit. It's going to be a tremendous week. The Presidential Precinct started six years ago and when the organization was founded, I knew this is where I needed to be. I doubt any of you have ever had that problem, right? Where you see some kind of challenge or problem and you just feel it in your gut, that's where you're supposed to commit your time and talent.

And I knew this for myself and moved the Charlottesville in 2013 after a career in global health. And in that work, in that role, I met young people like everyone in this room who are working to create better communities around the world. After traveling to over 60 countries around the world, there was really one thread from all the stories of leaders that I met with. And it's that young people were not sitting on the sidelines for change to happen anymore, we're rising up. We're taking initiative and we're investing in our communities and moving ideas forward to make our communities better for the next generation.

And we're all here because we have found different and successful pathways to tackle big pressing challenges in our communities. Although we all come from different circumstances and dealing with unique challenges, there's really one thing that's binding us all together, and that's our vision and our common goal to build a better future. And this goal is really at the work of

what we all do as leaders, really our guiding North Star. But it's also the foundation to the work we do at the Presidential Precinct, the nets to make lifelong investments in emerging leaders who are looking to build a better future for the next generation.

I want to take a little time to really focus on the lifelong investment. Throughout this week you'll not only hear from extraordinary leaders and speakers, but you'll really get the opportunity to roll up your sleeves, engage one another, share what's working in one country or community with another, and think through best practices that can really move your communities forward. Because although we have unique circumstances, there's common problems that we can address together.

And as a result of this week coming together, we're going to develop a unique global network. You'll develop your own family, your own new connections that will continue through life. And it's something that's really important to us, not to just build programs. You're here for a week, you go home and you continue doing things that you were doing before. But it's to create a lifelong commitment and we will continue these ideas moving forward and these relationships through the Presidential Precinct network, you'll know that there's some leaders in this room that have been here. This is their second time, third time back to Charlottesville, and it's really extraordinary to see the power of the network working together to improve the world.

You are all chosen. Many of you may be wondering, why am I here? And you were chosen because there's a big talented applicant pool of really extraordinary leaders around the world that were selected. It's because of the commitment and the impact that you've made as a civic leader. It's really extraordinary. I feel so humbled to be associated with everyone and I really hope to get an opportunity to get to know your stories more personally over the next week.

Whether you're working in South Africa, working in food or water security or from Bolivia working to help provide economic opportunities for marginalized citizens or working in Virginia to lobby for funding for Virginia education, you're all doing really amazing things. What's amazing to me is that if you can accomplish all these things on your own, imagine what we can do together. And together this week we're going to talk about the future democracy and the role that this strong foundation plays in our work around the globe.

This week you'll have the opportunity to talk about the biggest issues that we're facing in our world today. We'll talk about social innovations that are empowering communities. You'll get an opportunity to really define your own leadership journey. I think one of the most powerful things about stepping away from your work, and I know you all have very busy schedules, so it's really hard to get away, but then just think introspectively about yourself, the path you're on, the leadership journey you're on, and kind of, is this a time to steer it? It's just a time to change course. Think of these ideas and move forward and you'll have that opportunity this week. It's really no coincidence that we're having this conversation here where Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, they put pen to paper, they were here, they built friendships that kind of think through the foundations of what became modern-day democracy around the world.

And we're relying on you to really form a global community of thoughtful, innovative, bold, powerful civic leaders who have the mission to improve our world.

Looking at your bios and knowing many of you in this room, we're really counting on you to really move our world forward. It's time to get the work and I'm really excited to be a part of your journey moving forward. In closing, there are some people I like to thank because, without these people, this week simply wouldn't have been possible. First I'd like to thank American Evolution, whose vision to think through this important initiative of bringing leaders around the world came to life as Kathy mentioned three years ago. This summit simply wouldn't be possible without their support.

I'd also like to thank the University of Virginia's bicentennial commission, UVA's Miller Center who we're partnering with, with the presidential ideas festival. Also the Department of State and the J-1 Visa Exchange Program, The United Way, and Atlas Corp, I encourage all of you as you're walking around in the hallway, introducing yourself to folks, if you see someone with a name tag from one of these organization, just thank them because it's because of these leaders and others that Kathy mentioned that we're able to be here this week.

I'm really pleased to welcome our next guest Ambassador Steve Mull. He's really going to set the stage for the summit, putting the concepts of citizenship, civic engagement, and democracy into context. Please join me in welcoming Ambassador Steve Mull, vice provost of Global Affairs at the University of Virginia.

The Role of Citizens in a Democracy

The Honorable Stephen D. Mull, Vice Provost for Global Affairs, the University of Virginia

The Honorable Stephen D. Mull:

Good morning everybody, it's great to be here with you and Neil, thank you very much for that kind introduction. On behalf of our president here at UVA, Jim Ryan, it's really a great honor and pleasure to welcome each of you here to the University of Virginia for the Global Pathfinders Summit. I want to pay a special tribute to Jim Murray and other colleagues at the presidential precinct for conceiving and organizing this week's very special events with the generous support of our friends at American Evolution, whom we've heard from today already. But most of all, I want to express the university's deepest admiration for you and our respect for you. The youth leaders who honor us with your presence from across Virginia and around the world.

In these days of crisis and division in democratic governance, which we'll spend time talking about this week, it is you and your work every single day in education, community development, accessible healthcare, environmental protection, criminal justice, women's empowerment, and economic progress. It's that work that you do that inspires us that the future of democracy is a bright one regardless of what we may see in the headlines today. We meet here as Neil mentioned in the shadow of Thomas Jefferson, the author of America's Declaration of

Independence, and the founder of this university. The early drafts of his declaration were filled with very messy edits, crossed out words and various notes in the margins that today give us extraordinary insight into Jefferson's process as a writer, the political debates and philosophies, competing philosophies that swirled around the American colonies at the time, and the very difficult task of building consensus. Something that all of you already have strong experience with.

But one element of those early drafts had mystified historians for many years. It was clear that in his draft there was one word so offensive, so egregious that on second thought, Jefferson wanted to remove all evidence that he had ever used it in this historic document. Where that word had once appeared on his document there were signs of furious smudging and erasing, where he had obviously sought to remove all traces of it. What was that word? Well, thanks to modern technology, just a few years ago, we were finally able to discover what he tried so desperately to eliminate. That word was used in referring to his country, men and women. And once he wiped that from the document, he replaced it with the word citizens. Now other phrases from this historic document such as all men are created equal unalienable rights and life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness have survived to this day inspiring millions around the world in their own search for freedom.

Yet for me, nothing better represents the historical impact of the declaration of independence than that one simple edit, which changed the word subjects to citizens. Because citizenship is the very essence of what it means to be a democracy. The very opposite of systems that had treated people as subjects under the firm control of Kings, popes, dictators, militaries, or colonizers. For in a democracy, it is the citizens who should be and must be the masters of all. How do we understand citizenship in a democracy today? Citizens are the ultimate source of political authority. The people in whose name government officials make and enforce laws and whose rights as free individuals should be protected by strong, impartial institutions like the courts that ensure equality before the law for all citizens. And that guarantees the freedom to exercise the rights we hold so dear, such as freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom to move, freedom to learn, and freedom to fairly prosper.

Citizenship is the most important element of a democracy. Yet we know from our experiences around the world today that citizenship and the democratic institutions designed to protect it are fragile. Our institutions are susceptible to distortion and manipulation by populists, demagogues, economic powers, and authoritarians who claim to defend democracy while practicing the very opposite of it. In the 1980s, I worked as a diplomat in communist Poland, which styled itself as a people's democracy. Though there was no freedom of speech, no freedom of assembly, and no freedom to organize independent political parties beyond the control of the communist party. This prompted one of my Polish friends to tell me a joke, "Steve." He said, "Do you know what the differences are between democracy and people's democracy?" He asked, "I don't know." He said, "Well, it's the same difference as between a chair and an electric chair."

Later working in apartheid South Africa, the white government had created a fiction that only whites were truly South African citizens while black South Africans actually belong to many

different independent tribes that were each entitled to their own citizenship within the borders of wasted plots of land with few sustainable resources.

Of course, this was not citizenship at all but rather a sham rationale designed to prevent the emergence of true democracy in which everyone in South Africa had equal rights under the law and equal access to the economy, education, and to healthcare. Today around the world, including here in America, we see continuing and new efforts to undermine the powers and relevance of citizenship and the institutions that protect it. We see invasions of privacy that harvest and monetize our personal data in the best case and aim to control and suppress us in the worst. We see demagogues both in and outside of government marshaling forces through social media to launch violent campaigns against minorities, interfere in elections, and undermine our confidence in democratic institutions.

We see the free press falling under increasing attack as fake news for no other crime than reporting the truth. Increasingly making it harder for citizens to understand what the truth is. We see governments looking to suppress or distort the sacred democratic right to vote, making it more difficult to remove authoritarian governments and leaders from office. We see demagogues spreading fear of outsiders as a means of mobilizing political support. And we see increasing tendencies to disregard scientific fact in the name of some artificial version of reality, usually aimed at keeping the authoritarians in power. Immature democracies, most of us typically understand citizenship in terms of what it gives to us, the right to vote in fairly organized elections based on universal suffrage, the right to free speech and expressing our political views, the right to worship the God of our choice. We're not to worship any God at all. The right to freely organize, the rights to security, and to privacy. And in some societies, the right to basic income, healthcare, and education.

These rights are certainly important and a major reason why most of us in fact prefer to be citizens in a democracy because it is that collection of rights that gives us as human beings the ability to realize our full potential to live our lives according to our interests, our passions, and our abilities. Yet there is something much more important than the simple rights we get in a democracy for if we do not exercise... for we have a sacred obligation and responsibility to exercise those rights. For if we do not exercise, then vigorously and assertively history shows that citizens in democracies will gradually lose those rights leading to an end of democracy. In the words of T.S. Elliot, not with a bang, but a whimper. This is the most important element of citizenship in a democracy.

Making Jefferson's transition from subject to citizen means not just enjoying the benefits of those rights, but taking personal responsibility for asserting them. I'd like you all to take a moment to think now of your own personal political heroes. What did they do to earn your admiration? Why are they an example for you? I'd be willing to wager that most of them persevered at great personal risk, sometimes losing their lives or their freedom along the way. To assertively exercise a democratic right on behalf of us all.

That's certainly true of my own personal political heroes. Harriet Tubman, who in the 19th century repeatedly returned to the Southern United States to leave slaves to freedom on the underground railroad at great personal risk. She reportedly told those in her care, "If you hear the dogs keep going. If you see the torches in the woods, keep going. If they're shouting after you, keep going. Don't ever stop. If you want to taste the freedom, keep going."

Susan B. Anthony, who in her struggle to win the right to vote for women in the United States faced a criminal trial for trying to vote in the presidential election of 1872. When the judge declared that she was guilty and imposed a stiff fine, she stood up in the courtroom and defiantly told the bad judge, "I shall never pay \$1 of your unjust penalty," so intimidating the judge that he decided against jailing her.

Martin Luther King, who spent many nights in jail and ultimately lost his life in his struggle to demand equal rights for all in America, regardless of their skin color, ultimately succeeded in winning major new legislation to protect the economic and voting rights of African Americans.

Lech Wałęsa, the modest shipyard electrician who refused to accept the Polish communist government's attempts to stop workers from organizing to demand freedom and their rights as workers and endured a painful separation in detention from his family, only to go on and lead to the end of communism in central and Eastern Europe in 1989.

Nelson Mandela, who spent nearly 28 years in prison because of his commitment that all South Africans, regardless of their race, deserve the rights of full rights of democratic citizenship. Refusing numerous government attempts to compromise that principle until he finally walked free out of prison in February, 1990 and went on to be victorious as president at South Africa's first democratic elections.

Unfortunately, for every single one of these heroes, there are tens of thousands of us who don't care enough to exercise our rights of citizenship. Last week in South Africa's national elections, reports indicate only about 46% of the population turned out to vote despite the enormous sacrifices of their forebears that gave all South Africans the right to vote only 25 years ago.

Political leaders make emotional charges that are demonstrably false in their attempts to hide inconvenient facts. Yet their political allies decide often not to speak out in the truth, often out of fear of losing their own political power. And so many average citizens remain silent when demagogues demonize minorities failing to understand that by remaining silent, they are paving the way for their own demonization in the future.

Fortunately, despite this indifference to the mounting threats against democratic citizenship, there are still countless people like you around the world who bravely stand up for all of us in asserting democratic rights. Those who refuse to remain silent and who demand justice when the economically or politically powerful sexually assault them. The scientists who risk their jobs in asserting that yes, the earth's climate is changing and we are in increasing danger unless we change our ways. The community leaders who risk retribution for standing up to demand justice

for the victims of racially discriminatory policing. The citizens here in Charlottesville who stood up against violent white supremacy two years ago. Voting activists around the world who risked danger to fight for the right to vote for all citizens. The brave reporters who write the truth and who pay for it with severe government abuse and sometimes even with their lives. And the courageous girls in countries that deny them an education who go to school despite the risk of severe attacks against them.

These and so many others are the heroes of democratic citizenship today. They're not necessarily older or experienced, they're not all that well educated, neither are they necessarily wealthy. What unites them is the passionate commitment to exercising their democratic citizenship rights. They and countless others like them deserve the support of you, the future leaders of the democratic world. If we want to preserve our democratic citizenship, it is you who must act. As we go through this week of discussion and reflection, I encourage you to think about whose democratic rights are most at risk in your own individual communities. And what you were going to do as a leader to help them assert those rights.

If you leave this week more committed to help others exercise their rights against the ongoing efforts to take them away, I know the future of our democratic societies will be stronger and brighter. Thank you very much. I wish you a good week here.

I think we have a few minutes. I would love to hear any thoughts or questions that any of you have before we move on to the next event. Thank you. I think we have people circulating with microphones.

Speaker 2:

Just raise your hand if you'd like to speak.

The Honorable Stephen D. Mull:

There in the back.

Liziane Silva:

Hi, thank you for a great presentation. My name is Liziane. I'm a social entrepreneur from Brazil, and I was wondering from your perspective, could you speak a bit about how the internet is changing how democracy works and how interacts, and how we can as people who are very, let's say familiar with the technology and what's going on. How can we leverage this even more in institutions that are not really responding to us? Thank you.

The Honorable Stephen D. Mull:

Well, thank you very much for that extremely topical and relevant question. The internet and in particular social media has really transformed how democracies operate today in almost every country around the world. And it's changed almost every element of governance. I remember when I served as ambassador to Poland from 2012 to 2015, some of my colleagues said, you need to open a Twitter account and start using it because that's a great way to conduct diplomacy. I was like, what? I'm used to conducting diplomacy inside ministries and conference

rooms, and almost everything you talk about in diplomacy is pretty sensitive, but okay, I'll give it a try. And within a couple of weeks of opening my very first Twitter account, I was amazed at the power as it represented a tool in helping to shape public debates, helping to bring more facts to the attention in terms of mobilizing support for worldwide initiatives that the United States government was hoping to launch.

And I think that's true in every element of especially representative democracy, is that social media offers an immediate channel to assess how you're doing, what's important to people, what would they like you to accomplish as their leaders and their representatives. At the same time, there are enormous risks and dangers to democracy that lie within this institution of social media.

In our own elections in 2016, we were able to see outsiders who dramatically changed the course of our own internal political debate in terms of deciding whom to elect as our next president. It is clear that social media companies are collecting data that they use. In the best case scenario, they're trying to sell you things, but in the worst case scenarios and other more authoritarian governments around the world are using this information to anticipate who is going to oppose them.

So it is a field that is long overdue for careful attention by democratic governance. On the one hand, freedom of speech, I think all of us would agree that is the central component of democracy. And so any effort to limit that freedom of speech is a danger we all need to fight against. But yet when there are forces who don't particularly feel democratically, we need those who are looking to manipulate and use these tools to advance their non-democratic objectives. We need democracies to figure out how to stop that from happening. And it's going to be a work in progress, I think for a long time to come in terms of figuring out how you protect the freedom of speech while making sure that these extremely powerful tools are not used in the end to shut down freedom of speech.

So I think all of us have a lot to learn from each other in democratic governance around the world on how best to do that. Certainly in your own communities, you will find, I'm sure you do already, that social media is an incredibly valuable tool in organizing and supporting the work that you're doing, but you're going to be on the front lines of experiencing that. And so we look forward to hearing your observations about how we can prevent this very powerful tool from being turned on those of us who promote democracy in the end. Thank you.

Joshua Eyaru:

Thank you very much. My name is Joshua Eyaru, I'm an Atlas Corps Fellow from Uganda. I have like a follow-up question from the same social media topic. So when you look at it like from the perspective of African governments, there is a challenge that most people who can't speak up, they have been able to use social media as a tool to voice out toward a wish like they should say out, because you may not have the opportunity to speak up in public gatherings, but people feel comfortable when they're behind a computer and they feel that security.

But unfortunately, I wouldn't want to quote but like it so happens that governments have started using social media or whatever you do on the internet; they've begun passing threats to people who are speaking up, and it has imposed a lot of security issues to most of the people who have tried to be advocates using this tools.

So my question would be like how can we protect such people? Because most of them do not have a technical background, they've just managed to sign up for Facebook, they've been able to use Twitter, but that's all they know. They may not be able to have avenues of how they can protect themselves when they're online, and they have received a lot of threats. Some of these threats like in my country have always been licked and people have been able to share screenshots of government or parties who are able to send them direct messages in their inbox threatening them that what you're doing on social media, please stop it. And these are people who are speaking up on issues that are really very important. And so my concern is on the security part of the individuals who are involved in this kind of activism, how can we protect them? Thank you.

The Honorable Stephen D. Mull:

Well, that is an excellent question and I would answer it by saying, like in so many things in a democracy, the most important tool in protecting democratic values, protecting the security of people, protecting the privacy of people is education. It's shocking how few people understand how much at risk they are. Even people who are relatively well educated, they think of going onto Facebook as a rather benign activity, and only until recently are people becoming more aware of the potential jeopardy they are putting themselves in. And in the cases of your colleagues, sometimes it's pretty serious if it can lead to somebody's arrest. So an important part in using social media as a tool for protecting democracy is in fully educating the people who use it about what the risks are.

I remember when my mother recently passed away, decided to open a Facebook account and she thought it was just something where she could share information just with her immediate family. And soon I started running into people and I found out that my mother was posting very personal details about me on Facebook, and people I barely knew would come up and say, Oh, I didn't know this was your favorite color or this was your favorite baseball team or I didn't know you did all of these bad things when you were a child. I was like, how did you find that out? So I had to have a long and uncomfortable conversation with my mother explaining it.

Of course, this is kind of funny. In the end, it wasn't too embarrassing, but there are people who use it, whose very lives are in jeopardy by not being aware of who is watching what they're doing, and being careful about the sorts of details that they share. So to the extent that you sir are involved in community organizing and helping to educate people, I hope you and your colleagues in fact play that very important educational role.

Speaker 2:

Last question.

The Honorable Stephen D. Mull:
Last question.

Genti Xhaxhiu:

Hi, I am Genti from Albania. I'm more old school. I'm not going to ask for social media or the internet. You mentioned some very nice examples about world leaders risking their life, risking their future and everything, their families. I would like to jump to the example of Aung San Suu Kyi, which used to be a famous leader - currently is the prime-

The Honorable Stephen D. Mull:
Still with us.

Genti Xhaxhiu:

Kind of the prime minister of Burma, but she used to be a very famous human rights activist, Nobel Prize laureate and things like that. But there is a lot of discussion about her role right now. It seems that after she came to power as a prime minister, she's state counselor, but the position of the prime minister, the head of the government, she's not the right person to indicate as a human rights promotion. So she's having very big problems with the community in the northern part of the country. Some people say it's kind of illegal with the fact that she's not supporting the Rohingya community there. So my question would be, being a human rights activist and then coming into power, might you risk to lose all your cores and all your values and turn to a new democratic dictator.

The Honorable Stephen D. Mull:

Yes, that's an excellent question. And in fact, I think if you look back at history, every democratic revolution in the world inevitably very soon thereafter results in terrible anti-democratic behavior and abuses of power. It happened here in the United States in the second administration after George Washington, John Adams and his supporters introduced legislation that ended up throwing newspaper editors in jail and arresting people and fighting them for criticizing his administration. We saw the rise of the guillotine in the French Revolution after that took place in 1789. In more modern times, the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 was followed very quickly thereafter by a period of enormous abuse of power. And it continues again and again in every country around the world. Just because it's inevitable, it doesn't mean we have to accept it or tolerate it.

And it's here where those values of citizenship, where the obligation to exercise those rights that you have won to make sure that the new rulers, in fact respect those democratic values that brought them to power. And that's where the community organizes, cooperates with and makes allies around the world to help you, working with the free press to expose and shine a bright light on a bunch of these abuses and to create so much pressure that these new leaders realize that they've gone too far. Inevitably, there should be an equilibrium that develops. But in the meantime, it's especially critical after new revolutions to make sure that you pay special attention to exercising those rights.

Youth, Power and Voice

Catherine Constantinides, Climate Activist and Human Rights Defender; Co-Founder, Generation Earth

Andy Rabens, Special Advisor, Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, United States Department of State

Liziane Silva, Founding Partner and Former CEO, Ink

Andy Rabens:

All right. First off, I just want to give one more shout out to Ambassador Mull. He was a mentor of mine at the State Department. He had one of the most distinguished careers, and he actually ended as one of the career... There are only five at a time ever at a moment of career ambassadors, so he actually had an incredible career at State Department and has given a lot to the U.S. in a variety of roles.

We're really excited now to build off of the intro discussion and to really dive in with a couple of incredibly dynamic, both social entrepreneurs, political activists from South Africa, from Brazil. We have Liziane Silva, and we have Catherine Constantinides. My name's Andy Rabens. I do the Global Youth Portfolio at the State Department, and I've gotten the chance to meet a number of you, I think who are... Are there folks here real quick, show of hands, who here is from outside of the U.S.? Quick show of hands.

Who here is from Virginia? Awesome. Are there any YALI alums who are here, Young African Leaders Initiative, who have been here before to Charlottesville? Awesome. How about the YLAI folks? Young Leaders of the Americas? Atlas Corps? Awesome. Awesome. This is an amazing group.

I think we referenced earlier about 47 countries, all across the Commonwealth of Virginia, and I think this is a chance now to really have a more interactive dialogue with you all, with our two very distinguished panelists to jump into some of the... both the opportunities and the challenges in this moment we're living in where young people are finally, I think in the U.S., they have been around the world for maybe a little bit longer, playing a real role on the global stage and getting much more active, much more engaged as entrepreneurs, much more engaged as politicians.

Our last midterm elections we saw the largest number of young people run for office in the history of our federal government in the United States. So what I'm hoping to do in this session, we have about 40 minutes or so is to pose a couple of questions to get the conversation started with Catherine and Liziane, to give some of their experience about being social entrepreneurs in South Africa, in Brazil. Then we'll move pretty quickly into the political space.

They just had a big election in South Africa recently that Ambassador Mull referenced. Brazil politics, I think President Bolsonaro is in New York and in the U.S. right now as we speak. And then I'm going to open things up to a larger discussion with you all about that intersection between citizenship, activism and actual politics and have a discussion.

I know we've got a couple folks who are involved in Virginia politics. I know we've got a number of folks who are involved very deeply in international politics, and to have a larger discussion about how we try to be more active as citizens in our respective communities and countries.

So without further ado, let me turn things over to Catherine first, and maybe just give a little bit of an oversight. You started your first business I know at age 16.

Catherine Constantinides:

Yes.

Andy Rabens:

When we look at also women entrepreneur numbers in the United States, around the globe, that's pretty abnormal. And you've managed to transcend I think the business side and politics. Would you give a little sense of where that spark come from and how have you over your career so far been able to transcend and keep one hand in the entrepreneurship space, and then also keep another strong hand in the political realm as well?

Catherine Constantinides:

Thank you so much and thank you so much for having me. It's so wonderful to be back here with the Presidential Precinct family who are part of this, so thank you very much for having me. I think that for me as a 16 year old, I didn't know that I was a social entrepreneur. I was simply trying to raise funds to do the community work that I was doing.

And off of the back of that, it has to be really about the kind of home that I came from, the kind of background as to the community I grew up in, but certainly at the age of 16 when I did start my business, I didn't know that I was a social entrepreneur. It took me about four years and entrepreneur magazine called me and wanted to interview me, I wasn't really too sure why. And then they actually dubbed me as a social entrepreneur and I was quite shocked and fascinated by this. But it's not easy and it's difficult. Being a woman and being young are two of the most challenging parts of this specific journey, especially at the age of 16, I started learning at a young age to lie about my age and continue to do so.

And it's always really interesting because at that age when people ask me how old I was, they all of a sudden didn't feel the same way that they did 20 minutes ago. And so I certainly made sure that I started to lie about my age, so whatever age you want me to be, yeah, that's fine, I'll be that. And it was also always interesting to find that I was the only woman sitting around a table.

When we look at the environmental and climate sustainability space, [they're] very entrenched in male dominance. I still to this day, sadly look around the table and realize I'm still the only female around the table. And it's really about how we use the platform and the opportunities given to us to ensure that we don't only walk through the door, but we take other young women behind us through that same door of opportunity, because it really is a lonely place at the top.

And when we start to forget that this journey isn't about us and us alone, it really must be about the collective because together we're so much stronger. But somehow the social fabric of the kind of society we're living in today has changed so fundamentally that that set of core values no longer exists, but it rests with us as young leaders and leaders who really are within the entrepreneurship space, within the activism space and within the political realm as well to make sure that we start to really build a fabric that one day when generations behind us look back at what we've achieved, they can be proud of the fact that we have rebuilt the value fiber of our society that has got lost somewhere along the line.

Andy Rabens:

Great. Liziane, do you want to give a little more insight to when you started Ink back in Brazil? And I know you've hired staff, you've also been transitioning a little bit onto grad school and keeping a hand in your business world, but also getting more involved in youth activism and in politics as well. You want to give a sense of how did you get your spark and how have you been, I think seeing your impact from the business community and also the political space?

Liziane Silva:

Of course. Thank you. First again, thanks to the Presidential Precinct and American Evolution for inviting me. All my love to you. Actually I always felt connected to collective issues as a young person, but I never found the right ecosystem for me, like my school didn't have entrepreneurship classes or like these very cool things. The internet was not there. I'm not that young anymore.

In 2004, I read the two words, social entrepreneurship together and I was like, "Oh, that's what I want to do. That's where I'm going." And it just magically made sense as Neil was saying before, like that's the thing I need to do, because I'm not depending on a ready ecosystem, I can take charge. I can lead and build a better ecosystem for other people that are coming, and that's how I see my role.

I'm not necessarily into business, or politics, or this, or that. I'm like, yes, yes to all. I'm a living human being, I feel like a global citizen and that's enough for me to have the right to take a lead, and to create, and to inspire other people to come with and create the future we want to see.

So that being said, just coming back to earth, to the more practical reality. I started Ink in 2012 after a lot of time thinking how I wanted to express this. And last year I found this amazing young woman who became the CEO and partner, also is becoming a partner now in our company, so I transitioned out of the operations. I'm now pursuing a master's in social entrepreneurship at USC.

And this shift that I'm making is making me think a lot about what are the really relevant issues that we need to be addressing in the future? And through this new perspective, I'm getting involved with more and more technology. And we just pre-launched a few weeks ago, a project

to use artificial intelligence to fight violence against women in Brazil, and that happened in Congress.

It's a citizen-led, it's a social enterprise that we're creating, but we know the relevance of the institutions that we have like in the government, in the civil society and we just find ways to engage them and to like, again, find the consensus and have everyone working together to advance the issues that we cannot stand anymore. It's just that, it's time.

Andy Rabens:

Great. Quick show of hands. How many of you all are in the entrepreneurship space? Have your own businesses? Are thinking about starting your own businesses? And how about in the more political organizing activism, in that space? Show of hands real quick. Any elected officials right now who are in the room? Couple. Terrific. Any folks thinking about running down the road? Fabulous. Great. Great. There should be more hands up hopefully by the end of the week. I want to turn things to that intersection, and I think Catherine, you referenced some of the numbers about women in the entrepreneurship space, and when you look at big picture stuff, I think it's about 4% of Fortune 500 companies have a female CEO, and you look at less than 15 of the CEOs are female.

When we look at the political space, I think that the U.S. we were at our all-time high with just under 25% of our national legislature are female. What do you think some of the barriers are in terms of women achieving success in the business space as their own CEOs and also in the political space? What would your advice be for more people to get in that arena?

Catherine Constantinides:

I think the comments I'm going to make really come from very much a South African and African perspective and context. And this may not be the same answer to the question depending geographically where you're coming from. But access to finance for women in Africa is really hindered. And so you see so few women stepping up, because they know that they can't actually get access to the kind of finance they need as a startup, as an entrepreneur, an SME, et cetera. So the barriers to economic opportunity are far less and that is a reality.

The other thing that's really important I think is men have really harnessed the potential to lean on networks. They understand how to use their networks. And I think as an entrepreneur it is so important to understand the power of networking and being able to use that. And that transcends business, that goes into the political or activism space as well because no matter what it is that you're trying to achieve, be it trying to get a thousand people to march against something within your community or your cities, be it trying to get a new product onto the market, be it a tech app or any other service, you need to be able to rely and use networks really, really well.

And I think as women we underplay the access to networks that we have just because we are just not bold enough to lean on those networks and to really be brave to say, "This is what I'm doing," or, "This is what I need." And "no" is actually okay, but we're scared of the answer that we're going to get, that it may not be exactly what we want at that very time.

But often we don't realize it's those many collective no's that we have received and those doors that have been closed that have led us to other opportunities, and they really are. It's important that when you are within these spaces that you take away lessons from perceived failures because it's only that that will make you stronger. So often we fail and we allow ourselves to understand that failure and then we move on, but did we take lessons from that failure?

Did we take lessons out of that stumbling block to really inform the next set of decisions that we make? And I think that when we... We're sitting here in this room, you reference a very painful election that recently happened and Ambassador [Mull] also referenced that election. And I say it's painful because as a young democracy, we're only 25 years old, but as a young democracy, nothing is going to change if nothing changes.

But it takes every single one of us to be those active citizens that we've all spoken so much about today to really implement and activate that very change. It's no good that we all have access to these great rights that we speak of and that we're living in a democracy, but none of us play a role in being part of that very democracy that we are living a part of.

We saw six million young eligible voters under the age of 30 not even registered to vote. I'll say that again, six million eligible voters under the age of 30 did not even register to vote. We have had the lowest rates of people going to the polls 10 days ago in an election that needed to be a transformative election in a country for the last 10 years has been crippled by ill-governance, corruption, and state capture.

A president who sat for 10 years in our country and looted the state in every possible way, and yet no change has been brought about. Change has to be something that we consciously and deliberately do. And no matter which sphere you're in, be it social entrepreneurship, be it the activism space or in the political realm, every single one of us has a duty to our country to be an active, engaged citizen.

It doesn't matter who you are. You don't have to be an activist to be an engaged, active citizen. It is the role of society to build the communities that we want to live in. And it is so important that as young people sitting here, you're open minded to the question asked. I hope that if the questions asked right now are the same questions asked in five days' time that this entire room will put their hands up, because you understand the importance of transitioning from the private sector to the public space, be it public service or public leadership.

Because right now from where I'm sitting in South Africa and from an African perspective, we need powerful young people who are great at what they do, who are passionate about their countries to build those very countries.

We can no longer have young people who are vibrant and sit on social media as armchair critics to what we see that is an injustice in our society and communities. We have to be the leaders that

we're waiting for, and we can no longer rest and not be the voice of action. We're not young, and it can't be said that, "Oh, I have a lot of time."

Yes, we all have a lot of time to do a lot of things, but our nations need us now more than ever, because if you look at the globe, we're going through a leadership crisis. And if you cannot acknowledge that and you cannot understand how you will play an important role when you go back to your countries or to the individual spaces you occupy, it doesn't matter even if you're living in another country or another region. You can participate in being an active person, and that is what the world needs right now.

Andy Rabens:

A pretty solid charge. Great stuff.

Liz, if you want to weigh in as well on some of the challenges that you see with women in the entrepreneurship space, and the political space, and any advice you might have for people to get in the arena?

Liziane Silva:

Sure. There's a lot of thoughts that I have. I think the ones that keeps coming back is that, Catherine has mentioned that being at the top is hard and someone asked about like losing your track when gaining power, right? How do we keep ourselves accountable to our own ideals and to what brought us to pursue this power to influence.

And I really want to say that the more I think about this, and I've been thinking about this a lot for the best like 20 years maybe is that... What I see more and more is that that's self-observation. That's like self-knowledge. We need to get to know ourselves. We need to do that, not only to have mental health, which is extremely important, especially when you're in power. It's a hard thing, it's not trivial. We're not doing trivial things.

So it's important to really keep on track with where your mental health is and how you are taking care of yourself while you're doing this. And through doing that, you take care of others. It's only by changing yourself, by observing yourself that you can actually be the leader we want to see.

We know the leader we want to see, we know the people we would like to represent us, but how can we be them? And then my belief is that we really need to give more attention to observing ourselves and to our mental health. And in that space as a woman entrepreneur, to me being able to keep my mental health has been a journey of learning to accept that me being alive is enough. I'm going to repeat this again and again because I think this is so important.

All of you and all of us already know this because we are taking charge, we are doing this, but the imposter syndrome is real. It is. Many times it comes in very subtle ways saying like, "Oh, you need to study a little more." And I'm there in the Masters thinking, why am I doing this? "You need to study a little more. You need to do this, you need to do that."

And in this whole movement that has been happening, considering the elections we have had in all of our three countries and the more recent one, that makes me connect this idea of being enough and taking charge with when we find that the institutions are not responding to us, saying we're enough, we're diverse, we're this global youth, global citizens, there's so much good and beliefs that we want to move forward, and then this institutions push us back.

I've had very much a push back from the past election, so I was like, "Whoa, wait. Were we not going to that great place that we were talking about? Where are we going now? Whoa, God." And that has made me have more clarity of what the boundaries are. What are the boundaries of this power that I have and that I can?

And for a while I was just like, "Wow, there's a lot of boundaries, and they're overwhelming." And now I'm just like stepping back and saying, "Okay, it's awesome to see the boundaries." When the boundaries show up, when the extremist politicians, populists show up, it's not in the back of someone's mind who's plotting something anymore. It's done, it's there. Now we can deal with it, now we can look at it. Now we know what it looks like. Now we can tackle it.

We see what we don't know. Before we didn't even see it, it was hidden. Now we're like, "Okay, I don't quite understand this, but now I see it. Now we can take action again." And that's how my, again, journey as a female entrepreneur has been. In the beginning I was like, "No, there's no..." How to say that? "There's no oppression. You know, I'm fine. I'm just going to open my business, and everything's going to be great."

And then I started being the only woman in the room, and I just want to tell a really short story that happened like one time, five partners, people who knew me, we were in a meeting together, and I got to the meeting a little late, because I was signing Ink's first big contract, so it was a big day, I was so happy.

I got to the meeting, I participated on the rest of the meeting. At the end, the man who was the oldest and the most powerful in terms of his hierarchy in the room, he was like, "Oh, we have to take a picture of this historic moment. Liz, can you take a picture for us?" I took that picture. I didn't know how to react to that at that moment.

Andy Rabens:
You took a selfie, right? With the-

Liziane Silva:
No, no. I was so overwhelmed by... I couldn't react at the time. I would either yell and throw the phone at his face, which I wouldn't do because I'm a polite person, and I don't believe in violence. But at the time I didn't have the skill to say, "Yeah, let's take a selfie." Or to do something like that.

Again, when those boundaries, when those limits, when we face them, it's when we say, "Okay, that's where I need to build up. That's where I need to..." Next time as Catherine was saying also, I learned from this experience, and now I can find a way around it. That's it.

Andy Rabens:

Next time I think you just take a selfie of yourself, you hand the camera back and say, "Keep an eye on this person." I'm going to ask one more, just a quick question and then I want to open things up to larger groups, so get your questions, comments, thoughts ready. And I want to move more intensely into the political space.

And just kind of throw out a big question for everyone. You all think right now, the moment we're living in, do you feel like young people... The world today, well over 60% of the globe is below the age 35. And in Africa we've got a far greater youth bulge, which could be incredibly powerful if it's pushed in the right direction.

In the U.S., we've got our own challenges with a lot of youth activism. How many of you all think that young people have finally woken up to politics and are playing a much more active role? And how many people think that there's still kind of young people are a little bit asleep at the wheel, are armchair critics on social media as I think we referenced before?

Does anyone know real quick the average age of a member of parliament globally, so this is your national legislature, Congress, whatever else in your country that the average age of a national legislature globally? Anyone guess?

Speaker 4:

65.

Andy Rabens:

About 59 years old. You know what the average age that you can run for that position is? Average age you can run for Congress or the equivalent? 30 globally. In the U.S., anyone know? Virginians know this. Run for the house? 25. Run for the Senate? How old do you have to be in the U.S. to run for the Senate?

Speaker 5:

35.

Andy Rabens:

30. How old do you have to be to run for president?

Audience:

35.

Andy Rabens:

35. When you look at our politics in the U.S., average age of a member of the House? 57. We beat the global average by a touch. Senate? 61. And then we talked about number of women, we just went from 19%, which was the all-time high in the last Congress to 24% in this Congress, which is an all-time high. So you see the challenges there.

So I'm going to push it back, I know Catherine gave a call to action on the political space, but any other advice and what you're seeing? I know we have Wael Ghonim talking tomorrow about the Arab Spring, and what happened in Egypt, and probably the inability to turn in that youth energy into politics and the political space. But what have you seen? You had an incredible point earlier too about the number of votes that were cast in the election, but just frustration with the current crop of candidates, and they were cast for random people that didn't actually end up counting.

Catherine Constantinides:
Yes.

Andy Rabens:
So any other advice for how young people should be willing to take that step into the political arena as candidates so they're both playing a role on the outside but also on the inside as well?

Catherine Constantinides:
I'm going to answer that question, but just a few bits of information from a South African perspective. The youngest Member of Parliament was 21, and we do have a new crop of Members of Parliament who will be sworn in next month, and they are relatively younger. However, our oldest Member of Parliament is 90, and he will be sworn into Parliament again in a few weeks.

And this is a problem, the gap between the median age of African politicians and with reference to population, the gap between the youngest politician and the oldest is 45 years from an African perspective. So those numbers are all quite frightful.

I was mentioning that in the South African elections recently, we saw a number of spoiled ballots, and for us, because of the kind of political system we have, a spoiled ballot is better than somebody not going to the polls at all. But if you had to collectively count all of those ballots together and they were put into a group of a political party, just to give you an understanding, that number would have ranked in the top five political parties. So-

Andy Rabens:
Can you explain that spoiled ballot term means because I think for the audience that-

Catherine Constantinides:
For those of you who don't know the South African system, our base is set on how many people went to the poll to vote. That then becomes a base number. And then based off of that the votes are counted to the political parties and allocated accordingly to local legislature as well as

national parliament, but that number, the base number is based off of how many people went to the polls.

So for us, we were advocating that people must go and vote. Even if you spoil your ballot, unfortunately, many did, even if you spoil your ballot, go and vote, go to the voting poll. And unfortunately, as you heard earlier, that number was still really, really very low. And as I mentioned earlier, six million eligible voters under the age of 30 did not even bother to register to vote.

But elections aside, because that makes me very, very depressed. Elections aside, there are a few things I want to mention and this is not specifically to females, but this is something that I think we all battle with, and it's something that's important for us to take note of. There's something called work-life balance. And with reference to mental health, this is crucially important.

But when we look at work-life balance, and this is from my own understanding and my own experience, but I would honestly say that there's no such thing. Every single day you get up and you have a choice to make, a decision to make. What do you have to get done today? What is going to give? Because every single day we make choices, something has to give.

For those of you who are married or have children, sometimes it will be family. Sometimes your children are going to have to sacrifice because you need to get X, Y, and Z done. And that may not just be on one day; that may be a period of time. When you are busy with a startup or you're busy running a campaign for an election, that is going to be a prolonged period of time. But work-life balance is about the decision you make every single day to ensure that you reach the goals and objectives of what you've set out for yourself.

And this is something that we often forget. We think that there's this perfect balance, but there isn't. It's like a seesaw. That's what you call it in South Africa, seesaw. You're going to sit on one side and you're going to carry the weight, and another day somebody else is going to carry the weight and you're going to be up high. And it's that kind of metaphoric understanding of our lives and what we need to achieve that's important.

And I use the word important, which brings me to another point I really want to share. It's something I often think of when I find challenges. I ask myself, "Is this important or is it urgent?" Because so often we scurry to do the things that are urgent, but we could have given it to someone else to do and achieve. But we forget that if we don't focus on those things that are important all of the time, the power of consistency rests in our daily habits.

And it is so important as leaders within organizations, within companies and within the political realm, that we are deliberate about the choices that we make. And so as young people, as we think about transitioning into the political space, we need to ask ourselves, what are the important issues of our time, of our generation, of our very communities that we come from?

And let us rally behind those things that are important and let us hold onto them like a dog with a bone and not let go. It's about the important decision every single day to put out conscious messaging on the social media platforms that we have. We can't just sit there and use these platforms, also referenced earlier, we all just go onto Facebook and check in here and check in there. No, we've got to become more conscious because each and every one of us has a responsibility to our community.

It may be a community of 50 people on Facebook, it may be a community of 1,000 people on Twitter or a group of followers on Instagram. You have the power and influence no matter where you are and who you are. And we need to understand that we need to lead from where we are. We don't need fancy titles.

So yes, the reality is that many of you will not transition into political leadership or into public spaces in your own countries or in your own regions, but what can you do to lead from where you are every single day? Because you have a power. And it's testing that very power in your own space that will rarely talk to how you're going to change the future and the fabric of the society that you live in. Thank you.

Liziane Silva:
Thank you.

Andy Rabens:
Liz.

Liziane Silva:
I want to say two things. I don't remember how you originally asked the question, but I have thoughts that I can share.

Andy Rabens:
Just questions about the political space and how do you get more young people to feel like they're empowered and-

Liziane Silva:
Oh yeah, of course.

Andy Rabens:
...pushed to enter into the political arena.

Liziane Silva:
One of the things coming back to that idea of like finding the limits and the boundaries of being outside the political space in way, like being influenced by this major political events, I already said this that shouldn't inspire us to just stop them and be sad and depressed, but to actually work smarter on how to go around them and how to influence them. And for me, one key thing in there is to understand that all of these systems were created by people.

We were talking about how Jefferson was writing and rewriting the constitution. He was a person, you know guys? It was not some kind of entity, and it was people like us. So that means we can have that kind of influence also, and we need to have this kind of spaces and many others to really discuss what democracy is now. It's not a trivial question. I really believe that we are underestimating the power of being in a global community connected by the internet.

Even though there's a lot of people who do not have access, who are not engaged to get in the conversation, we need to spread more and have more access. But just the thought of like as being on a such closely knit global community changes so much the perspective of the nations, the States, the leadership we need. And I feel we don't discuss that enough. And I want to point out, I happen to be on the board of advisors of an institute in Curitiba that was created by very, very young people.

Their CEO is 25 now, could even run for-

Yeah. And they started actually tackling this question, what is democracy? And they found there are many answers out there. It's not as consensual as we make it sound when we talk about it on a less profound level. And they're bringing, for example global thinkers of democracy. They're translating their books into Portuguese, bringing them to Brazil to discuss democracy there.

So I think that kind of initiative, it's not like you running for Congress or something like that, but it's you directly influencing politics and creating the democracy we want to see. So that can be made from many perspectives and I think we always need to as I said before Gloria, the AI to fight violence against women was launched in Congress, in Brazil. In the Congress house because we all need to work together.

We cannot create a version to, "Oh no, bankers are just bad people." Or, "Politicians are just bad people." Or, "These people are just bad people." It's people. We all have good and bad sides and we need to work together to create ways to find consensus and build more enriching lives to all of us.

And on that note, just to finish, I think when we do that, we're doing something that is so important that is bringing the grassroots reality that we live, as Catherine was saying, like what you're doing in your realm, in your community and when we're engaging with people who nowadays have the power to make big decisions around the topics we're passionate about, if we do not dialogue with them, they will keep making worse and worse decisions because they will not have the knowledge that you have about the experiences you're having, or how the community's organizing, or the base work, what are the real needs of the people.

When you engage and you bring this, even just as information, you allow them to make better decisions that will again come back to the basis and feed your work and make it ideally better. I think this is basically an invitation to if you don't see yourself running, get close to them or support the people who did raise their hands. I think that's also really important.

The people who run are just one and there's a whole team around them. Let's be that team also, let's be ready to do all of this. Okay. Sorry.

Andy Rabens:

I want to open things up because I think we are running out of time a little bit to larger group on questions, comments, insights, and we'll take three at once. So just introduce yourself very briefly and then ask or comment away.

Nicole Soultanov:

Hi. My name is Nicole Soultanov. I'm from France. You talked about a disconnect between people not showing up to vote and that makes me wonder what is the role of education in reconnecting people and representatives? And the reason why I'm asking that is because some of you may know that France has been through a lot of protests with the yellow vests, and I think some of the requests that were being made by the people could have been solved at the local or regional level by representatives.

And I think that unveils two problems, the fact that representatives failed at reaching out to their community and also people didn't really take the opportunity to reach out or didn't know that they could do it. And there's a strong hierarchy in the political realm in our country. And so I wonder, what's the role of education in this process? And I feel that there's so many different audiences for this education.

Andy Rabens:

Good question.

Liziane Silva:

Thank you.

Andy Rabens:

We'll take two more and then we'll throw them all to the group.

Joshua Eyar:

Thank you. My name is Joshua. She said something that's exactly related to what I was going to ask. It's just like a comment around that part of young people getting involved in political processes, especially if they want to participate in active politics. There's a challenge that I've seen personally and I think for some time it's the reason that I kind of withdrew from running for office because sometimes we look at young people and they become famous.

The moment someone gets this kind of publicity that so and so is famous, we mistake them to be actually people who can lead, and it's the whole community that comes and says, "Hey, you are now famous and that means you can win an election." And this mistake, I've seen it a lot in a lot of young people because you're famous, you run for office and you win. At the end of the day you just have no idea about what you're doing.

And that's why I wanted to raise that point that she talked about of education. How can we support these young people that even after they've won elections, how can we help them, like how can we mentor them? We need this program that can mentor young politicians because at the end of the day, it's not your fault, the community will come to you, and you see, when the young person has been promised that you'll pass, there's a lot of changes around your life.

You feel like, okay this is a promise, people are going to vote me. And once you're in you are alone and everyone will be looking at your mistakes only, but they have no idea about like deep in you, what are you capable of and that's what mentorship can do. How can we help them become the best version of themselves?

And then my brother here had raised that point of who people get into politics and then maybe they change and then they begin being doing something contrary to what we're doing. And that's like one thing that actually keeps scaring most of us. Like you really have good intentions but you ask yourself one question that if I get in, am I going to stick to the plan because I think the system has been designed to change the way you do politics.

And if that is the word systems have been designed that once you get involve because you one person, sometimes there's the whole risk. It's not all about just that you can put your life at risk, but you can put your entire family in the line at the end of the day. And that's why mostly when they get into politics, they just say, "It's better that I shut up or I joined the bandwagon."

And that's one thing that is ruining the politics that I've seen for most countries that at least I've been able to live in. So how can we mentor these young people? And then the people who are already in politics and they're complying with wrong systems, they are aligning themselves with what's not right, how can we help them keep back on track? Because if it means that they cannot participate well in politics and keep on track, maybe as she said, they can be involved in other processes, they can impact communities even when they're not politicians themselves. Thank you.

Andy Rabens:
Great question.

Liziane Silva:
Thank you.

Andy Rabens:
Great comments. We'll take one more over here. Yep.

Georquel Goodwin:
Hello everyone. My name is Georquel Goodwin. I am a senior finance major, political science minor from Hampton University. My question simply is there's been an ascension in personal branding in America, especially with a lot of younger politicians. How do we find that efficient

equilibrium to effectively change and provoke the people as far as losing who we are, but also, I guess propelling our journey, I guess to where we go?

Andy Rabens:

Do you see it as a good thing or bad thing, the mix?

Georquel Goodwin:

I see it as a good and bad thing just because our generation sometimes gets too caught up in just like our personal beliefs, and kind of like, oh, well, who's going to have the most followers or the most attention on social media, and that just kind of disengages a lot of those that might not be as interested in social media or the branding concept of it.

Andy Rabens:

Great. Okay.

Liziane Silva:

Thanks.

Andy Rabens:

We're going to let the panelists answer the first set of questions, which were fabulous. So we've got one on education, we got Joshua who asked about how do you make sure people are running with a purpose and stay true to that platform so they don't get corrupted. Folks have been watching Game of Thrones, I'm sure there's a lot of a lot of thoughts going around my head right now.

And then the personal branding question as well. Is there too much to lose? Is that good thing, bad thing? How do you use that in a good way? We have to keep these kind of quick, just so we can get-

Catherine Constantinides:

I'm going to make very quick points, but on the question of voter education and elections, I think it is crucially important that we re-look at the education system because in my country, and I'm sure this is the same as a global norm, we need to go back and visit civic education and get young children to understand constitutions, democracy, how systems work, it's got to start there.

Somewhere along the line we forgot that we've got to actually educate citizens to be citizens and I think that's really very important. Also from a South African perspective and potentially also from a French perspective, the electoral system needs to be reformed. We actually need to look and revisit how our electoral system works and operates and that means looking at policy. And that's really very, very important.

Party politics affiliation in South Africa also is a huge problem and a challenge versus independent candidates being able to go into the electoral system. On Joshua's questions, I'm going to just say two or three very quick things. The one is authentic leadership. We need to

make sure that we know why we're getting into politics, and this also answers the third question on personal branding because authentic leaders know exactly who they are and what they're doing. They know themselves.

It's a point that Neil made earlier in the opening address. Do you know who you are? Do you know why you're doing what you're doing? Do you refer back to your why? Especially in the hard times, do you go back and say, "Why did I get into this? What am I trying to achieve?" And I think it's very important.

When you go into politics and you're looking for political grooming, offline we can discuss our African political grooming academies, et cetera. They are not mainstream, but I can discuss that with you. But we need to almost have a board of directors, a group of people in our close circle that will keep us in check.

And as leaders, specifically young leaders, we need to make sure that that group that even if it's only in our head that we think of them as our own board of directors for our personal career, especially into politics, those people will have real discussions. They won't tell you what you would like to hear, but they will tell you what you need to hear. And that's crucially important.

So look in your life, who are people you have met, they don't need to be engaged with you on a daily basis, but people that you can trust for real, authentic answers and people who will pour into you on your journey of political leadership. And when we talk about personal branding, for me, those are important things as well. Tell your story and own it because in a time where fake news is real, if we don't tell our stories, somebody else will.

So share your narrative, share who you are, and we have to be the authors of the kind of history that we want our children to write about. And so personal branding is important because of the kind of time that we live in. And using social media is powerful, but make sure that your authentic self is the same person that walks into this room and the same person that's going to walk into a bar tonight. Be authentic, be real.

Don't be somebody here and somebody else somewhere else, be who you are on all your platforms because you'll get caught out and it will catch up with you. So authentic leadership and ethical leadership are two crucial matters when we're trying to stay on course of what we're trying to achieve and also when we're trying to tell a story of what our journey is.

Andy Rabens:
Good advice. Liz.

Liziane Silva:
Continuing on that and just make three little points. When we take charge of our narratives and expose ourselves that way, it's very naive to expect that we're not going to be received as backlash or be attacked somehow, so it's really important also to get acquainted to power, to say, "That's okay. I'm going to respond or not respond to this. I'm going to keep that authenticity

when bad critics come and to be smart about what are the strategies that are known to be effective where you can actually get deeper in communication with more people and have more influence and gain more power."

I think that's also a topic we don't talk so much about. It's ugly to talk about power, and there's always sometimes this association with the negativity in it and how people abuse power, but power is a very human thing, and is a very natural thing, and we're organizing society through it. And if we get more acquainted to it, we can create our ways of spreading and sharing this power.

And then on your question over there, I want to say that mentoring is so key. Thank you for bringing that up. There is a movement in Brazil called [Henava] that selected like 100 young people who were not in politics and train them for 10 months to get acquainted to power, to know how to communicate, really like hardcore training to be... And a few of them got elected. And there's a lot of movements like that popping up and coming from society. So it's actually a lady who could be here, saying a lot smarter things than I am, who is the social entrepreneur behind this movement, is just someone who cares. And she mobilized the resources to be able to take this through.

And the people who were elected, they are doing an amazing job in saying the very obvious things, the things we all are taking for granted. A few weeks ago, one of them, Tabata Amaral, she was facing the minister of education in Brazil who was presenting a plan for education, and she said, "Oh, that's great. It looks like a wish list. Do we have a plan? Are you going to present an actual plan?"

And she became a meme, and a Tabata, just for saying the obvious, just for going there and using her voice, and her power, to say the things that we sometimes take for granted because we think it's so obvious. So never think that the obvious is too obvious. We can always remind ourselves of that very obvious things that actually can move us forward.

Andy Rabens:

Great. I think we're unfortunately just a touch over for time, and I think lunch is next. You guys can get caffeinated, and I think we can continue the discussion hopefully over lunch. Before we give one huge round of applause to the panelists who were absolutely dynamite, I want to also say that I think this is a great segue.

Later this afternoon, I think you guys are going to be starting the process of the Virginia Consensus Document, which I think a lot of these ideas that people are starting to germinate with can be put in there in some fashion. So this is a great, I think, setting the stage for later today. So without further ado, huge round of applause. Great advice.

Liziane Silva:

Thank you.

A Collective Vision for the Future: The Virginia Resolutions

Frank Dukes, Institute for Environmental Negotiation, the University of Virginia

Dr. Frank Dukes:

As-salamu alaykum and Ramadan Mubarak for those of you who are celebrating, and for those of you, I'm leaving out from that, welcome to all of you. Very glad to be here. Also, I like to ground. We're going to be working together for the next five days, actually, this would be an opportunity for you all to get a chance to be talking in small groups. We're inviting you and we're asking you to actually let us know and let each other know about what civic engagement look like. What are the values of civic engagement that you think that we should be promoting and what sort of commitments that might you be able to make for civic engagement too.

I'd like to ground us before we do that. Of course, we're at the University of Virginia, we're on land that was occupied by the Monacan peoples and you can still find them, they were actually federally recognized just a couple years ago. Also, you probably saw outside there, this is also a site, the Kitty Foster site. So we are on land that was occupied by people enslaved and free. The university was built by people that were enslaved as well as free, too and we're on property that was actually discovered to have been owned by free people of color here, before the university took the property, also.

The Virginia Resolutions, you had a little bit of an introduction to that. How do you define civic engagement? What do you want civic engagement to be? The core values that guide it, the challenges and barriers that you might have for that, and then commitments that you all would actually be willing to make. We're going to be doing this during this week. We'll actually be refining them after you go back to your home countries, your home institutions and we expect and hope that they're going to actually have a long life beyond this summit.

What they're not going to be and what they are, they're going to be action oriented, organic. They're created by you. We're not coming in with something that we want you all to say. Living and legacy project, focused on problem solving as opposed to grievances or complaints, and applicable, we want to see, are there universal principles? We know we come from different cultures, we see these different cultures, we value the different cultures and experiences, but are there universal principles that you think transcend those different cultures? And then, derived from shared principles and values.

So, they'll be articulating your aspirations, your values and your commitment to the future of global democracy and civic engagement. What we're going to be doing and we're starting today and in just a minute, I'm going to ask you to turn to each other and begin this discussion, over the next few days we're actually having breakout groups, so you can do it in smaller groups, but a healthy and robust discussion, the meaning and practice and then crafting a consensus statement. So I and some of my colleagues are going to help you take the different ideas and values that you have and seeing whether we can actually create something, you say, yes, this represents us collectively. Then, also, that not only represents you but it's going to inspire you and others to actually commit to actions.

We've already heard from the wonderful speakers that we've had, some of what you feel like you need to do. The idea of civic engagement for instance, that you just heard. Our role is facilitator, my role and colleagues, not to tell you what you want, but actually, we've done some assimilation. Some of you actually responded to some of the questionnaires that we sent out ahead of time about how we're going to work together and what sort of values you might see for civic engagement. We're going to capture the conversations that you have and work towards this statement and then afterwards we're going to ask for volunteers from a smaller leadership team to be able to work with us in using social media to craft them, to make sure that it really is a consensus and we don't just pretend that it's a consensus, that it really does represent everybody.

We've got a bunch of people here who don't know each other, actually. How many of you are sitting with people that you know, that you knew beforehand? So not that many, actually. Okay, that's pretty good. I was going to invite you to make sure that you do sit with people that you don't know, but it looks like that's not going to be too much difficulty for that. We asked you if given that we're going to be different people coming together in a relatively short period of time, have different views, how can we actually work together? What are some of the goals?

We began that by asking, how do you not want to work together? So what happens when you do not work together well at your worst, what we want to avoid? Then at your best, when you're really functioning well and then for this week, what are your aspirations and then what do you actually do to make those happen? So we'll go over those briefly. This is what you told us, though, the ones that responded to this. This is what we want to avoid. The disengaged, the disconnected, angry mob, frustrated adolescents, competitors, individuals. And this is what you see at the best, when groups are working together well.

What that leaves us with is the hope and the empathy and the compassion, but we also see it because there's joy and there's laughter. There's praise, there's reinforcement for what people do. And how do we actually make that happen? Well, you want to learn from each other, we want to recognize that although we have differences that we value, we are also one in this world. That we will listen to each other with patience and we will argue, because the idea is not to avoid conflict but actually to surface conflict and make sure that we deal with it productively. Without conflict there is no change. That everybody gets engaged in it, that we are open to views that contradict ours, but we do this in ways that demonstrate mutual respect. That you build networks and I don't know who said, be the change, that's a pretty famous phrase, but that you act the change that you want to see in the world, too.

These were actually the guidance, they say this is the way that we enact this. So I'm going to actually take a little bit of time for each one of these. Choose to believe that we all come from good intentions. The meaning that we begin with that. We may be proven otherwise but we begin with that assumption. Then this idea of curiosity before judgment. So we find out, what did you really mean by that? Because when I hear that this means this, to me, but I want to know what that means to you.

Making this conscious effort to value each participant's contribution and then this is an opportunity. It's a great opportunity to question our own assumptions and even prejudices that we have. We can test them from people that come from different backgrounds than ours and not only test them but be appreciative of others diversity and cultures. We will be helping you do this as facilitator, that's one of our tasks, is actually to make sure that there's equal opportunity to participate, that you're sharing the floor. We say our truth, but we encourage others to speak too.

That we listen actively and then another one, being willing to be vulnerable. That can be hard with people that have different backgrounds than you. How many of you would admit to actually being a little bit nervous as you come into this gathering? So I'll admit to being a little bit nervous myself as I come into this gathering. There's an element of vulnerability right? You would know that experience, that when you're willing to admit to that vulnerability that opens other people up, as well. If we know that there is some concern that we have for ourselves, we know that then other people experience that, too. We can relate to each other better.

I don't know about this code word, this idea of using a code word to invoke our best selves and maybe we can come up with something collectively like that and maybe it's just a pause. I went to graduation yesterday, the graduation speaker on Sunday here talked about a pause and just an opportunity to reflect on, do I really mean to say what it is that I'm saying here? So actually, I'm just going to pause myself right now and ask you to find a partner or perhaps three together and just offer some of the reflections about what you've heard from this and how this might make sense to you or any sort of difference this might make to you.

You have a handout here and you have two parts to it. One part is around this sort of higher ground. We're using that metaphor of higher ground that we're seeking to work with each other in ways that rise each other up together, as opposed to putting each other down, of course. You can either turn those in, you can turn them in the back when you're done with this or you can actually keep them during the week. It's fine for you to keep them as for your notes for those two. So in a little bit, we're going to talk a little bit about some of what we heard from you about civic engagement, but right now just turn to each other and say, when we look at we're going to be working with each other, do these resonate for me? Do these values, these aspirations, these guidelines, do they work for me for how we're going to be together? Or there's things that are missing?

Talk to each other for a little bit and then we'll actually get a chance for you to reflect for the whole group, too. Okay? So take a couple minutes, turn to a partner, two or three perhaps, and just share, do these resonate? Are there changes you want to see? Whatever the case might be.

I can tell people have been very eager to begin conversation, right? Again, hands up and anybody that has any reflections that you want to make, we can get the microphone to you, that things you want to talk, share with each other. Anything you want to say to each other about these? Anybody? We've got the couple of microphones, anything you want to share about what you were talking or anything? Yeah, so we have a hand here. We have a hand here, and if you would just introduce yourself, your name and where you're from.

Meenakshi Monga:

Hi, everyone. I am Meenakshi Monga, I am an Atlas Corps fellow from India. It's lovely to be here and we had a very nice discussion. We are a team of three here and all these points, they resonate a lot with us and we even thought that we are going to keep it within us and going to use it in the future engagements as well, even when we leave from here. One of the important point that we came up to add to this list was to add empathy.

Dr. Frank Dukes:

Empathy.

Meenakshi Monga:

Yeah.

Dr. Frank Dukes:

Thank you.

Meenakshi Monga:

So that was something we would like to add and when it comes to listening actively, sometimes it's important to listen, not to respond, but just to absorb.

Dr. Frank Dukes:

Okay, we do want you responding, but first you listen.

Meenakshi Monga:

Yeah.

Dr. Frank Dukes:

Not to respond, you're listening. As a mediator, or anybody else a mediator here? Do we have other people that are mediators, facilitators? Cool. Sometimes we'll ask people, listen for understanding as opposed to listening to how you're going to be responding. Thank you and we're taking notes on that too. By the way, I should credit John Paul Knotts, who is not only taking notes and has been doing the microphone but also actually, those are not my slides. He did all the beautiful visuals for that too, so appreciation to him. I think there was a hand up over there, too.

Marina Castro-Meirelles:

My name is Marina Castro-Meirelles, and I'm a Virginia delegate and one of the things that comes to mind more for the reflection section is whether or not we would want to make conceptual distinctions between civic engagement, versus community engagement, versus service learning. It seems that civic engagement can suffer from conceptual stretching and so it makes me wonder if we want to define it in very concrete terms, or maybe it best serves our purposes to leave it as a broader definition.

Dr. Frank Dukes:

That's great. You are actually doing the work that we're going to begin tomorrow in the small groups, but I think you're actually opening up a question that we can begin with in the small groups tomorrow, is the defining what does make sense and does it lose some power with you if you include community engagement, if you include service learning, is there some value for that? We don't have an answer for you. I mean, I have my own ideas, but we want you actually to develop that in conversation with each other. Thank you. Anybody else? Yeah. Could you introduce yourself?

Christina Henry:

Oh yes, I'm Christina. I'm a Virginia delegate, I guess, because I'm from Virginia, too. I was thinking about one of the things, a moderate dialogue group and one of the things we talked about was focusing on 'I' statements in our group and being able to dissect what's your opinion and what's fact? Because I think a lot of times when we get into discussion, we state our opinions like they're facts, so then we start arguing about them and it shouldn't be an argument. We kind of say, you're an expert in your own experience, so validating other people's experience and saying, mine and yours might be different, but yours is truth and mine is truth and they can coexist. I think that's important, making sure you're making distinctions between what's your own experience and what's your own opinion and what's an actual fact.

Dr. Frank Dukes:

Thank you, thank you. People can disagree with facts, you can't disagree with your own experience, right? The validity. Thank you, these are a good start for this. What we want to do then, is also give you the feedback that you all gave us on the civic engagement questions that we posed to you. So we asked this question in the pre-summit. What does civic engagement mean to you? That's one of the questions there and then, what forms does it take in your work? And then, why does it matter? We're making a presumption that it matters, you can challenge that. I think it would be an interesting conversation to have that challenged. And then the challenges you face as you work to create positive change in your own community. Particularly the challenges that relate to civic engagement for that, and then the tools or information that might help you address those challenges. So we asked you that and here's what we heard back from you, collectively.

One, this is a definition, contributing to the improvement of your community and the public good. Being a leader for change or petitioning your government for change, civic ownership of policies, laws, technologies and government programs. What does that civic ownership mean? I interpret that to mean legitimacy, it might mean different things for you all. Working to affect the political, economic or social wellbeing of your community or your country, empowering citizens, what might that mean? And then, helping and encouraging communities to invest in different ways in improving themselves. So those are the definitions, a summary of the definitions, a synthesis of the definitions that you came up with.

The forms that civic engagement takes in your work and why it matters, building community partnerships, dialogue, opportunities for volunteerism. The education, empowerment, youth

development, building the next generation. It's interesting, you all, from my perspective, I see you as the next generation and you're already thinking of developing the next generation of activists. Technology, digital communication analysis and storytelling. The power of stories. Somebody used the phrase, caring capitalism, civic minded and responsible in the business context and then legislative advocacy for specific issues. People mentioned cerebral palsy, women's issues, domestic violence, food security, malnutrition and so forth.

You also answered the question about challenges you face. So resources, competition for funding and attention and people, and then, organizations and teams working in silos. So sometimes that competition is for people in different areas, but sometimes it's competition amongst yourselves, different groups. The administrative, bureaucratic red tape and roadblocks and then agencies that build walls rather than bridges, and the lack of young people in decision making positions to support projects and work with activists. We've already heard about the gender dimensions of that, too. The fear of change also combined with the lack of time for citizens to engage and then ignorance about the value of civic engagement. And then, the corruption and the lack of strong civic institutions that can help actually weed out corruption, such as courts and independent media.

The last question, I think, the last question, the tools or information you want to gather. Coalition building skills, training on how to network and persuade government officials and decision makers. Certainly the fundraising and grant making advice, the education of people in local communities, about how to participate and make change. Training in how to leverage the social digital media and then support from international organizations to be able to fight corruption within your own community, you may not have the resources to be able to do that.

Let me go back to that. Let's actually do the same thing we just did, if you can find a different person to connect with that's fine, but you can also talk to the same people that you had before. Take a couple of minutes, just reflect on what you heard your fellow delegates say and what that might mean to you and how this might lead into the conversations that we have over the next couple of days, okay? Do these resonate with you? Is there something missing in particular that might be from here? So take a couple of minutes with that.

Okay, this is the part I hate the least, which is interrupting good conversation. We know we actually got a whole afternoon full of breakouts that you're going to be having some different experiences. I know some people leading them who are really cool people, you're going to look forward to that. So we want to get you there on time but we do have a few minutes to hear again from people, what resonated, what might be missing? Anybody want to share that? We have a hand over here and we've got the microphone. Again, if people would introduce yourself, we're getting a chance to get to know each other, right?

Rahima Morshed:

Hi, my name is Rahima Morshed, I am a Virginia delegate. I think one of the things that Liz and I here talked about is, all of these are great points, but something that Miss Katherine mentioned earlier, is a wish list versus a plan. One of the bullet points that I looked at in this example is

education of people in local communities. I think that's something we want to enforce, but I know a lot of the people from the previous generation can agree that that's something that they've been trying to enforce for some time now. So I think there needs to be precedents in reinforcing these things, but also how would you go about that?

I think it's going to be an isolated situation for every individual. For example, if I go back today and I want to run for Senate in my state, I would either lobby or I would create a grassroots campaign and my approach is going to be different than somebody who wants to do something else. Whether it's running in elections or holding public office or creating their own business, the approach is going to be different every time and I think that needs to be a little bit more specified because so much of this all very useful information is a little bit more broad, so I think it's important to give notice in that.

Dr. Frank Dukes:

Okay, good. That's something we can actually do, the last session that we have on Thursday together, we'll have enough time to be able to do that. And what might that look like in your own host institutions or host communities? So thank you for suggesting that. I see a hand? Okay.

Liziane Silva:

Hi, I'm Liziane, and one thing that I feel is missing as a tool is how we can observe power dynamics so we can better plan to influence them.

Dr. Frank Dukes:

Very good, thank you. Power. No need to say anything else about it, right? Except we will, we'll have a conversation about that. What else? Yes, over here? Oh, over here first.

Fionnuala Fisk:

Oh, my name is Finn. I'm a Virginia delegate. One of the things that we were talking about right here was about young people understanding that they can affect the world in some way. Realizing that the work you're doing has changed something about the world around you is a really empowering thing because once you understand that your efforts won't be entirely in vain, I think then you understand, okay, if I invest more and more and more into this, I can do more. So, having that realization, having people tell you you're making a difference if you don't realize you're making a difference, or just getting to see that for yourself, has been a really crazy thing.

Dr. Frank Dukes:

Thank you, and you'll have the opportunity to learn from each other all the different, incredible things that you all are doing too. Thanks. I think I saw that hand there, and then there's a hand here.

Victor Anyebe:

Thank you very much, my name is Victor from Nigeria. I'm an Atlas Corps fellow. What I want to say is that each of these options here has value, essentially, and I think what we need to understand is how these values apply across different demographics and settings and then

properly understand frameworks that allow us to create mixed models of these values, to improve outcomes in different sectors.

Dr. Frank Dukes:

Good. Thank you, thank you. Yes.

Joshua Eyaru:

Hello, my name is Joshua, Atlas Corps fellow from Uganda. There's this pattern in education that keeps coming up in every discussion we have and so my colleague raised something that was a bit inspiring, that I felt like we needed to think about it. Most times as young people we raise up that we need change, we need change, we need change and then maybe when we lead this actions, whatever we do to cause change in our communities, the challenge we normally find is that on the education part, we are activists, but chances are we don't know even 10% of our constitution. So I think it's one thing that we are missing as young people. We only know the constitution based on maybe what others quote for us that our constitution says this, but we have not taken time to read this constitution and understand it deeply. The more you understand your constitution, you can actually advocate for whatever you're advocating for from an informed point. That's very important for us young people to focus on.

Dr. Frank Dukes:

Thank you, thank you. Anybody else? One more. If you're feeling shy, it's okay, I'm not calling you out because you're feeling shy.

Whitney Achieng Okumu:

Sorry about that, my name is Whitney Achieng Okumu, an international delegate from Uganda. So I think one of the tools we've forgotten talk about is leveraging partnerships. This today here is one of the highest level of civic engagement that we are actually forgetting and we've seen very many companies come together, Virginia General Assembly. I think if we are going to actually achieve the biggest or the highest level of civic engagement then we need to bring partners together.

Dr. Frank Dukes:

Thank you. I'm afraid we've just got time for one more, yeah.

Kat Noviello:

Hi, I'm Kat, I'm a Virginia delegate. I work in digital marketing in Richmond and I just wanted to point out that I think all of these tools listed up here are awesome, and social media really enhances each one of them. Just as important it is as it is to build your school skills, fundraise, educate yourself in the physical space, I think it's equally as important to do so in the digital space because whatever cause that you have or challenge you're trying to overcome, social media and the internet is a really great way to get your message out and build a following and cause change. But as we mentioned before, it's equally as important to show up.

Dr. Frank Dukes:

Okay, thank you. I really can't wait to get started. I know it's not till, I think, 2:00 tomorrow we have the breakouts to continue the conversation on civic engagement. Let me just talk about how this is going to work. This is our initial conversation about how you're going to work together and a little bit of feedback, just to sort of whet the appetite about this discussion on civic engagement. Tomorrow at 2:00, we'll have five facilitated carousel breakout sessions. What that means is we've got civic engagement broken down into five different topics and you're going to begin in smaller groups talking about one topic, then you rotate and you get to talk for the next topic and so on. We'll do that for Tuesday and Wednesday to be able to have the breakout sessions.

Then Thursday, the final workout session, we're going to break into three groups and you're going to be visiting the three different presidential homes that are part of the presidential precinct and having the facilitated conversations to dig, especially into more depth. By then we'll be looking at what sort of actions and commitments would you really be able to make and then we'll actually bring the flip charts back for your dinner at Morven, which is going to be on Thursday night.

Then on Friday, we're going to be asking three of you to share that experience briefly of what it was like to create this and as I said, there will be follow up then. We will be doing some follow up to make sure that what we craft really does reflect your words and not just the summary that we thought that we heard from that, too. What we're hoping this will be, rather than being a 30 page document that people don't look at, this actually could be something that would be distilled in a couple of pages. The set of core principles, core values and the knowledge and skills, and then the commitments you make to an idea for the structure, but really this can emerge out of what you end up talking about, too. And the responsibility to engage in commitments you're going to be making. That's very important, we will make that opportunity for you to be able to do that.

Are there any questions before we move on to the next group about what it is that we're inviting you to do? The organizers of this are actually very excited about this opportunity, they're thinking that this could be something that resonates beyond the people that are gathered here, because we don't often get to see, as you said, this is a form of civic engagement and we don't often get to have the people that are gathered here together. Are there questions before we move on to the next session?

Okay. I think that was the last slide, right? Yeah. So I'm going to turn it over to Nancy Hopkins, who's going to be introducing herself and also introducing the next work and I really look forward to seeing you guys at 2:00 tomorrow, if not before.

The Path to Equilibrium: Introspections of an Activist
Wael Ghonim, Computer Engineer, Internet Activist, and Social Entrepreneur

Wael Ghonim:

My daughter told me to stop saying ah-ah and I'm just thinking about it. So the word *tahrir*. I come from Egypt, and I speak Arabic. Arabic is my first language. And then in Arabic, I came to realize as I grew up that the language is far more complicated than we think it is, than we give it credit for. So the word *tahrir* means to liberate. It also means liberation. But interestingly enough, it means to publish. And I thought the other day, "Why is the "to publish" has anything to do with to liberate? What's the connection?" And the connection is very obvious, right? Because when you share knowledge, when we disseminate information across us, the ability for us to be able to work collectively and do something productive increases over time.

So I just think that thoughts are just like babies. Think of them in that way. They are just inside of you, before they happen, nothing happens. And then when the thoughts start getting generated, it start getting the... whatever the nature of your brain is influencing those thoughts. So you start your condition, if you are happy, your thought is going to be a happy thought. It's going to be more optimistic. If you're sad, your thought is going to be a sad thought. It's going to be more pessimistic. But then as you get the thought out of your brain, you are actually liberating the thought. The thought is born, and it's no longer yours, because it becomes part of the collective, because you can no longer control it.

And ironically, the more you try to control the thought after it gets out of you, the more you actually lose control of the thought. And the more you try and allow everybody to entertain the thought, and take it and play with it, and be offended by it, and be happy with it, and be excited about it and modify it in a way that you do not want the thought to be, the more you're actually calmed down and you understand that the thought is okay, and it's just like the birth. It is just learning how to adapt. It is learning how to improve.

The problem in the world today is that we're all becoming thought police, including myself. And we're thought police not just for others, because that's the scam. We're a thought police for ourselves. We use our logic as our imagination engine start and start going somewhere. You have a set of like probably infinite number of blocks, that you use in your head to tell yourself, "That doesn't work." But reality is, I don't know, how many of you are familiar with the butterfly effect? Wow, that's quite a good group. For the rest of you, the butterfly effect is basically ... You should read about it on Wikipedia, the Wikipedia page is a great one. I will try to explain it, but I'm not the best one to represent it. The idea of it basically is that everything that happens, including the very tiny, small details in our lives, impact our life significantly, but not only that, impacts the lives of everyone significantly.

You have been impacting my life, and I have been impacting your life. We just don't know about it. We have no way to know about it because the world is so interconnected. The animals that we are cruel to or the people that die in suffering, have a lot to do with our own personal security, because our security is not in isolation. That's what we have understood through thousands of years of evolution. That's why we end up working collectively. Our security is a function of everybody feeling secure. So we engage in thought policing ourselves, and eventually we engage in thought policing others. And by the way, the most interesting, funniest trick in the game,

everybody think that they are not thought policing, including the people you think that they are thought policing, because they also think that you are thought policing.

And we end up fighting with each other about who has the right to police, because who has the moral high ground, who has the moral standard that is ought to be copied by everyone else? And that's another scam. That's another problem because I'm a different person than you. There is no way you can relate to my experiences. You only relate to the words which already reduce the experience, because my words come from my logic. My experience is far more in depth than the logic that I use, because my logic is limited with the words that I know. If I only know about 10 emotions, and then what happens when I experience any emotion, I categorize it as one of the 10 emotions.

If someone learns about 20 emotions, this just happened to become a little bit more advanced. Why? Because they're going to be able to identify better with more accuracy. Everything could be reduced to an infinite abstract, and everything could be basically zoomed in to an infinite level of details. And life is just a matter of the balance, you just go, you need to be able to zoom in when you need to, so that you will look at the important details. But you also need to zoom out when you need to, so that you look at the big picture. Okay. So this is all like stuff that we all agree on.

What is it that we don't agree on? Let's start with democracy. I am a democracy activist that understands that democracy doesn't work. And that's why I'm a democracy activist, because if it doesn't work, I would have been doing something else. But the fact that it doesn't work should not make us go after people and claim that people are bad. It's just that the system doesn't work.

Because the system is supposed to secure all of us, and when the system is not securing all of us, the insecure of us start doing things to secure themselves. And if the system doesn't provide, like for example, if someone feels victimized because they were actually a victim of something that had happened to them in their lives, and there are no means for them to improve their level of like emotional security, by being taken care of by the society that caused the trauma, they are going to have an expression of that trauma.

And that expression would be in anger, or it would be in depression or it would be ... It would just take different shapes and forms. It will always come out. And when humans like us start taking more control and more power and ruin the load balancing game, because it's a load balancing game. The idea of the game is that if the knowledge is distributed in this hall, if the knowledge is distributed, my death will become less relevant. If the knowledge is centralized, someone's death is becoming more damaging. Probably I would not say that about myself. But I would just think that at the end of the day, this is what I'm doing on stage. I have learned a few things that are a product of my experience, and what I'm trying to do is to share them with you.

And the reason why I'm sharing them with you is because they should not live with me. I have to liberate them. Whether they're wrong or right, because I don't know. I'm just thinking. I'm just thinking out loud, and I'm just giving you what I'm thinking.

Funny enough, I actually thought about, "Should I prepare a talk or not?" Because we are trained to prepare talks. We're told to actually prepare paper and have an objective, and I don't want to have an objective. My objective is to connect with you, that's my objective. Because if we connect... We don't know enough about each other. I don't know enough about you and your experiences. Why would I have an objective before I even know who are you? Isn't that a bit arrogant? But I know one thing in this setup, which is you have agreed to give me some of your time, and I'm going to be gentle enough to provide you some value out of it, of what I understand.

I understood that the opposite of injustice is not justice. The opposite of injustice is not justice. Justice is the norm. The opposite is, I don't know, over justice? English is not ... Can someone help us with that thought? Can someone in the audience tell us what would be the opposite of injustice, if you overdo, like overcompensate the people who have a problem with justice?

Audience:
Justice overload.

Wael Ghonim:
Huh?

Audience:
Justice overload.

Wael Ghonim:
Justice overload. I don't think so. There is no justice overload. I think it just like you give generously. The meaning of it, you give generously. Because if you are trying to be just at a time where there are a lot of people who are experiencing unjust, they're barely going to be able to make it because you will never be able to fix the balance. And the balance, by the way, is not just outside of us. The main balance which is the part that you are responsible of, is the balance inside of you.

So let's stop talking about the outside of us, and let's talk a little bit about what's inside of us. I just realized that a lot of my activism is driven by anger, and I was trained to be angry. And I was also trained to be attention seeking. And a lot of my activism was also influenced by my attention seeking.

And now in retrospect, I'm not judging any of the people here because everyone is on their own journey. I would not have identified with myself as an attention seeker, before as I was engaged in the action, and therefore, I don't think there was some moral dilemma there. I'm okay with myself because as soon as I realized that, I stopped it. Because I realized that when you disconnect with your soul, you try and feed it with whatever. Attention is one of them. And if you try and feed with attention in a valuable way, thank you and we appreciate it. But that's not good for you. It's good for the world probably. Sometimes you will get a little bit angry and do

things that are not best for the world. But overall, you're going to add value. So thank you, but it's not good for you.

Because at the end of the day, attention seeking is a virus, it's a drug. You will start wanting X, then you want 10X, then you 100X, and then attention eventually becomes a fake currency. It's not really connected to value because think about it this way. Initially, attention and value start here. If you provide value, you deserve the attention, so people grant you attention. But then there are some people here who are very desperate, who are very excited, who are told that if they're not seeking attention, they're not doing the good thing. The whole system is pushing you to become an attention seeker. So under that influence, you validate based on attention seeking. For example, I had to be in peace with the fact that I'm stressed out in this conversation. Because in the past, I was not in peace with it. It's okay. I don't know any of you. I am a human, I have an animal side in me. And I understand that all these people looking at me is something, kind of not average. So at the end of the day, I want to become in peace with myself on that one, and I want to become in peace with myself for being an attention seeker.

Because I'm still an attention seeker. I'm just working on it. I'm just being more aware of it. I understand when it happens, and I know not to optimize for it. So the real problem is that a lot of our activities are driven by surface level emotions, because a lot of the market is driving us to do surface level emotions activities.

They're telling you that happiness is a chocolate that you bite, that an experience is going to an island, and sit down in front of the sea and look at your phone, and just an education is basically teaching you how to restrict yourself and not be like that bird, that is learning and ... I meant to put this, and I had to say I really entertain myself listening to your emotional outbursts. Because at the end of the day, I know what would happen, because I watched the video, but the first time I had the same emotional reaction to it, like, "Oh my God, this bird is dead. That's so cruel. How did their parents do that?" But it's just like, "I don't know enough." Just like how we don't know enough about ourselves.

There is infinite amount of like energy that's inside each one of us, and we are being taught by legacy systems. And by the way, do not get me wrong, I actually think that we need to keep the system, whatever that system is. We should not kill any system, we should improve systems. We should push systems in the right direction. Because at the end of the day, the mere fact that the system still exists, means it's still providing a value no matter how bad it is. It is not up to you to decide what reality should look like. Reality is deciding itself on itself. It is up to you to observe reality and when it doesn't match with your expectations, you take that as a signal to look inside of you. And that's why I think the real journey is actually inside of you. It's not outside of you.

You take that signal, and you try and ask yourself, "What was wrong with my expectations? What was in my logic that basically led to me not seeing that as a normal trajectory?" And by the way, just a second, I'm not saying as accept reality for whatever that is. I mean, accept reality for whatever that is because it's reality, but you get in the game to change it. You get in the game to interact with it. You get in the game to influence it, but there is a condition. The more you want to be able to be efficient in it, the more you need to understand it better and observe better. But

how can you observe reality if you can't even observe yourself, if you can't know that part of your behavior that brings your mom crazy or your dad's crazy, is actually something that you need to consider changing? Because that behavior has some truth to it.

There is something because if you believe in your cause, you want to believe that at the end of the day, like after this, I would love for you ... I keep my email. Do you see it? Do you see the email, everybody? I'd love for you to help me and guide me about my method of delivery, because it's not optimal, but it doesn't have to be. It could become better. I could connect with you in a better way. I could learn how to pass my points in a more organized way, and I'd love for you to tell me about that because I need to fix the aspect inside of me. Because whatever that I'm projecting now, is full of like the positive signals that whatever I have, and the negative signals too. I'm not able to identify all of them.

But I'm able to tell you that at the end of the day, I just realized one thing in life, that the puzzle outside is just meant to distract you from the puzzle inside. And the puzzle inside is the real one you have to deal with, and when you start dealing with in all honesty while seeking the truth, you start to getting to fix the puzzle outside automatically, or as I would say, it will start fixing itself for you. That's when some of us experience these things sometimes. Like you get a message from ... You're walking and you're down, and everything is wrong, and you have no idea how things will improve. And then things just start improving and people tell you that this is a coincidence, they just don't know what they're talking about.

They just have not read the Wikipedia page about the butterfly effect, because there is no such thing as a coincidence. It's just our ignorance is what makes us think it's coincidence, just like how our ignorance is driving a lot of how the world is running right now. Our ignorance mixed with our inability to connect with our souls to be able to improve ourselves. And by the way, let me tell you, if the world has a problem, it means all of us has a problem. It means all of us has a problem inside, including those who are working their heart off to fix the problem, because maybe there's a more efficient way for them to work their heart off because there are a gazillion ways to reach a solution. And I know now enough that the best way to reach a solution, the way that brings people together including your biggest enemies.

And if you can imagine, just imagine, do not do, do not work on it, if you can just imagine your biggest enemies on the table with you, and you know how to tell them what Mandela told his enemies, "Dear enemy, we love you." Because he really gets it. The enemy is just a reflection that there's a lot of polarization in the world right now. It's kind of like the temperature. The temperature on Earth and the temperature inside of us, tells us a lot about the health of our souls and the health of the soul of the land. If the temperature on Earth is high, that means it's bad. If it's low, that means it's equally bad. If our temperature is high, it's bad. If our temperature is low, it's bad. Life is really all about the balance, and that equilibrium is actually an internal thing. It's not an external thing.

No matter what happens outside of us, there is something that inside of us that know how to balance with it, if you use the right logic. I'll end with a thought where I started. It's just a

thought. God is a thought, right? At the end of the day, none of us experience God. There are some of us who believe in God, some who don't. Some are Christians, Muslims, Jews, agnostic, atheists, whatever it is, at the end of the day, they all agree that there is one thing that is common among all of us. We have all entertained a God thought. Not only that, the people who loved God the most and the people who hated God the most throughout history, are ones that are remembered. And we remember them from the first day of Adam. Because at the end of the day, you remember the name Adam, because the name Adam is connected to the name God.

And I was thinking the other day, assuming if... I'm not pushing religious beliefs, but assuming if we want to entertain a story, how did Adam tell his first son about his experience with God? How did he formulate it, given that the logic was still very primitive? Because our logic is way more advanced right now. How did he communicate? And how did the story of God kept evolving over time? Whether as I said you believe in it or you disbelieve in it, at the end of the day, the thought of God have survived and lived, which tells you that there is something about that thought that is telling you that nature wants it to remain. Thank you very much. Feel free to ask any questions in any subject, because I know it all. All right, I see a hand there with a lot of energy.

Liziane Silva:

Hi, I'm Liz from Brazil, social entrepreneur, and I'm thinking... I really enjoyed your talk.

Wael Ghonim:

Thank you.

Liziane Silva:

It was very like crazy and interesting. And you talked about nudging systems in a direction that you believe more in, and I want to hear from your experience. There was a big nudge in Arab.

Wael Ghonim:

Yeah, that was not a nudge just to be clear. That was an aggressive move towards the system. Just to call things for what they are, when you go and revolt against the system and you shun, people want to bring down the system. It's not nudging, that's bringing it down.

Liziane Silva:

Pushing.

Wael Ghonim:

Yeah.

Liziane Silva:

So from the pushing, what do you think are the main, maybe two or three lessons that you see from looking back to it? But in terms of what it became, not of what the process was. Thank you.

Wael Ghonim:

Yeah, that's a great question. I have to say that my ideas keep formulating and changing over time. So I'm just going to give you my last version of my reflections on this. In a zoomed out way, let's forget about the situation so that we're not emotionally attached to it. Let's think in abstract. There's a very complicated network of nodes and they're all connected in a certain way, and the system that connects them is not secure. And it's growingly becoming insecure, which means it's not doing the job it's supposed to do, because we talk about security, and security is more about feeling safe. You're not worried. You're in your place, and you don't feel threatened, basically.

And when you have complicated systems that include 100 million people, and then you try to change those systems by bringing down the basic main nodes on the top, what happens, if there are no alternatives that is ready, is ultimate chaos, and there were alternatives. We had the Muslim Brotherhood. We had the Army eventually, and that kind of helped us be in a non-chaos environment, whatever that is. I'm not saying it's a good environment or a bad environment, but just an environment where we have not lost it like other countries, which by the way, it doesn't mean that I'm judging them too because I feel very bad. It's a much harder problem for them to solve.

And in my view right now, if you care about fixing a network or a system, in my view, the most efficient way is that you try and change it from inside. The second most efficient way is to try and create a support network on the side that supports that network, because you cannot be an individual from the outside trying to fix the inside. And you cannot be a network outside fighting a network that's inside, that's much bigger than you. But what you can do is like slowly get into trying to collaborate. But what if the network doesn't want to collaborate and actually goes after you? Then you have to resist. But if you jump into resistance right away, then you are missing many steps.

I think there is something about ... I always teach my kids, if you have 10 levels of escalation inside of you, like you have 10 steps of anger, make sure not to skip one as you are engaging with someone who are making you angry, because you just want to elevate one level after the other, looks like someone pressing 10 all the time. If you press 10 all the time, let's talk networks, you are a node, you are producing energy, you're just going to overspend energy, and get mad and not see a lot of things about reality, and reality will not get better for you, and then you will keep insulting reality because you're angry, and it will just keep going that way. So in my view, you start first not seeking conflict, you start trying to bring harmony. And then when they seek conflict, you try to bring harmony. And when they seek conflict, you try to bring harmony. And when they seek conflict, you try to bring harmony. Thank you.

Olumide Idowu:

Okay, so my name is Olumide from Nigeria. My question is, you actually answered the one when you said that we should not create the system, we should keep the system. So when is the right time for young people to join the system? And when is the right time to kick off? Because talking from an African perspective, to join the politics is very, very... When you talk about

money, politics, you need some money to go into politics. So when is the right time for young people to actually join the system and using the system?

Wael Ghonim:

I want to actually play with the words a little bit and tell you, that the young people join the system as soon as they start [being] created in their mom's body. Because I joined the system when I was one years old, and my dad had to travel to Saudi Arabia and leave Egypt, because economically he could not afford staying there, in Egypt, as a doctor. So he had to fly to the south of Saudi Arabia, and we lived just as my dad, myself and my mother, and I lived there for 13 years and I joined the system there. I learned from the people. I learned from the culture. I grew up there. I was a bit in my own bubble and the bubble was created by the system, because my parents wanted to protect me from whatever that's in the system.

So just generally speaking, I think one thing that will make us all calm down and understand that we should not be tough on ourselves, is that you give yourself too much credit when you're actually angry at yourself. You're just ridiculous. That's how I think of it, because whatever that you are representing right now is just the norm ... Like when you do something that's wrong, like in the past, I used to get really angry at myself when I did something wrong and beat myself up, and I bet you, by design, most of you are like that. And the reason why I think it's by design most of you are like that, because by design, most of you share a lot with me. This is not a coincidence.

It's just as much as it sounds it is a coincidence, but the reason I'm here is because I could connect with Peter, and you could connect with me, like the network basically works. So back to your question, I think that young people should get as early as possible, but in their position. The older need to respect their intelligence and creativity, but the younger need to respect the fact that they're naïve and arrogant. And they're naïve and arrogant not as an insult, that's actually part of the design. You are trying to explore life. So you're trying to not listen to... Like think about the baby, "No, don't do that. Hey. No, don't do that." They just want to keep exploring and in a lot of ways, that's arrogance. Because if you're not aware of your environment, if you don't really understand politics, it's kind of arrogant to be in the process, and try and push for things you don't understand.

In retrospect, I could see my arrogance now in 2011. Having said that, just to be clear about the message, I don't think I did something wrong at the time. I was just a manifestation of reality. I was one of the manifestations. Actually, I just happened to be one of the millions of people who manifested something, just like how your anger manifests something. To me when I'm angry now, I know my anger manifests something inside of me. It doesn't manifest something about the person that I'm... That's details. That's the noise. The real signal is inside. The fact that I'm angry, it means my soul is angry at me for not aligning expectations with reality. It has nothing to do with the person in front of me, because I'll tell you a proof.

If you know someone is rude and always insult people whenever they see them, and you know they're nuts, you have someone that does that all the time, you're not really surprised by their

behavior when you see it over and over again, it's whatever. You just get tolerant. You know how to not spend a dime of emotions on it, you understand that it is what it is. The reason why you get really angry is not because the person is doing something that annoys you. It's because the person is doing something that you have not predicted. And of course, that's not good for you. Because if it's good for you, you get happy and excited and "Oh my god, that's a great surprise." So I'll go back to the question and answer it in the logical way.

I think people need to get involved as early as possible. I actually think politicians, good politicians, need to go to schools and teach kids what they understand about politics, because the kids are sold scams on TV. "Do it, you are by yourself, you are the hero. You are just going to be able to do that, you are going to be able to do this," and that's all like... I look at some of the videos that distribute across the Internet and they're those five minutes motivational videos, that where basically someone reduces their experience to language. But unfortunately, they're not educated enough to understand that the experience is far more complicated than how they describe it, and the mere fact of you experiencing something doesn't give you the ability to analyze it. Those are two different functions.

Because sometimes I would be in an experience, and one of my friends tell me something I don't even see within the experience, just because my friend is not emotionally attached. Because if I feel insecure, I'm not going to see things and I'm going to see things, and if the person is not that, this old noise is not in their direction. So I think that we have a responsibility to walk into these systems with a little bit more care, and we have a responsibility to start from now understanding that there is a difference between signal and noise. I mean, not from now, I know you all do it all the time. I'm sorry about that. I did not mean it in this way. I just meant that, you want to basically, whatever I added to you that you didn't know, you want to incorporate it into your logical functions so that you can start ... You will observe yourself being an attention seeker, don't get mad at yourself, it's okay.

Just observe it and just analyze it. Just see where it's going. Fly with it because that bird when it jumped, you really are thinking that the bird is thinking, "Oh my god, what's happening?" No. I mean, just that animal is on nature. Their sittings are natural sittings. They're just being. They're just getting the hits because they understand its part of the process. If they die, that's information for nature for the next generation of birds that will come better, because there's something about the experience of living for all of us that we pass our knowledge to our ancestors. We don't know in some places. Some people have religious beliefs that tells them what it is. But on the overall, there is something about all of us agreeing that we want to preserve this place, despite the fact that we're dying.

When our belief in the future dies, we start becoming more greedy and we want to take as much as we can. And we don't trust others for the power, so we want to consolidate power within us. And once you consolidate power, what happens and that's why it's very important to bring in young people early enough, not to all of a sudden empower them and make them Congress members at 25, because I don't think ... That doesn't mean it's a bad idea that a 25 reaches Congress, if they are geniuses, it doesn't matter. But it just means that at the end of the day, you

need to have an experience that qualifies you to know the task that you're doing, and your claim of having that experience, you are just like how people sell that snake oil, "Fake it until you make it." And I bought that snake oil for a while.

It's a terrible thing. It tells you, "Be rehearsed in front of people when you give a talk. Do not speak your mind. No, no, prepare. Prepare." Think before you act because actually, your logical mind is far more advanced than your spirit. That's exactly what we're being told. Think before you act, because your logical mind is far advanced than your spirit. But the reality is, your spirit is actually what provides you with happiness. So good luck thinking before you act and then worrying about what to do because you're not happy, and then you start thinking about how to fix it. So you just go into cycles of doing bad things. People can't sleep and then drink coffee so that they can stay up, so that they can drink wine at night, so that they can get drunk, so that they can wake up in the morning and drink coffee, and then something is ... I was looking at antidepressant statistics. It's appalling.

One out of eight Americans take antidepressants in 2014, above the age of 12. And it's just like we keep making bugs and then fixing them using a human way that probably produce, it does...

By the way, again, I'm not talking negatively about antidepressants because I am not a psychologist, I'm not a psychiatrist. I'm not making assumptions. I'm just saying that it worries me, that the number of people who are getting introduced to antidepressants is on the increase. It's 65% growth in America in just, whatever, 10 years. I am also not sure about the statistics, please check it out. So what I'm trying to say is that whomever is telling you, "Think before you act" is probably not telling you the best answer.

This is one of the answers, but you will be limited to your logical thinking. You will live life as a chess board. And guess what? You will be surprised and annoyed a few times, because it's not a chess board. It's not a chess board when I was walking in the street, and I got kidnapped and tortured for 11 days. It was not a chessboard. It is what it is. I did something that at the end of the day instilled that reaction to happen. That reaction have created an enormous trauma inside of me, the likes of which I have never had. But whatever, I was able to get over it, and I feel privileged and lucky that I was able to get over ... Grateful actually, not lucky. Because again, the language of coincidence, and luck and whatever, I'm feeling grateful for God for being able to pass it.

And what I understand right now is that the spirit always want infinity, and if you try and feed it with the materialistic, you will start getting one. But then one will not be enough. You want two and then two will not be enough, and you want three, and then you will wonder why you aren't happy? You aren't happy because the game is not played like that. You can actually stop seeking the material and the material will come to you. Stop seeking attention and educate yourself, because a lot of people who are attention seekers are only reading attention seeking content, and that by design is not good content. It is mainstream bad content. Actually, I take it back. I don't mean ... Actually, just the fact that it's mainstream means it has more signal than noise, but it's growingly having noise.

And if you don't look at other perspectives, if you're not hearing perspective ... The way I formulated my perspectives had a lot to do with the fact that I just roll in life. I don't think before I act. And I know that probably had costs on me, that probably had costs on others, but again, I don't give myself too much credit anyway. Because I understand that I am just a small node in a huge network. And there's a ... I forgot the name of the philosopher that said, "If a seagull moves its wing one way, just one wing one way, it alters weather forever." Think about it, because that movement is energy spent and that energy gets its way into the overall system, just like how my speech now is energy spent, and I have no idea how are you receiving it? So I'm going to get the next question.

Joshua Eyaru:

Thank you. My name is Joshua Eyaru. I'm an Atlas Fellow from Uganda. I just wanted to expand more still on that point, when the system is working, you're trying to fix the system and things are not working. So like in 2016, I really wanted to run for a political office. But along the way, I felt like I was not ready. So in the process I was approached. They asked me to coordinate the national campaign for the current president. And so the team that approached me, I joined them and I did the work, but I was trying to do the work in the right way. I felt like I needed to stand for the right thing only. Unfortunately along the way, I realized that the way they had designed the system was, even as you're doing the right thing, you find yourself in the middle of a mess, because you're doing the right thing to feed some scandal that is taking place and you have no idea about it.

So I found myself in a situation where I was put in the middle of a scandal, and they wanted me actually to almost be answerable in court. Like they wanted to fix me in jail because of what I'd done. And I'm like, "There is no way of putting me in this kind of scandal yet you know the truth." And so one thing I did best at that moment was first of all to first clear my name, and I worked hard on that-

Wael Ghonim:

Sorry, to do what?

Joshua Eyaru:

To clear my name.

Wael Ghonim:

Okay.

Joshua Eyaru:

So when I cleared my name, finally the truth came out and the guy who was involved in all these scandals, the system caught up with him. At that moment, I was scared. And I was like, "If this is what politics means, I'm done." And I still had the desire for politics, but because of that small experience doing the right thing but feeding into the wrong overall picture, but that you have no idea about. So the best thing I had to do was to quit. I quit at that moment. But even after quitting

some few years down the road, I felt like I needed to participate. Not still with the same system, but I feel like if I find myself in a situation like that, that I've done the right thing-

Wael Ghonim:

I think I got, not your question, I got the spirit of what you're trying to communicate.

Joshua Eyaru:

Thank you.

Wael Ghonim:

And if you don't mind, let me communicate what you said brought to my thoughts. I actually think that the word "the right thing" is a loaded word. Because what's the right thing? Is it the right thing for you? Or the right thing for the group? Or the right thing for the group from your perspective, but not necessarily from their perspective? Or is it the right thing from... At the end of the day, there is infinite ways to look at any object, because there's infinite... Where like this, you can look from all sides and see a completely different view. So I always have now a tendency to believe, that we have to be very careful of what we say as the right thing.

Because if it's the right thing that helps the wrong people, then it's probably not the right thing by design, because the right thing would help the wrong people do the right thing. That's the right thing. And that's why I think when people work within systems, if they are working within systems, their objective is to build trust within the system, so that at the end of the day, the system trusts them enough for them to start knowing how to interact with it. If you are the kind that you cannot do it and you feel like your battle is outside, well, that's your feeling. And by the way, no one should tell you how you should do it. Like if I tell you now, "Go back and get into the..." What do I know? What do I know about you? What do I know about the system that you're trying to change? What do I know about your culture?

I only know what I'm socialized to know, like if I met a couple of people or I had a conversation. So I cannot give an advice like that, but what I can say is that for me, I follow my feelings. I follow my feelings, and I don't think before I act. I act, and then I observe, and then I respond, and then I learn. I act, and observe, and respond, and learn, because the real problem is not in thinking before you... You think before you act to minimize the errors, but I'll tell you what happens when you think before you act, because it's rather entertaining. When you think before you act, you're creating if statements, if this, don't do that. Like let's say a guy would say, "I only want to marry a woman with blonde hair," or a woman say, "I want to marry a man with black hair."

Once that restriction is set up, what happens? Limitations. Because that's what the logic does, it discriminates. You have eyes, and the logic's main job is to decide where it should look, where you look, where you draw. Your intentionality happens through your consciousness, happens through your conscious mind. And if you think before you act, what you're doing is you are limiting your ability to think into whatever the "if statements" could generate for you. Some people have better if statements, they're [wider] and they have [many] more functions, but that's

great. But that's only like one meter to the infinite that you can get out of it. I've been looking for a job, and I have not been getting a job for a long time. I've [gone] to interviews, and it's been terrible.

I don't know how to connect with people in the interviews, because at the end of the day, I believe I was very angry at the time. I'm angry, because I got to know a lot inside of me, and I was very impatient about bringing it out. And I'm still angry, by the way, and you could probably tell. No. But the one thing that happened is that I [kept] looking for ideas, and I just came to an idea a few days ago. I will not tell you about it because I don't want to sell you on it, because this idea is not to be advertised. This idea is to be a secret. You have to look for it. It will not look for you, I guess. Or I just decided now. Anyway, next question. How much time do we have? We got to go.

Speaker 6:

I wish we had more. Maybe last question and then we'll transition to the...

Wael Ghonim:

Yeah. So I can end the positive note so that we do it like they do it, you know?

Speaker 7:

Hey. So I just had a question, because you talked a lot about the objective perspective. And so I just wanted to know, in your experience, was there ever a time where there were negative implications of merely looking at something in an objective perspective, because we're humans, right? And so, in certain circumstances, especially in isolated situations, when we're talking about civic engagement, you have to be able to relate. And a lot of times you have to be able to relate to an experience of an individual, to be able to give them the importance that helping them is significant, and that the work can be done and giving them that importance. And so at what point in your experience...

Wael Ghonim:

Yeah. That's a great point actually, and I like for it to be a last ending, because I think a lot of us here are very sensitive people. And that's why we're in the business that we're in, because we feel the pain. We understand what it means to be exposed to injustice when you don't have power, and you kind of feel that you have power. And that's why you are angry at the fact that you have power, and you are supposed to do something about whatever that you're seeing that's wrong. I do think that... There is a book I was reading a few months ago, I highly recommend, called *The Laws of Human Nature* by an author called Robert Greene. And he talks about sensitivity as a superpower.

Your ability to sense means that you can feel the environment, and you can know how the environment is changing. And the environment here is not just the people, it's also people, nature, animals, that sensing ability is highly valuable. It's a super power to the world because we need to know what's happening. The birds... Now we're busy with our phones. But in the past 1,000 years, the birds was so important in the lives of people living, because if the birds all of a

sudden start flying fast and screaming, something bad is happening, we need to evacuate. We follow the birds. That's why we love the sounds of birds because when they are available, and safe and secure, they give us peace. We know that we should be safe and secure.

The trick though, is to turn your sensitivity outwards. It's not to... There's a book I also highly recommend, that I forgot the title of the book and the name of the author, but I will still recommend the book. It has something to do that we should not be empathetic, we should be rationally compassionate, and Google will do the job for you. And I need to remember that book because I really liked the idea. There's a difference between being empathetic and rationally compassionate. I don't need to feel the pain of the poor person, actually that's not my job. If I feel their pain, I'm actually taking away from my energy into something that's not that productive. I just need to feel a projection of their pain. I need to understand their pain, I need to have the peace inside of me that enables me to connect with that pain, and then I rationally help them.

And by the way, not necessarily always by doing what they want. Because at the end of the day when someone... I'll talk about myself. When I'm angry, or sad, or stressed, or insecure or feeling threatened, I'm not in my best position to think. I actually would appreciate someone to reduce the number of decisions that I need to make right now. Not to take away my agency, because there's a huge difference because I do not appreciate anyone taking my agency, and I stand to defend it by my life. But it's just more of like, there is some problem that I'm facing and I'm aware of that problem, and it's better for others to get and engage with me. If those others are empathetic and crying next to me, I can tell you by design, they are going to be able to solve it because that level of power and... They're going to be able to engage, not solve it, to engage positively. But they're reducing their ability to solve.

So I would say, we need to learn how to evaluate our emotions all the time, and be aware and understand that there is a state where you can feel the pain of someone without exposing yourself to it. Now with that, I just want to end with a final note. I know I took more than the time I should speak. I just wanted to say that at the end of the day, what I learned in my experience in the last two years, because I was going through a very hard depression, and the way it elaborated to me is that I did not take anyone's help except friends. And one of them actually have helped me tremendously. He lives in Amsterdam. So despite the fact that we were away, the Internet have given me that opportunity to be able to connect with my friend to... He was the soul that understood me at the time.

Of course, anyone could have had the fix of anyone else because we're humans. We can connect with each other with no awkwardness if we want to, but at the end of the day, that soul has helped me. And it made me understand that at the end of the day, our destiny is one. We're all one, Republicans, Democrats, feminists and people who are happy with their masculinity, and religious people, and angry atheists, and Chinese, North Koreans, Americans, Iranians, Egyptians, we're just all one and there is a shared common thing that has been given to us for thousands of years. And by the way, we need to start giving our ancestors a little bit of credit and respect than more than that. Thank you very much.

Technology for Social Change

Dr. Aaron Presnall, President, the Jefferson Institute

C. Douglas Smith, Managing Partner, Stornoway Advisors

Nicol Perez, Civic Education Partner Manager, Facebook

Pia Mancini, Co-Founder and CEO, OpenCollective

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

So yes. I'm Aaron Presnall. I think we can just do first names here. Let's keep it ... This is easy and casual. The idea is not for us to talk a lot, but rather for you guys to really lead the conversation. We want to hear your questions we're here to serve you. There's a lot of experience and wisdom here on the panel, but this room is full of experience and wisdom as well. We're interested in what your challenges are, and how maybe we could help you think through some of them. Hopefully, we'll learn something along the way, as well.

Nicol is now working with Civic Education at Facebook. Prior to that, she was working with Civic Engagement at Facebook, so she's had an interesting balance of experience both on the product development side. But now also on sort of the real outreach and empowerment side, if you like Facebook. Pia is a serial social entrepreneur and social engineer. She is co-founder of two really interesting open civic initiatives. But interestingly enough at the same time, she's also a co-founder of a political party, which she established in Argentina out of frustration with her failed efforts at getting the established political parties in Argentina to engage at the level that she was looking for with their constituents as they proceeded with decision making.

Doug has got 20 years of experience with the, if you like, the investment side almost of digital technology and civic empowerment in the United States and abroad. He's most recently in terms of his sort of formal role, has served as Vice President and Director for the Center on the Constitution at Montpelier. So here, you probably have seen or maybe even visited heard about Monticello, that's Jefferson's home. He was the guy in the American Revolution with the big crazy ideas, right?

Montpelier was the home of Madison. He was Jefferson's sidekick. He was the guy, he was the operator. Right? He was the one who actually made those crazy ideas into something real and was the primary author of the Constitution. That's what that center was all about. So do you want to get us started? I think what we'll do is with each of the panelists, just give them like five minutes, just kind of introduce themselves a little bit better than I could and give their first thoughts on, but then hand it over to you guys and see where we go.

Nicol Perez:

Cool. Can you guys hear me?

Yes, I think so. My name is Nicol. I am primarily here to serve you some sleeves. But I also work at Facebook, I'm on a team, they're called education partnerships. I lead our civic education, partnership efforts. A lot of what this means is working with experts, and working

with nonprofits, and different organizations that are working to improve the way that civic education is taught in schools. How many of you remember... I mean, how many of you are in high school? Okay. How many of you remember your civics class in high school and what you learned?

That's really good because I don't remember anything I learned in my civics class. That's because oftentimes in schools today, you're taught maybe the three branches of government or if you're from another place, maybe some history. But you don't leave feeling you have a sense of agency or you know how to actually change things in your community and impact the world. If you did get that out of your civics class, then you're very lucky and that is amazing, and I'm happy for you. But a lot of us don't get that. So we're working on building capacity with organizations that are working to figure out how do we make civics more actionable in schools.

A lot of you might be asking, why does Facebook even care about this? The reason is because for better or for worse, we've changed the way that people engage civically every day. Right? It used to be that people, a select few would gather in a town hall or in a town square and talk about the issues that were happening in their community, and then go and do something about it. Now, that no longer happens. A lot of those conversations are happening on our platforms, on social media, not just Facebook and Instagram, but also Twitter and Snapchat and a bunch of other social medias.

We feel, and I specifically feel, a deep sense of responsibility to help the education system and to help just young people be educated on how to use our platforms for good because we all know that they can be used for really not great things. So a lot of the work we're doing is figuring out how we teach digital literacy. How do we empower young people like you guys, to use our platforms to elevate your voices so that you can have a say in decision making tables and a say with elected leaders, and what they're discussing.

Prior to this, I was a part of a product team at Facebook. It was called the Civic Engagement Product Team. A lot of what we did was figure out how do we build products to help people have a voice in government. One of the things we realized, and what's interesting is that a lot of this just came out of watching user behaviors on our platform. So a lot of people were tagging their elected officials, a lot of people when something happened in the news, they were going to Facebook and saying, "Everybody, call your reps and like, tell them how you feel about X and Y issue."

We started to think through how do we make it much easier for people to reach their elected officials? Because elected officials are on our platforms, and people are on our platform. So how do we help make it easy for them to connect with each other? How do we do it in meaningful ways? So that's what that team thought about. We built products like Town Hall, which is live here in the US and in Brazil, which helps you easily find and connect with your elected officials down to the local level and in one click, give them a call. So we'll include like their contact information in there.

It also means we work on building products to help people, to remind people went to vote, where to vote during election time and to help people plan to go vote with their friends. So election time is a huge time where a lot of people go to social media to share that they voted, to encourage your friends to vote. So we think through like, "How do we help people help each other get registered to vote? How do we do peer to peer voter registration drives?" So we've built products to do that that have helped millions of people get registered to vote. So it's been super cool working on this kind of work. It sometimes feels like I'm in the eye of the storm just because Facebook is the press punching bag. But it's really cool stuff.

Prior to this, I was a youth delegate at the UN which this was before I was at Facebook, but the State Department and the UN, they will choose one young person to represent American youth voices at the United Nations. By some grand miracle and twisted fate, I got chosen to represent American youth. That was wild because I'm from Bolivia, I immigrated to the US. I was like, "How am I going to represent American's voices at the UN and conversations with folks like Samantha Power, Ban Ki-moon, German Chancellor Angela Merkel?"

I immediately turned to social media to talk to as many people as I could, to gather people's opinions, and oftentimes to invite other young people to come with me to the UN and to decision making tables just because I couldn't possibly represent such a diverse set of young people here in the US. I've personally used social media to elevate youth voices at decision making tables and now working at Facebook to build products and build partnerships that are going to help us all be equipped with the skills and knowledge we need to use a platform like Facebook, and Instagram, and WhatsApp, and Messenger as a tool for good.

I strongly believe that those platforms and social media can be used for good. So that's why I'm there. I'm pumped to be here and pumped to hear about some of your experiences, and to be on a panel with such amazing people.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

I'm so glad you pointed that out that social media tools, they're tools, right? They're value neutral in principle, they can be used for good things and bad things, right? When we think about digital technology and change, it begs the question change. What kind of change? The good kind, bad kind? The last session, say, okay, we're not going to we're not going to use the word good and bad. But still, it's important to think first about what's the change that you want and then find the right tools. Right? What do you think, Pia?

Pia Mancini:

Yeah. Hi, there's a unicorn in the seating. I was like, whoa.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

A little whimsy.

Pia Mancini:

Can I take it home for my daughter? I want it. All right, sorry about that I was like, and I saw. On that note, I'm Pia. I'm from Buenos Aires, Argentina. I've always worked in politics ever since I finished, I don't know whatever high school, I think even before college I was already in the organizing and political space. I did everything from like campaign managing to government to think tanks to I don't know, you name it. Where I'm coming from is I remember one time I was campaign managing for a friend of mine who now is mayor of this huge city that I helped him become mayor of it.

This community organizer took us to this huge barn in the middle of the Pilar that is outside of Buenos Aires, kind of semi poor area outside of Buenos Aires. So he takes us to his barn and was stuck up to the ceiling with mattresses, and construction materials, and stuff like that to build homes for folks who don't have a home. I'm like, great. When are we starting? He's like, "No, no, Pia, I mean, elections are not until next year, right? So we're holding off on using this." I'm like, what? So it was extremely frustrating for me that I felt that hang on a second. We have this technology that we're able to study in places that we're never going to set foot at, we can fundraise from folks around the world that we are never going to meet. We can engage in conversations with people in hundreds of different countries and places, and experiences, and backgrounds. But we are limited to voting once every two years?

That's the scope of our input in politics? That's sending an emoji, right? That's the level of... It blew my mind. This was a while ago, right. But it was like 2012. Still, already social media was, obviously and the internet was massive. I felt that we were sort of trapped. We were citizens of a century trapped in institutions designed in a different century and for a different communication technology. Right, the time that these, that anyone here probably, but by the time our institutions were developed at the political institutions that rule our life, the communication technology was ink and paper and a horse, right. That's how we communicated.

So it made sense at the time, absolute sense that we built political institutions where the few made decisions in the name of the many because the many didn't have access to make those decisions, didn't have access to the information, education. Physically, we couldn't be physically in the same space, right? We couldn't even get to those cities in time to vote or to have a voice. But that changed radically. Our political institutions have not adapted to the society that we have today. Folks, institutions are not created in a void. They respond to a certain society, they respond to certain existing technology that was in place where those institutions, when those institutions were designed.

I believe firmly that we need to adapt and evolve the type of political institutions we have today for the technology that we have, for the society that we have, for who we are, how we express ourselves how we organize. So with that framework is how we started, The Net Party, the political party, we started developing technology for democracy. We build different open source platforms for civic engagement. What was fascinating about that was we were creating technology for democracy in Buenos Aires. We wanted folks to be able to vote how they would like their representatives to vote. We wanted to be able to offer ourselves a way to be part of the

decision making process of democracy on a regular basis, not once every couple of years, right, when we are called to say yay or nay to a whole system.

I remember one day was like, I don't know, January 2013. One of the developers that was working with me sends me an email. He's like, "Hey, do you recognize this?" It was our software being used in Tunisia to debate the Constitution, like someone had grabbed it, translated into French and Arabic. They were using it for the constitutional debate in Tunisia. My mind was blown away. There was this emerging need in society around the world to have better tools for democracy and civic engagement. Now, I'm going to say that I come from the same generation of activists as well, I started my activism around 2011.

We were super naïve. I'm just going to be super honest, we were very naïve. We thought that social media was this amazing tool that we were going to use to bring voices into the system that before couldn't have a place. We really deeply believed that this was a proper avenue for change. I think we didn't realize that what social media is is it's all of that. But it's also designed for the viral spreading of information that optimizes for engagement because the model is advertising. Right? We didn't see that coming. Right?

I don't know, in a way we were trying to push civic debate into a tool that was designed for viral advertising, the viral spreading of information and you know what? What spreads faster is what makes us angry, right? Nothing spreads faster than outrage, nothing. Nothing. So social media wasn't created for mature cool debate, it was created for virality.

So we're kind of stuck in this situation now that, and I don't have the answer. Just spoiler alert, I have no idea. But we are stuck in this situation where we need to rethink what our tools are for democracy. More than that, I think, at a greater scale, and this is what I am working on is like, we need to think what democracy ... What is great democracy for us? Right? What does great democracy look like for you?

Because if I keep saying that this is not what we want, but we are utterly unable to crystallize an alternative, the only thing that we're doing is we're creating power vacuums. Politics of course vacuums. They don't stay empty. Someone else is going to feel that, the demagogue that's there, the military, right? They're already kind of radical, organized group. Those are the ones who step in because they're already organized. We need to think if this is not what we want, then what do we want? Do you know, if this is not the democracy that we like, then what is great democracy for us? That's what I want to leave you with. Thank you.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

You all this morning did some great community work, right? There wasn't a whole lot of digital technology involved with it. There was technology involved with that work, right? You were weeding, you were painting. There was all kinds of tools that you were using. You got a lot done for those communities, probably had community members coming out saying hello and maybe even working with you. But it was very physical, it comes down to us. With the mattresses in the

warehouse, there are physical things that require ancient technology to pick up and move around. Right?

Yet we have also at the same time these new tools, to the extent that they're abused, it may be a component of the tool itself. It may be, as you point out, exposing weaknesses in our own systems that actually we own, the tools don't own that. If we have problems with populism and problems with corruption, that's our issue. Others may exploit that with the social media tools, but that's actually not the tool's fault, right? They're exploiting a weakness within ourselves.

Doug, you've dealt with these kinds of complex environments from a development perspective, right? In particular, you've had some interesting experience with dairy and an agriculture. Right? How do you see a very physical industry and the digital technologies, how do you bring these old and new things together to create, and empower, and move social change in a positive way?

C. Douglas Smith:

Yeah, I think some of it's about adoption and knowing when and how appropriate adoption happens. So thanks to the precinct, always putting on phenomenal programs for people around the world and for inviting us here. The spring of my last semester in grad school, I was looking for jobs. I went into an interview. They asked me about this thing called the World Wide Web. To which I boldly said, "Yes, I do have an electric mail address." They were in awe, it was AOL. Now, I've dated myself, right? In the interview, they said, "Well, what do you know about databases?" I said, "It's amazing. You take data, you put it in a database. You can mix it up and get it out." I have no idea why they hired me.

But this demonstrates the problem we have both in the social and in the development sector, which is that we're always behind on the tech front, right? Because the main innovation is happening, to be honest with you, in the consumer spaces and in the digital company spaces. 10 years after that, I found myself senior web strategist for a web company. I went in to see a client. I was working with them on developing, again, a data system for their company. The guy on the other side of the table literally said, "I want some of that Java stuff. I read about it in a magazine. It's amazing." I said, "Well, What do you want to do with the Java stuff?" He's like, "I don't know, but I got to have some of it." We charged him for that Java stuff, let me tell you.

Again, it was an NGO, again, behind the curve ball, and again, trying to catch up based on whatever it is McKinsey published six months ago. I think this is one of the challenges, and I think that that's been reiterated by my colleagues is that in the development sector, and in the social impact sector, and in the political sector to a degree, we're always trying to catch up because we don't have the innovation mindset or we don't want to spend the money, or we don't have the money to actually do the types of innovation required to be disruptors.

So by the time we're starting to adopt what we think is disruptive, it's really not disruptive anymore. I think that's a real challenge that we have. Admiral Maul yesterday in the opening reminded us that social media is shaping the public debate. But I think for too many of us, we

think it's because the social media is shaping the public debate not that the social media is or should be an agnostic platform by which these debates are happening from others.

When we understand that those debates are coming from others on these platforms, I think what we're going to realize is there have always been these extreme voices. None of us can be shocked about that. If anything, social media has democratized voice, and it has flushed them out into the public. The challenge is how it is that we're managing those voices. And how it is that we set an expectation for each other and the platform's themselves to say, "This is wrong and this is right," if we expect those platforms to be agnostic.

Now fortunately, I think what we're seeing is more and more corporations and it's largely because investors in technology are calling for this are saying there is a right and a wrong. We are moving away from the idea that there are agnostic platforms towards what is an internet social norm. It's emerging. It is not pretty and it is not clean. But it is evolving, just like the conversations themselves are. I think that's the challenge that I would put for each of you is how it is that you help to not do what NGOs have done in the past or political organizations have done in the past, which is chasing after the Java, but instead figuring out how it is to leverage the technology where it makes sense to actually provide access, and to elevate, and to activate voices. So we have a much more common, a much more cohesive, even if it's full of disagreement, a much more cohesive conversation. We may find that that's not possible, and that's okay.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

Yeah, I think it a couple of things that I really heard there. One is to concentrate first on the change not the technology. Right? So the real disruptors are those who are thinking about that social change that they want to make. That's the disruption actually, it's not about the technology. Facebook is in the business of technology disruption. Right? Well, maybe they used to be. But this is a roomful of social disruptors, right? The technology is in the enabling device, right. As long as you're focused on that, then the tools will come. Right? When and where they're appropriate, keep your minds open and talk to the right people.

But the other thing in talking about, and we will learn and I think another side of that is that those who would seek to confuse, and distort, and influence. They also learn, right? That's also a moving target. They get better at it. As there are those who observe and see how easy and cheap it is to be successful, successful in some ways at a grand scale, you get replication, right? It's not just one or a couple large state actors, but lots of states, and non-states, and corporations and small groups individuals even. I think we're only beginning to explore the kind of challenging environment that that we will face in that space. But now it's time to turn it all to you all. Yes, lots of hands. That's exactly where I wanted to be. All right, let's start in the back.

Fionnuala Fisk:

Hi, my name is Finn. I'm one of the Virginia hosts. I just finished writing my senior thesis on the effect of de-platforming on digital far right extremists. So as you imagine, I have absolutely no opinions on this topic whatsoever. But I did actually just want to provide some resources that I

stumbled across in the course of writing this thesis, that if you all are interested in reading more about this topic, I just kind of wanted to put them out there.

Two in particular, there is a really great report by Data and Society, which is a think tank that writes about technology in the public sphere among plenty of other things. It's called the Alternative, or the Alternate Influence Network. What she does is she looks at this network of far right influencers on YouTube in particular, how they're cross networking, how they're cross referencing each other, how they're creating this cohesive group online that responds to each other, draw strength from each other uses these platforms, in order to get their message heard, amplifies the more extreme voices in their group. So that was the Alternate Influence Network by Rebecca Lewis for Data and Society.

There's also this amazing book called *Twitter and Tear Gas* by Zeynep Tufekci. She's a Turkish activist, writes about these issues. She's a scholar on ... She writes about the Arab Spring, she writes about how Facebook has been used in recent years, kind of how Facebook versus Twitter was able to amplify the Ferguson protests, how that was only able to come up on Twitter because the structure of Twitter responded better to that particular crisis than Facebook. She amplifies this really important point, that I would argue that these platforms are not content neutral. They're not just tools. They're algorithms. They make conscious choices about what kind of content they want to promote, what kind of content they don't want to promote.

There's no dislike button on Facebook, and that impacts what kind of content we see. I think it's really important that we understand these are not content neutral platforms. They are platforms. They are where our public sphere is, but they're not content neutral. So when people are using these platforms, they need to understand that. Yeah, that's my two cents I guess.

Nicol Perez:
Thank you for that.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:
Thanks. I hope that as each of you have resources that that the Precinct also maybe in terms of its continuing social networking of you all even maybe can curate a bunch of resources that might be available to support folks as they continue on and contribute. Each of you, I hope would also contribute to that resource list as we go forward. Sorry, I'm giving you action items. That's not... More hands. Sure. Okay.

Joe Reeves:
Hi, my name is Joe Reeves. I'm a Virginia host. I'm a student here at UVA. My question is, I'm particularly excited about your response, Nicol, but it's almost just to respond to Pia and Doug's comments. Because I find it fascinating how technology is evolving specifically with big data analytics and algorithms and a lot of the aspects of the first comment. I guess my question is and I also just to add on to that, but how that impacts civic society, specifically looking, reflecting on the 2016 election in America with the profitability and perpetuation of false news on social media platforms? How algorithms are built to perpetuate self-confirmation bias where you see

more of that same content despite its validity. But these algorithms are also driven by profit motivations, it keeps users on the websites longer. That's good for the business of Facebook. So where's the equilibrium point between civic responsibility and validity? But then also maintaining the business fundamental of driving profitability?

Nicol Perez:

Yeah, I mean, I don't think that there we have, that I have the perfect answer to this. I definitely think that we do have a responsibility as a platform to understand how is it that we can show people the content that is important to them, but also give them the power to say like, "I don't want to see this anymore in my newsfeed or if I see an ad, a political ad, I want to know where it's coming from, who's paying for it, who else they're targeting." So that you can make informed decisions about the things that you do. I think we have a responsibility to show people the content that they like, give people ads that are tailored to their interests so that you're not seeing random ads that you don't care about which sustains our business and enables us to provide a service that is free to people, and that anyone can use regardless of the amount of income you have.

Then two, to build tools that help with transparency, so building apps, transparency tools that help you understand who's paying for an ad, and then also you know who else they're targeting, which is I think, important information and launching those tools in place, especially around election time. Then also understanding, testing out new methods, whether it's third party fact checking, whether it's how do we, in exploring questions to answers, exploring answers to questions like, who decides what's right or wrong or what is misinformation? Should it be our platform? Should we leave that to third party fact checkers?

Should we have a collective way that the community on Facebook can help us identify that? I think that's a lot of the stuff we're exploring at Facebook. In that we hire many professors and researchers to come and help us understand what are the best ways that we can both show people ads that they care about, so that we keep this service free, but also that we're protecting our people on our platform in a way that makes sense. So I think a lot of things to explore. But those are some other ways that Facebook is sort of looking into doing this kind of stuff.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

You come from a very different kind of business model. How do you find that equilibrium where you have a successful business where at the same time, finding that balance with social responsibility and transparency?

Pia Mancini:

It's tough. So Open Collective is my company, which has nothing to do with democracy. That's a foundation that is started called Democracy Earth, which is full and nonprofit. I also started a company which I now run is called Open Collective. It has a different business model. I think that advertising so I think that ... The fine line that we walk is that we have investors, and it's obviously a fine line that every company works, you have shareholders. Part of the problem is

that at least in the United States, the role of a corporation is to maximize profit for your shareholders. That's your object.

That's what you should do. I as a CEO of my company, I am called to that standard, which I think is a bit complex because when you talk about social issues, or when you start working in a social space, there are things that you want to do that might not go towards the growth of your company, but you still think the right thing to do. I guess that part of my job as a CEO is making sure that I take the company to a place where we have the independence to make those decisions, without having to respond to the bottom line only.

I think that when it comes to fake news and the spread of misinformation and the business model of the internet is advertising. So with absolutely all the love in the world, until we change that, nothing really matters. Because that's the business model of the internet. So Facebook, with all respect, can try and put in place all the civic initiatives that they want, their business model is advertising. They make money out of you staying engaged with Facebook and selling your data to advertisers or selling your profile to advertisers. That is the model, and not only Facebook, that the business model of the internet in general.

So until that changes, I think we're only going to see more spread of misinformation, and virality, and whatever drives engagement. I think I said before, what drives engagement is outrage and being upset about things. So what's going to happen with the internet? I don't know, there are a lot of really interesting fringe projects happening around with web three, the decentralized space, the crypto space, offline social media, like the scuttlebutt consortium, money verse.

There are a lot of super interesting projects that are now trying to think what is the next web because the one that we have took us here, which is great. It has at the base layer, a lot of open protocols, but it doesn't have open protocols for things that are key, that are identity, for example. It's just how it's built as an infrastructure problem. I think that we need to support engage with start fund projects that are building The Next Web.

What does that look like, and how we have open protocols for identity, how we have personal API's, right? The services engage with me, in my terms, my data is mine. It's mine, I sell it as I want. I make profit of others using my data if I wish to, instead of me as an individual having to go and connect with all these different API's in their terms, in the service's terms. That's what I want to see in the world. Yeah, but again, until we get there, we're going to see fake news. I'm sorry, I don't have... I wish I had a more optimistic answer because I am at my core, I am an optimist, but I think that my responsibility is to be fully transparent with what I really think.

Nicol Perez:

Yeah, I mean, just to add to that, I mean, yeah, I don't foresee us as Facebook solving the fake news problem. In fact, I think there's a lot to be done, which is my job, now at Facebook in civic education, I think there's a lot to be done for our education systems to catch up and teach young people how we how technology can be used and misused. So that when you encounter fake news

or when you encounter things on the platforms, you are at least informed on how to engage with them.

Pia Mancini:

I mean, there's a fantastic model there is Wikipedia, right? Wikipedia is a fantastic model. It's a source of truth. When I was in college or in school, like quoting Wikipedia on a school paper was like, "Bye bye. See you later." Now, Wikipedia is the source of truth is amazing.

Nicol Perez:

It's the source.

Pia Mancini:

It is, it is. It's crowdfunded. You post something that is fake there, and people voluntarily take the time to go, and edit, and add quotes, and add resources. They take out, they weed out misinformation. Of course, it's underfunded, it doesn't have advertising. It's not perfect. It doesn't have a business model. So that's a problem or maybe it's not. Maybe it's why it is what it is. Right? But yeah, then I think that anyway...

C. Douglas Smith:

I just we're about...

Pia Mancini:

I know you feel with a source of truth, but I get why.

C. Douglas Smith:

Part of it. So I've worked a lot of politics, admittedly. Wikipedia, you can the way it's just wide open for editing. I mean, you can go on and you can more than tweak with someone's Wikipedia profile.

Pia Mancini:

It's going to get changed in two seconds.

C. Douglas Smith:

It doesn't necessarily get changed in two seconds. I think so this is the challenge we have is that-

Pia Mancini:

I challenge you to that. We're going to do this. I'm going to email everyone.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

Half the room is now logged on. We're all editing Doug's profile.

Pia Mancini:

I will do that.

C. Douglas Smith:

I think part of the challenge is both of you have hit on is this the truth though. On the topic of resources, the Hewlett Foundation has done some really groundbreaking work on truth and media around some of these issues. I think that they are really leading some of the research charge on how it is that we grapple with this. You're right. Part of it is teaching people to start weeding out what is likely not true and what is possibly true. But you do have to filter these things.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

Some of it's even more nefarious than alternate visions or alternate truths as some have suggested. But actually the systematic destruction of truth itself, right? So it's thousands of alternate narratives. So that one true that more fact empirically based narrative is just lost within the thousands. It's a weaponization of post-modernism, right? When nothing is true, then anything is possible, you can slide through, sneak through. So could we get the mic over here too? Where's where? Gee, I don't.

Joshua Eyaru:

Thank you. My name is Joshua. I'm an Atlas Corps Fellow from Uganda. So human beings are prone to making mistakes every day of our life. These mistakes over time, we realize the mistakes we do, we correct them. That means like, someone who meets me today, you might meet a better version of me compared to whoever met me last year, because over time, we evolve. We keep changing. We realize and we actually do challenges that sometimes when we share information, we share this information sticks. So what I shared in January last year, might be still, and I've shared a lot of things maybe about myself.

Over time as I'm changing, I'm evolving into a better person. I begin sharing good stuff about me. But at the end of the day, these records of you from the past, technology has captured them. We've seen over time, like in my contract, I've interacted with some people in HR. They go ahead and judge people based on what they used to post when they were in high school, when they're so excited about life, when they're reckless about what they say, but somebody has changed.

Unfortunately, somebody is missing a job because HR believes that at such and such a time this guy posted this and this. What did he mean? So you don't know the person right now. Maybe this has changed over time. So my question is like, how do we take care of these maybe unintended consequences that maybe social media has maybe imposed on people?

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

So you have a room full of aspiring political activists here who are now really concerned about what they posted on social media when they were 16, 17 years old? Their frontal cortex hadn't evolved as far as it has now. Some control issues maybe, and they're nervous. It's a very practical, meaty, real problem for aspiring politicians that can in fact filter people, filter great quality people out of activism, of politics because of silly stuff that they did before. How do we deal with it?

Pia Mancini:

I deleted all my tweets when I ran. Before I ran.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

Yeah, so all your tweets are deleted. Okay. But in the archives still has that, we could still...

Pia Mancini:

This is going, this is going.

C. Douglas Smith:

Did it work?

Pia Mancini:

Yeah, I did the work. Again, when I ran, it was 2013. A, I didn't have that many tweets. Although, I've been in the platform since 2007. So I had a fair bit of tweets. But again, it was a different time. That's what I did. But I think there is not a project or the right to be forgotten or something like again.

Nicol Perez:

Yeah, yeah, where you can ... I mean, yeah, you can go and go back many years and start deleting your stuff. But I think this is like a really important thing to touch. I'm really happy you asked this because we often, when we think about our politicians, we expect them to be perfect and to have never taken a photo in college with like a red cup, like drinking a drink. It's like, no, we all did that in college. Relax, we cannot expect our politicians to consistently be absolutely perfect. We're not going to vote for someone just because of a tweet they said in 2013.

We just need to recognize that politicians are regular people. We can be a part of changing that conversation and changing the expectations we set in our politicians. Politicians are like everyday people just like us. They should be going there to represent us. It doesn't mean that they are perfect. We need to sort of we can expect a lot of our politicians but it shouldn't be that we have to expect them to be absolutely perfect and to have never had a drink in college. We need to be a part of changing that conversation and making it okay.

It's interesting now, I see employers sort of changing that. I don't know what it's like in other countries but for example, when I applied for jobs out of college, no one, I mean I had many photos up on Facebook of me at a college party. I wasn't being asked about them. I'm really happy about that because we were only college ones or we all said something dumb on the internet once. We just need to like relax about it. I understand that it's very hard to tell your HR person this. As we like, grow older and as we are creating society, let's just all understand that we're like changing and evolving humans. Even with politicians, we can't expect, we shouldn't completely dismiss a politician because of a tweet they said many, many years ago, and understand that our perspectives are changing, and that we are changing people. We just need to be more compassionate with each other.

C. Douglas Smith:

Now, I might not be ready to go that far. Because I live in Virginia. This thing, this social media thing called yearbooks happened to us with our governor. Right? Where he couldn't tell you whether he was the guy in blackface or the guy in the hood. So I'm not sure I'm ready to go quite that far. But I think, Aaron, the issue that you raised was actually really important, which is it's dissuading people like you from going into politics. That's the worst thing that could happen for our representative democracy, both here and abroad, is we need the infusion of idealism. We need the infusion of people who are willing to make mistakes. We need the infusion of your energy in politics, we need each of you thinking about how it is that you're involved in the process. Because otherwise, it's going to be relegated to the extremes and the extremes with money. That's why I feel your pain.

Pia Mancini:

Can I add though, to that, guys take care of yourselves and girls, if you're going to run, it's tough. Sure, it's all fun and games, until it's your face out there and people calling you those things. It's like people bringing out from your history, digging into it. Just, I mean, it's not rosy and just be very mindful of how you're feeling always. Make sure that you're taking care. I think it's public service and running. That's what I do. I wouldn't, I wouldn't do anything else. But I also would very much ask you to take care of yourselves and make sure that you're willing to do that. Maybe delete some pictures, if you can.

Nicol Perez:

Yeah. I mean, share what you're comfortable with, go back and delete things, but yeah.

Pia Mancini:

My two cents.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

More questions? Yeah.

Sophia Gonzalez:

Yes. Hello. My name is Sophia. I'm from El Salvador. We just recently had an election. Our elected president is a disruptive president. He only communicates via Twitter. I think it's something that's happening here in the US as well. Yeah. But it's been a disruptive election in El Salvador because he didn't even show for the presidential debates. He made a presidential monologue at the same time that the presidential debate was taking place.

He never shows up to press conferences. He only goes on Facebook Live and has his own monologue. He's actually never been present before our public. I don't know, it's really it's changing the way of politics in my country. So actually my question to you is do you think that there's a thing as too much technology that's taking place right now or should we expect this from now on or should we stick to some conventional practices that have been taking place so far and ask him to stick to that or just let him do his thing and just be okay with it.

C. Douglas Smith:

Yeah, I don't know. Maybe your president is a hologram and doesn't exist. But generally speaking, technology is not going away. Artificial Intelligence is rising. Machine learning is rising. The companies that are making the most money in the digital space, 70% of them are investing heavily in AI already. So the technology, the question is there ever too much? In my opinion, it's sometimes misused or you throw different technology at something just for the sake of technology, but I don't think technology is going away. We have to figure out as people who are activating around social justice and social issues, we have to figure out how we're going to leverage it and not be scared of it. I think we have to figure out how to invest in it. So we're not always catching up.

Pia Mancini:

Yeah, and also like San Francisco, for example. Now, it's a great example they just voted to not have facial recognition in San Francisco on the streets. I live in New York. My face is all over the freaking whatever. I don't know who's watching but that's not even a question. Right? In San Francisco, it's banned. So you have that, you have New York, and then you have China, right? Then like social score system, I don't know if that trust. So I think you have different levels of ... I don't think we should lose the fact that we have agency on that. I think that we do have agency. I mean, there is this tension between the land and the cloud, essentially, right, governments and digital companies. In this tension, I think we as citizens can actually have a certain level of impact I wouldn't forget about that. Right? It requires organizing, it requires activism, it requires investing our time, our voices, our funds. But yeah, I think it is a battle that we can give.

Nicol Perez:

Yeah, I mean, I also think ... For example, technology can be used to enhance a lot of things in the offline world, right? Whereas here, for example, my city council meetings, I live in Oakland, California. I can't attend any of the city council meetings because they all happen at like, 2:00 PM. When we're all at work. Who is attending those meetings? It's like, I'm going to need you to record it. So I can watch it later at some point so that I can be somewhat informed on what's happening in in my community.

So I think in those cases, it gives access to people that are working and don't have a luxury to step out of work at 2:00 PM to go listen to your city council members to debate an issue that's important and that affects you. I also think it can be used to really inform people. I think the biggest thing here is like you're mentioning, our president refuses to debate on live TV. That sucks because then you're not able to accurately compare two candidates.

Right? But he's off doing monologues on Facebook Live. I think a lot of this is comes down to like how do we invest in people and educate them on how to one, turn out to vote, why it's important to turn out to vote, why it's important to look at what's happening and understand like, "Oh, he refuses maybe to go on debates because X, Y, and Z reasons. He doesn't want to answer X, Y and Z questions." Give people the power to be able to choose who they elected to office. I think what's interesting is we're seeing oftentimes a lot of surveys say that people trust less in democracy.

It comes down to how do we help teach people whether it's in schools or outside of schools that they have a sense of agency to be able to look at information and make a choice. They have a responsibility to the public good, and to go out and vote. So that we're choosing people that are responsible, and that we believe accurately represent us. So there is a time and place for technology. I think technology can be used in many powerful ways to give more access to tables that we're not a part of. But I think in this case, a lot of what I would say is we need to do better in investing in education and teaching people how to understand information, be able to use it, to be able to exercise your vote and your voice.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

I'd also just suggest that what you just described is frankly, ridiculous, right? It's funny, make fun of it. Right? Have physical events where in fact you have a cutout of your president or a hologram, right, and make it so that the president ... He loses either way, right? He shows up and looks ridiculous, because maybe he's just awkward in public settings. He doesn't show up and he looks ridiculous, because he's a paper cutout right? Make it a lose-lose situation through humor. Make fun of him, ridicule him. Expose how ridiculous that scenario is that he's presenting. Then you'll begin to crack open that that sense of invulnerability of the monologue. Right? I think we have time for one more. Is that right? Or ...?

Pia Mancini:

No.

Speaker 10:

Just one last quick one and then we got to get done.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

Okay. Quick one and-

Pia Mancini:

Sorry, folks.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

Lightning round.

Pia Mancini:

My fault.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

Quick question. Yes, right there. Right behind. Yeah.

Evie Kanhai-Gurchuran:

So I would like to ask should we be widening the net of accountability because we talk about technology for social change. Technology has opened up ridiculous opportunities for

programmers and creators of programs and even PR firms when you think about social media and the content they create. But I find that there is not accountability for the creators, even though they're being maybe fed the content.

Do you feel that there should be some amount of accountability? Because I'll give you what's happening in my country right now. We had a no confidence motion against our government. Elections was actually supposed to happen in March. I'm from Guyana by the way. So the opposition party hired a controversial PR firm out of the US to lobby for fair elections and for the elections to come about, as it should, according to our democracy.

But the current government is arguing that they only did that so that they can have ads to increase racial tension and this kind of things. So as a digital marketer, I know that Facebook, for example, has their rules and their terms of agreement and wouldn't or shouldn't allow that. But again, should we be wiring on that accountability and not just say, "Okay, it's this party's or that party's fault," where we have political parties in my country, or the people that are posting the content or utilizing the apps, should we be holding the creators also accountable?

Pia Mancini:

Who do you mean by the creators?

Evie Kanhai-Gurchuran:

For example, the PR firm who is now going to create the campaigns and tell the story. Even if let's say they create an app of our around what they want their agenda to be. They're able to use that to influence voters and just the population. Should there be more accountability on the side of the people that are creating the technology?

Nicol Perez:

Another question I had for you was who's we? Who's we in this, "Should we should we be holding them accountable?" Is that the public? Is that the government? Is that social media sites? Do you have a perspective?

Evie Kanhai-Gurchuran:

Well, I think from you being from Facebook, would you ever hold a PR firm accountable or do you?

Nicol Perez:

Yeah. So I mean, I think the biggest thing we do in this case when you're running ads on Facebook in the lead up to an election, there's a requirement for A, you'd have to show that you're a real person and not a bot. So our ad transparency tools ask you to send a photo of your ID by email. It's this whole really complicated process if you want to run out in the lead up to an election. Then we provide transparency to people so that you guys can see who else these ads are being targeted to. So when you click the three dots next to an ad, you will see information on how much money they're spending and who they're targeting with this ad. I think ultimately, what's most important is for us to give people that information so that you can make your own

choices. I don't think we should be the ones telling you what's right or wrong. I think it is our responsibility to build the tools to help you make decisions.

I also think government has a role to play in this. In regulating the kind of ads that people can run on anywhere, not just Facebook in the lead up to elections. So I think it's a multi actor, like a lot of people. We should be held accountable for building the tools to help you, to give you the information you need to be able to make smart choices. But I think government is also involved, I think society should also be involved in in holding that accountable. My two cents.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:
Have you got anything?

Pia Mancini:
Obviously I think they should be held accountable. I think there are rules and regulations that hold them accountable. You and governments should enforce them. You shouldn't be able to ... I don't know, in Argentina, for example, three or four days before the election, you can't campaign anymore, right? But you couldn't put ads on TV and on the street, but no one thought about social media. So you could still put ads on Facebook or comments on Facebook, or whatever, or Twitter during the day of the election, which is crazy, right? So those things, I think, obviously, should be enforced and taking ... We should hold them accountable. Also, where the money's coming from, if there are rules that prevent foreign money from being spent in an election locally, the money trades should be followed. Those spending the money wrongly should be accountable. Those taking the money should also be held accountable.

C. Douglas Smith:
Yeah, it's interesting. I think generally, propaganda has been around in the political space forever. I would agree that I actually don't think the platforms are going to be able to hold the content producers responsible. But for anyone wanting to create a company out there, a third party app that's essentially a bullshit meter that's based on a bot that responds in real time, based on machine learning, you probably have a pretty good business there.

Pia Mancini:
Don't do it, if nothing else.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:
It's a big problem, right? There are folks out there, there are lots of ideas, but there's plenty of room for it. Right? So yeah, or a company that would keep a registry of PR companies who pays them what the content is that they produce for whom. Not just in your country, but globally, because if they're doing it badly in your country, they're probably doing it badly in other places as well.

But at the same time, they probably want an account with Coca-Cola. Right? On the other hand, so transparency can be a tool for at least indirect accountability, right? In that way, the market can impose some discipline on behavior. It's counterintuitive in a way but yeah, there are there

are angles, there ways, but that's another business opportunity for someone out here somewhere. Unfortunately, we've run out of time. I know there are lots of questions, some of us will be able to hang out a little bit longer. Unfortunately, some of us have to run. But you can find us all online and through the social media platform-

Pia Mancini:

That we've been bashing. I know.

Dr. Aaron Presnall:

That are made available to you all and we look forward to seeing you there and in your own physical material, very real places. Thank you.

Perspectives on Representative Democracy

The Honorable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

The Honorable Ralph E. Gonsalves:

Good morning. I want to thank all the organizers of this event for their kindness and for their hospitality. I met this morning a magnificent young leader here in Virginia – and others. And I'm very pleased to be here to speak with you, to interact with you, answer your questions, and to learn from you.

I want to thank Jim Murray for the introduction and for putting out certain basic facts about St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I'll make one addition in terms of backdrop. Though we are small, 150 square miles, we have a seascape of 11,000 square nautical miles. That's very important, because it means that though the land on which we live is of great importance, the sea and its resources are at the center of our own developmental thrust. And the issues concerning global warming relate not only to matters of adaptation and mitigation in respect to the landscape, but also to the sea, the availability of those resources and how we protect those resources. Marine resources, fish and lobster and conch, tourism resources... We have to deal with rising sea levels and the like.

The matter of climate change has become urgent because the changes have been unusual and they have been unprecedented. And anyone who tells you, "don't worry about climate change" and denies it, they deny science. It's real, and it's happening before our eyes. And we see it especially in small islands and in developing countries.

Now we have been fashioned as a democracy. Colonialism – British colonialism – came to us in 1763. There was a general carve up in the eastern Caribbean between France and Britain. And Britain ruled basically uninterrupted – save and except for about 5 years in the latter part of the 18th century. And we became internally self-governed in 1969 and earned independence in 1979.

Now it is important to understand, when a colonial state is established, what it does to a people. The foundation of any organized system of government, of any democracy, is something called

citizenship. It is the highest office in the land. It is the one which joins all persons who are citizens in a political community or society organized as a state within a particular set of geographical boundaries.

But if this state is imposed and doesn't arise, as it did for instance in Europe and in several other countries of the world, as a consequence of the internal contradictions of the society... If this state is imposed and the imposition is emphasizing minimalist functions - collection of taxes, provision of basic services, and very importantly the maintenance of law and order and using the legal system as repressive - then those who are from there, in such a society with an external imposition of a state... The ordinary man and woman, the ordinary citizen of this state which has been imposed from outside, sees the state as a constellation of institutions to be used, misused, and abused. And therefore, they have no commitment to it.

To have a true representative democracy, you have to own the state. It has to belong to you. You have to own your government. Now you will go and you will see; you will read on the internet and you will see that St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the only country in the eastern Caribbean, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, which doesn't sell its passport and doesn't sell its citizenship. How can we, if citizenship is the highest office in the land?

It's an interesting Jeffersonian concept. [Citizen is a title] higher than President. It's higher than Prime Minister. And if [citizenship] is the highest office in the land, and if it is the bond and the glue which keeps us together in something called an organized society, clearly that which is the highest office in the land cannot be sold. And the passport is the outward sign of the inward grace of citizenship and cannot be sold.

To those who should wish to sell those things in order to provide food, I say that is unsustainable and it is antithetical to sustainable development.

Because hear me this and hear me well – if the state sells a citizenship, if the state sells the passport for money, what happens then? The ordinary citizen will see that the leaders are using, misusing, and abusing the state institutions. And if they can do that, we can do the same thing, and should do the same thing, until we can gather enough money to see if we can jump on a plane to come to the United States of America if Donald Trump will allow us to come in.

So there [would be] no commitment. And you would find, as W. B. Yeats puts it in *The Second Coming*, that, “The worst among us are full of passionate intensity, and the best lack conviction.” And lack commitment. [Commitment] is vital in the building of any representative democracy.

Now I can read for you the preamble in our constitution, which would give a flavor as to what we have. The words are really majestic.

“Whereas the people of the islands of St. Vincent, who are known as Vincentians, A. have affirmed that the nation is founded on the belief of the supremacy of God and the freedom and dignity of man – and woman.

B. desired that their society be so organized, so ordered, as to express their recognition of the principles of democracy, free institutions, social justice, and equality before the law.

C. Realize that the maintenance of human dignity presupposes safeguarding the rights of privacy, of family life, of property, and a fostering of the pursuit of just economic rewards for labor.

D. desire that their constitution should enshrine the above mentioned freedoms, principles, and ideals.”

And then, a set of institutional arrangements are put in place and a set of protective provisions of fundamental rights and freedoms in the usual parliamentary system, British-style.

Though it would be a mistake to think that what we have is a carbon copy of the British Parliamentary system, because you don't transpose Westminster and Whitehall across the Atlantic and have them remain in their pristine forms. But we are faithful to the fundamental principles of representative democracy and freedom, separation of powers, all [which] you read in the textbooks. I don't have to go through those, because you are familiar with them.

But there are real flesh and blood people that have to run these institutions. How did we come together as a people?

Our country comprises largely of migrant peoples, some who arrived freely and some who were enslaved. When the British came, they met about 10,000 people. The Kalinago and the Garifuna. The Kalinago are what you'd call the Yellow Caribs. And the Garifuna, the Black Caribs – a mixture of persons of African descent who had come there in various ways. Some ran away from Barbados, because Barbados had a slave society earlier. Barbados had flat lands; we had a lot of mountains and still do. There was [also] a shipwreck in the late 17th century [where] a slave ship had come ashore. And in an earlier period, a small number of slaves were brought there by French people on the western side of the island.

When the British came, they owned the Kalinago and the Garifuna. Owned all the land in common.

[When they arrived] there was a Chief, a Paramount Chief.

In 1764, the British made a mistake. They declared that all [of the] land belonged to the British crown. Well, if you come from London and Manchester, and you come all the way to St. Vincent, and you meet me at my land and you take it away from me, I will fight you.

For 31 years, between 1764 and 1795, a guerilla war was fought against the British. And the might of the British Empire took a long time before [it] could subdue the Kalinago and particularly the Garifuna.

Incidentally, the word “caribs” is a derogatory term. I don't know if you know this; it comes from the North Venetian term meaning “fierce and warlike”. And because the people reacted to the theft of their lands and their subjugation, Europeans called them fierce and warlike.

But the people in their own language called themselves Kalinago, which meant “the peaceful ones”. We were there living peacefully, and you came from where you came from to take my land. And I will fight you. It’s elemental. The people fight their neighbors over 100 square feet of land and the boundaries. Much less you come and take all the land and say that it’s yours?

Then the British carried out genocide when they defeated the indigenous people and killed the Paramount Chief Chatoyer, whom my government has installed as the first national hero of our country. The only one thus far.

They killed a large number, then transported about 5,000 to a neighboring island, just part of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, called Baliceaux. [The indigenous people] lived there for six months. Half of them died – they didn’t have any water, they didn’t have any food. And the other half were deported, exiled to Roatán Island in the bay of Honduras. From there they went to Belize, to Guatemala, to Honduras, and to Nicaragua. For these people, our Garifuna brothers and sisters, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is their spiritual homeland, known as Yurumein. And Chatoyer is a national hero in Guatemala, known as Satuye, though he never set foot there.

And of course, the British wanted to plant sugar, so they brought in slaves. Between 1764 and 1807, when the slave trade ended, some 55,000 slaves were landed, and some 10,000 from West Africa died along the way coming to St. Vincent. 65,000 were boarded.

Then slavery came to an end in 1838, but 2,200 Madeirans were brought. Madeira is a tropical/subtropical island. The British had brought some donkeys from Madeira, and they did very well. And they thought it would be a magnificent idea if some two-legged ones would come, since all of the slaves had decided that they weren’t going to go back on the plantations to work. Then a little later, some Indians were brought as indentured servants.

So, you notice the population mix already? You have the Anglo-Saxons that came as colonists, you have the indigenous people, you have the Africans, and you have the Indians. Then later on, some Chinese came, and then some Arabs, and so on.

This country, up to the late 19th century, was a classic plural society, where each ethnic, racial, cultural section had its own relatively distinct pattern of socio-cultural integration. Never the twain shall meet. They were in a society, but there was no core set of values among any of these groups that were held together by force.

But through the fever of history, remarkable things happen, and adjustments are made. Biology assists. And we grew to be a people with a core set of shared values as to who we are, around principles of how we change peacefully and how we will build representative institutions and better our lives. [We changed] to such an extent that we have grown to be a society which has become homogeneous.

You may not know this, you may not realize it, but perhaps you do if you think about it. The number of people who identify themselves to the census taker or who are identified to the census taker in St. Vincent as being Portuguese is less than 500. The majority of the population, 98%, are of African descent. And yet you have someone [in power] who looks like me, who doesn't look like my Surinamese brother, whom the bulk of the population would look like. And I have been the most popular politician in the country for the last twenty years.

This is not an Obama moment in reverse. We take [my being in power] as something that is normal because of the way in which the society has evolved and because of the way in which I myself developed. The folk molded me, and they helped me to be where I am.

We have an economy largely of services, which is true now; about 18% of our economy is services. When I came to office in 2001, I led the first government which never had, since 1763, an economy where an agricultural commodity dominated. In succession we had sugar, arrowroot, cotton, bananas. Between 1956 and 1995, bananas were the major income earner. And I came to office in a situation where bananas were gone, because Britain entered the European single market economy and the banana preferences went.

You want to have services. But if you want to have tourism, you need educated people. If you want to have banking services, if you want to have fishing done (other than how it was done by Peter on the Sea of Galilee), you need educated people. But only 39% of the twelve-year-olds were at secondary school, what you call high school. Within five years I had all of them in secondary school. I carried out an education revolution which is thoroughgoing. And I'm on target for one university graduate per household at an average by the year 2030. Remarkable changes have taken place in that regard, and we have benefited in dividends.

You can't have tourism and other services unless you have proper air services. Therefore you must build a modern international airport and develop organized, proper air services. You do the same thing with the port. These are important cross-cutting developmental issues.

There's a gentleman - His Excellency Donald J. Trump - who has an acute understanding of small islands. Remember? When Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico, he didn't respond with the alacrity that some of his critics thought that he should. He said his critics didn't understand Puerto Rico... that Puerto Rico is an island, surrounded by water - as though islands can be surrounded other than by water. Just in case you missed the point, he said, "Big water. Ocean water."

And I agree entirely with the president for having such an acute and profound understanding of islands! You're surrounded by big water, ocean water. We can't get from there to elsewhere by road or by rail, so we have to fix up our airports for air transportation and our ports for sea transportation.

And importantly, if we want to be an example to everybody in this era of climate change, we have to go green. By February 2022, 80% of the electricity in my country will be generated by renewable energy.

All these are works of a democratically elected government. In fair elections, periodic, every five years. We don't have term limits, so I can go as long as the people want me to go, or as long as my wife Louise permits me to go.

Energy is critical. Another important cross-cutting issue. We receive 20% of our energy already from three small hydro-electric plants. We are doing solar, and we are at the moment working on the production of boring holes for geothermal energy, of which we have an abundance. Of course, the price of energy would fall by at least 25%, which makes a big difference to uplift the competitiveness [of St. Vincent and the Grenadines]. And we'll have energy security and all the rest.

[When I entered office,] I met poverty. I met indigence in 25.6% of the population. It's now 3.9%. Intractable, that small amount, but still we are working assiduously on it. Now, many important changes have had to be made. And I'll tell you this. Elections and change in a parliamentary democracy, in a representative democracy, and particularly in the age of the internet: not an easy business. Not an easy business at all.

It may well be easier to effect change through command government. The only thing is this: change through command governments always is tenuous, and it will not be long lasting. Because another commander will come and change it.

But if [a change] is deeply embedded in the laws and arises from a consensus in the society, if ever they were to kick my butt or [if I were to] demit, whoever comes after will have to be very careful if they make alterations to initiatives which the people have already voted upon and which the people see embedded in a legislative, jurisprudential basis. You'll have to go to Parliament to change them; you'll have to have discussion; private sector groups, civil society groups, and so on, are going to be involved. You can't change it in this way.

Now, it means that you have to master everything about parliamentary democracy. You have to know elections, and you have to have a lot of patience. The person that you see standing in front of you, I am now 50 years as a political activist. And I have contested every single Parliamentary election since independence in 1979. I'm the only one in my country who has been a participant in every Parliamentary election. 40 years.

And a lot of people thought, well, why is this guy - he has a Ph.D. in political economy, he has his legal training, he is called to the bar in England and Wales. He can make a living anywhere. Why is he spending all his time doing this? I want to tell you. Those who endure wilderness years are likely, if ever to get to office, to last longer. It is important for wilderness years if you want to make change. You have [to have] commitment and sacrifice. It doesn't come easily.

What I am telling you is not something new. You read the Hebrew Bible: there is Moses, there is Joshua, there is the prophet builder Nehemiah... Once I told the Parliament in St. Vincent and the Grenadines when they didn't quite understand wilderness years, I said humorously, "And there is Ralph."

Now, you have to build organizations. You want to be a leader? You better love people. That's the first requisite. You have to love people.

I am sure all of you are bright. Many of you have degrees and doing graduate degrees, and so on and so forth. When they come, all the young men and women, I say the first requisite is that you love people. And don't love them in some marginal kind of manner. You love them in a focused way. You love them in a manner in which tempests cannot shake you. And you have a clear vision as to where you want to go, and you are organized.

Now, I'm a Roman Catholic. There are two principles on leadership in the church which are useful for consideration. The first one, it is said in the church that once you sing in the choir, you can be pope. So that [is to say that] there is nothing wrong with having an ambition. Once you're singing in the choir, the papacy is not outside of your reach.

But the ambition inherent in that proposition is constrained, by a beautiful hymn, the words of a beautiful hymn that say, "The good lord shows his face on he or she who waits his or her turn." You have to be in communion with the people, have them knock you about.

I'll tell you this - today, when I go to a political rally, there are all the modern paraphernalia, and 10,000 to 15,000 people are there. There's music and everything! All the razzmatazz of modern mobilization. But it didn't start like that. That's where you build it.

I had a small party, a small political party. On a Thursday night, I'll have an executive meeting, and we'll decide that we're going into a particular area in the countryside to have a political meeting on the Saturday, at 5 o'clock in the evening.

I had an old Cortina car, had a steering wheel tough like a truck. I had in the trunk the four funnel horns. Do you remember those old funnel horns? Oh, you probably wouldn't remember them. I had a small black amplifier on the back seat, and the car has a 12 volt battery. I set up my amplifier and everything, with this 12 volt battery.

And I await my colleagues to come. Nobody else turns up! The girlfriend wanted the car... They had to go somewhere else... Good people, but you have to have discipline, and you have to do this thing well.

But I wouldn't go away. I'd be the chairman of the meeting. I'll say the opening prayer. I'm the chairman. I'm the first speaker. I'm the second speaker. I'm the third and fourth speaker. I will speak for three hours or thereabouts nonstop. And when I'm finished - on every subject under the sun. I give the benediction. I take up my equipment.

I go into certain areas, and the people are so hostile, they wouldn't even come out. As soon as I set up, they close their doors and their windows. I'm speaking. You're hearing me. Sometimes I would speak to audiences consisting of an old man, a fat woman, and a dog - the dog being the most attentive of my three listeners.

But then I will go there in the week, and I'll talk to the people. And two weeks later I will go back, and then you will see a few people out. And I will go back again. And then after the meeting, a family will ask me if I am not hungry, if I want some food to eat. "Please come and eat some food. Because you talked too much tonight." And then you are making progress, because you are learning; people see your love. It's tangible, it's real. Don't worry. You will make history, as sure as the sun rises.

But remember this always, great leaders make history. Great men and women make history. But only to the extent that the circumstances of history permit them so to make.

[I reference] one of the least recognized of the leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel, Issachar; you read the Book of Chronicles, and there's a simple line about Issachar. "Issachar knew the times, and he acted accordingly." You have to know the times. You have to understand people. You have to know their possibilities, and you have to know their strengths. You have to know their limitations, and you have to know their weaknesses. You have to study the whole extant circumstances to what you are doing.

I know you will attend a lot of formal courses on leadership. And you'll read books which emphasize that you must inspire people. And that's true. A leader must inspire. A leader must put in. But far more important for a leader to do is to draw out. To draw out of the people whom he or she is leading. To draw out of them their qualities, their strengths, their possibilities, their goodness, their nobility. And draw out of them that which they do not as yet know that they possess. [If you can do this] you would have achieved a high mark, a high distinction in leadership.

I have been Prime Minister for 18 years, and I'm the longest serving head of government in the hemisphere. I never thought that would happen. In the dark days of the wilderness, I didn't even know whether I would become leader for one day, much less through 18 years. But you do what you think you have to do. And you build.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines, we don't believe - and I don't believe - in bling. I'm not a bling man. I don't believe in doing things which are not sustainable. And I explain to people why. I tell the people of my country that there is no progressive society, anywhere in the world, which has been built on leisure, pleasure, and nice time. I love leisure, I love pleasure, and I love nice time. I'm a Caribbean man to my bones.

But, if I don't produce, if I don't work hard or smart, I can't do leisure, I can't do pleasure, and I can't do nice time. I'll have to take it from somebody else [in order] to have leisure, pleasure,

and nice time. There's too much emphasis on leisure, pleasure, and nice time. And not enough on hard and smart work. A progressive society must work hard and smart. But as our Constitution says, we must have just rewards, just economic rewards for your labor. Vital. And we agreed on those [values] in a consensus way.

St. Vincent and Grenadines has to make use of its instruments of sovereignty and independence to mobilize resources. Private sector and also state resources. Resources from developmental partners and institutions. To do so, it must always be very careful and always be very prepared. And always have a clear path forward.

You may be surprised to hear that we built an international airport, and say "what's difficult about that?" Well, our country is mountainous. People wanted to build one for 50 years. Nobody knew how to do it. To build an airport in St. Vincent, I had to move three big hills and one mountain. I had to span a stream and a river. I had to move 140 middle and upper middle income houses, and cause them to be built elsewhere. I had to move a church and a cemetery, for starters. I built an airport without the imprimatur of any country in Europe or in North America. Built entirely on the basis of South-South cooperation. We started without any money. But if you do it right, you will get it done, and nothing will be too difficult for you to achieve.

Currently St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the president of ECOSOC, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. One of the major institutions, and we're the smallest country ever. We're the 3rd Caribbean country since 1945 to head ECOSOC. Jamaica did it and Haiti, nobody else.

And we are on target now to be the smallest country ever to be a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. We started this quest twelve years ago. I didn't know I was going to be in office at this time. But we built it. And we did our work. Now it is more than likely, indeed it would be a surprise, if we didn't get two-thirds of the general assembly on June the 7th to sit as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. And we have done it without spending one cent in relation to anybody who is supporting us. We did it with ideas, and sincerity, clarity of thought. And just [by] working on an ongoing basis.

Just think of it. St. Vincent and the Grenadines, despite our small size, sitting, in 2020 and 2021, deciding on matters of world peace and security. [We will be] with the five permanent members - the United States of America, Britain, France, Russia, and China - and be one of 10 non-permanent members, elected for two years. You know, in the preparation for that, I [now] have on my staff in the United Nations young people, not older than you, who speak Mandarin Chinese, who speak Russian. French and Spanish are par for the course. If I need somebody with the ability to speak the language of the Turks, I can have it, because I have it at home.

The world is hostile to small island states. Climate change is a matter of existential significance. But I can't put my hands behind me and sit on them. I have to do the only thing that human beings have done from the beginning: come to terms with nature, and come to terms with their external environment.

And [we must] work [it] out among ourselves. And we have the experience and the knowledge of people like Jefferson, and others of the Founding Fathers in the great United States, to build something which is lasting.

The Honorable Lashrecse D. Aird:

Thank you again so much, Prime Minister Gonsalves for not only joining us but also for your remarks this morning. What I'd like to do is kick off our Q & A with a question and then open it up to the audience allowing for three questions and asking that you respond to all three of those at once. In your remarks, you talked a great deal about the darkness and the weariness periods of time. And as an individual who has been in elected office since the very beginning of the independence of your country, I imagine that you have seen these dark days, these weariness wilderness days and I'd like for you to really emphasize that term you used of enduring with a room full of future leaders that will guide their own countries, establish their own visions for the direction their countries will take believe that that endurance is significant.

I'd like to know more about what that means to endure an uncertain times. You've had to balance competing priorities socially, politically, economically. You've had to manage scandal, criticism and being able to endure all of that is critical to I believe the accomplishments and successes that you mentioned towards the end of your remarks.

The Honorable Ralph E. Gonsalves:

Well I think thank you very much and you have been inspiring. You are inspiring.

The Honorable Lashrecse D. Aird:

Thank you.

The Honorable Ralph E. Gonsalves:

Look, you have to believe in yourself. You have to have a clear idea as to where you're going and you have to have a good support systems. You have to build structures, you and your colleagues and when you are at a stage in your life that you, if you consider it necessary and desirable to have a spouse, make sure that that spouse shares what you are about. When I was getting married to Eloise, I said to her, "Listen, the journey I'm on is a very difficult one. If you want an easy life, let me just leave you here." I was in opposition. I was struggling. I said, "In addition to being married to you, I have two mistresses, one is known as politics and the other one is law and you will maintain serenity by making sure that those two mistresses don't take over and to have some sense of balance." And it's important and if you think that you are in this business of leading in politics to make money, stay in something else.

Now, there are different styles that people will have, but styles of leadership and how you do it is really depending on all the circumstances and your own persona. I told Neil when I was talking to him about this very question, a young person coming into leadership, don't get too obsessed with your brightness. You know there are two kinds of brightness, brightness which blinds and the brightness which illuminates. If I'm driving my SUV in your direction and you come in mine

and both of us are on high beam. There's a lot of brightness but we're not seeing each other. You'll have to be able to clear the pathway and work with people.

And you look at what are the main events. There are people who are always going to try and take you up the track from you included in this edge of the Internet. I mean, there are all kinds of crazies who will say all sorts of things and fake news and all the rest of things. You just don't bother about those things. You know, we have a word in the Caribbean, certainly in my country. The word is spelled C-O-M-M-E-S-S, commess. Commess means vituperative language use against you, slander, defamation, innuendo. All sorts of made-up stories. And you simply tell the people that you may run a campaign on commess but you can't run a government on commess.

I believe that in the United States of America, it would be well-advised for a number of presidential candidates to bear that simple truth in mind. You can run a campaign maybe on commess, but you can't run a government on commess and you have a lot more sensible people than foolish people who are listening.

The Honorable Lashrecse D. Aird:

Thank you so much. I'm going to at this time now open the floor to three questions and I'll take the first question here.

Genti Xhaxhiu:

Thank you very much. Excellency Prime Minister, thank you for the opening remarks and for all your inspiring speech. I am Genti from Albania, a small country as well of three million in the Balkans. My question would be, is related to something that you mentioned that you will run for office as long as your people vote you and as long as your wife is fine with that. So this is the same, more or less issue that we're facing. Some scholars are commenting on Angela Merkel, Chancellor, saying that enough should be enough and sometimes the elites should change and new generations should not be prime ministers, but should create the path for new leaders to come in.

There is a huge consensus that you are, I was reading yesterday international media comments on you are very charismatic leader, well-respected, intelligent, and everything. But don't you think that elites should circulate and maybe limit the mandate of the prime minister or the president to two or up to three mandates maybe. It is both democracy-

The Honorable Lashrecse D. Aird:

And before you respond I'm going to take the other two.

The Honorable Ralph E. Gonsalves:

Oh, sorry. Thanks.

The Honorable Lashrecse D. Aird:

Thank you. Yes. Here.

Georquel Goodwin:

Good morning, Prime Minister. My name is Georquel Goodwin. I am a student at Hampton University and a Virginia delegate. You talked about ordinary women and men should feel represented and own the government. How do you entice people to feel motivated during trying times and through rural circumstances?

The Honorable Lashrecse D. Aird:

And I'll take one additional question here.

The Honorable Ralph E. Gonsalves:

I think there's a young lady. Okay, fine with that. Yes.

Liziane Silva:

Hi, I'm Liziane, and I'm a social entrepreneur from Brazil. Thank you very much for being here with us and for taking the time to inspire young leaders to take leadership and be responsible. I would love to add a question to what has been said. That is, how do you see your role in mentoring and in training new people to be in positions of power in the country? Thank you.

The Honorable Ralph E. Gonsalves:

Yes.

My brother from Albania, in the circumstances of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, I do not believe in term limits, generally speaking, in parliamentary democracies in prime ministerial systems as distinct from presidential ones. There are always challenges institutionally in dealing with term limits. The people within your party and within the electorate will decide when to get rid of you. They did it to Margaret Thatcher. They did it to Tony Blair. I'm using the British parliamentary system. It looks as though they want to do it to Theresa May.

I would want to demit. I want to do something which hasn't been done before in our politics in the Caribbean. I wanted to give up my job as prime minister. I'd have a younger member of the cabinet become prime minister and I will serve dutifully under his leadership. Unfortunately, ladies, the two young men, the two young persons who are poised to take over from me, there's no young woman as yet in that group, though that there are good young woman in the party, qualified young woman, but they're not yet at the ministerial level and therefore wouldn't be seen as possible successors yet. But I went into my central executive, ask them to release me.

Carlos will tell you I was the only member of the executive who voted for me to go. I did it twice within a month, feature that. Then I went to the national council, which is the consists of the delegates of the party from across the country, and as I was speaking I said, well listen, I want to talk about this question of succession, and they said, no, no, no, no, no, no. The executive has already decided that we don't want to hear any talk about succession. You're staying there.

Then I go to the national convention, which is the large body, and I walked in with Eloise, as the chairman has the session opening and, as he saw Eloise and I coming down the corridor for the

next 15 minutes, he said, I want to talk to comrade sister Eloise about something. And the thrust of the chairman's party, I mean speech, was that the party needed me for a fifth, to go for a fifth consecutive election victory by the end of 2020 and the women, more than half of the convention were women, they got up and they shouted and told her that they know that she's married to me, but they're also married to me, and I am needed.

So I would really like to go. Maybe you can help me to get a better amended lyrics of Engelbert Humperdink's "Please release me, let me go." But that... You don't know Englebert Humperdink, heh? No, I think that's gone all over your head.

Though the polls tells me all the time that, though I'm 72, I'm going to be 73 in August, that I'm the most popular politician among young people in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. So clearly the young people have a soft spot for the elderly.

No, the questions asked by my comrade sister and my comrade here. I use the word comrade a lot because it means solidarity. Oneness. If you come to the airport in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and you say, or what are you going to do? You come in, you tell the immigration officer, well, I have an appointment with the comrade. They say, you know the comrade? I believe they will help you get through a little easier through immigration.

Our party is democratically organized and we have groups throughout the constituency, throughout the country and the opportunities for young people to come and participate. But what we do very well is that we link with civil society groups to train a young person in politics while you'd like to have them in the party. If they're not yet wanting to come into the party for whatever reason, don't lock them out. They may be involved in a woman's group, a youth group or trade union, a small business group, whatever it is, and they can build their skills and get the awareness and everything and you work with them. And consciously, and I'm coming to yours, and consciously the leader has to try to build.

The two young men who are in line, the party sees, I'm not talking anything out of turn, the party sees them as my likely successors. One is the minister of finance, he is 46, and one is the minister of agricultural industry out there. He's 37 and both of them are very able. They did very well at school, at university there. Lots of good experience and Carlos will tell you that I am harder on them than I am on anybody else in the party because I expect more of them. For instance, if they were to come late to a cabinet meeting, they've got a really rough time from me. If one of the older guys come, I'll say, man, why you late? What happened? And you'd give an excuse. I said, well, you're not supposed to be late, but any of these two...ooh... they know what's required but we can do far more than we are doing in terms of training.

Part of the trick in changing in the economy, transforming it, as I've indicated, is while we are transforming to recognize that real flesh and blood people have to live. So, in 2001, where we were, I said, look, we have to build an economy. Our quest is to build a modern competitive many sided post-colonial economy, which is at once national, regional and global, modern and competitive education, applied science and technology. Many sided, you do tourism, you have to

do agriculture, fruits and vegetables in a particular way. You have to do fishing, you have to do other things. ICT and I'll borrow money from the World Bank for instance, and I'll give grants to young people through a particular system to build entrepreneurship among young people in CICT. They don't have to pay back the money. I give them that to start up. Of course, they have to have a business plan with a program and we have proper structures to make them, to have them do their work and to get their money in trenches and the like. It has to be postcolonial because nobody owes us a living, there are no preferences. It has to be regional. That's why I'm strong with regionalism. Our major export exports of goods, not to North America anyway, but to the region.

Our tourists come from overseas, from the new United States and the like and we have to get, make that global connection. But while we are transforming the economy and put it on a sustainable footing and if you want to see what they are, you can look at the 17 sustainable development goals adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, the framework is basically there. And I will tell you, do I come from the left of the political spectrum? Like Deng Xiaoping, it doesn't matter me what the color of the cat is. So long as it catches mice, in other words, what works is, and experience teaches, what works.

And I build a good social infrastructure and do a lot of creative things to make sure that I reduce poverty and children don't go to bed hungry at night. I have an excellent school feeding program for the children in the primary school. It's seen as the best school feeding program in our part of the world. I have programs, the youth empowerment service, the support for education and training programs for young people, I do a lot of things, targeted specific interventions and do them in a creative non-expensive way so that we can help people along.

If you come by my office, any day, Jim Murray who has been there, you will see 30, 40, 50 people waiting outside my office daily. They come to see me. Of course, I can't see 30, 40, 50 people, but I have structures to see them. But the people who walk off the streets, and whom I see without appointments, I fit them in. If they, sometimes I will tell my staff, I said, tell them that they can hang around and say where they came from. They say, well, this one came from the Northeast of the Island. I said, well, she would have left home very early this morning. Make sure that she gets coffee or tea and biscuits and so that while she waits, right? I get around to her, and they will wait to see me. And so there's an advantage also of size, but I don't feel overburdened by having to see people because they give me a lot of information and bureaucrats, public servants when they come and tell me things, I say, well that's not what I heard this morning from people who came to visit me.

And when I tell this, they come to me on a daily basis. If I am seeing the American ambassador, and people turn up, I will go out and tell them. I say, "Listen, I'm going to be with the American ambassador today, and after that, I have this. I have structures and systems to take care of you. A couple of you know, want to, may have to see me, but you just have to hold on." And they will wait because they know. They have the confidence that if I give them my word, I will see them that day. Even though it takes until five o'clock, I will see them and they will wait, in patience, because you have established a bond.

It's, as I said, a mystical thing about it. I must tell you it's amazing. And after a while, even my political opponents will have to concede that, well, he keeps in touch with his people and, and you have to do it, but you can't do it unless you love people, my brothers and sisters, my comrades, you can't do it. Anytime you get cynical with people, get out of this business of leading people. Can't do it at all.

The Honorable Lashrecse D. Aird:

Thank you so much, Prime Minister. Please join me in thanking Prime Minister Gonsalves.

Leadership for Democracy

Dr. Brian Balogh, Host, *Backstory*; Professor of History, the University of Virginia

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman, Host, *Backstory*; Professor of History and American Studies, Yale University

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Hello. Welcome to the University of Virginia, and thanks for coming. It's great to look out at all of these bright, optimistic faces. What we're going to do today is talk about leadership styles and approaches to leadership over three or four centuries. My colleague Joanne and I are each going to focus on a couple of leaders across American history. But before we do that, Joanne is going to set the scene and give you a sense of what it was like in the very early days of Virginia, when it was really just getting started as a political entity. We're going to take a few minutes and travel pretty quickly through American history, and then we're going to interview two of your fellow... what do you call yourselves?

GPSers.

Audience:

Delegates. Pathfinders.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Delegates.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Pathfinders. Two of your fellow Pathfinders. We're going to talk to Tobi and Collins for a few minutes, and then we're going to take your questions about leadership, and that's how we'll spend the next hour. So Joanne, take us to see... I think Joanne has the easy part because there were only four people in this period. I focus on the 20th century where there were millions, but there were only seven people in the early republic. So take us back to those three who happened to live in Virginia.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Thanks, Brian. Great intro. I just want to really briefly set the scene and talk a little bit about one of the anniversaries that we're celebrating, which is the 400th anniversary of the creation of the

first representative legislative body in the new world, which was here in Virginia. And I want to make two points about that. So on the one hand, I want to say that, that was a noteworthy and admirable thing, it built on the tradition of the old world and on England, England wanted to establish a colony here in Virginia. That was, well, let me back up for a minute. That was admirable and yet not because the point of it wasn't some great human venture, but it was an economic enterprise. So basically, England established this colony, they wanted to plant literally the flag of England in Virginia. They wanted potentially to look around and see if there was gold that they could get. So the primary purpose was not to establish that noble representative legislative body, but after they had been here for a time, they'd had some trouble, they restarted the colony, it seemed to be going okay, they then did import the British system of government and created that legislative body, which is admirable, fine, and that established a tradition in some ways that we're going to be really building on as we discuss what we're discussing here today.

On the other hand, the people who were leading that colony were definitely not representative. So the people leading that colony would have been very wealthy, white men who would have been born pretty much to a high status family. That for a long time in the colonies, and then in early America as well, would have been assumed to be what it meant to be a leader, that was a small group of people. That's what it meant. We're going to be talking about people who do or don't necessarily fit into that category.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

So let me ask you. In the early days, what kind of pushback, if any, was there against this very small cadre of leaders that really came from the same kinds of background? Did everybody buy into that?

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Initially? Not a lot of pushback. I mean, I think initially the assumption was that is the way things are. If you jump ahead in time about a century and you look at the diaries or the letters of people who live through the American Revolution, what's really striking is that before the American Revolution, they're not pushing back. So before the American Revolution, they just assumed that their British leaders were their British leaders, and they had a certain place in society. I remember a diary entry of someone who talks, he was a shoemaker, and he talked about going into someone's house to make their shoes, going through the back door and being very nervous about the fact that the owner of the house wanted to address him in some way and he felt intimidated. After the revolution, that same person is confronting, aristocratic seeming people on the street and telling them to get out of the way because they're in his way. So pushback is part of what develops I think over time, and the revolution is a moment when I think a lot of Americans learn what that felt like.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

And that British thing I learned actually in graduate school, even though I didn't specialize in your period, I learned that they were pushing back against the British because they felt the British weren't behaving like British should, right?

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:
Right.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
Can you explain that to these people from all over the world, because that seems kind of weird to me.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:
It does. Because you assume if it's a revolution against something, that people are breaking away and reforming and trying to do something new. But in fact, the American Revolution was a lot of British colonists who didn't feel that they were being treated like British colonists. They felt that they were being deprived of the rights that they deserved, as British subjects. So yes, it wasn't that they were sort of declaring something for freedom. It was that they were demanding what they thought were their basic rights, and as that developed, it became a revolution.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
So how do we get to this George Washington character?

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:
This George Washington character. Okay, now I'm going to get really high tech here.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
Oh boy.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:
This is scary. This represents the people we're going to be talking about George. So there's George. So, we're like this, George and I. So George Washington, in some ways, is very much like the people I was just talking to you about. He's born relatively well off, his family is an important family. It's assumed he's going to be a leader of some kind. He's an ambitious person. He lives his life, going through a series of very responsible leadership roles. He joins the Virginia militia and serves during wartime to get rank from serving in the military. He goes on to serve in the Virginia government. He ends up leading the Continental Army during the revolution. He then presides over the Constitutional Convention, becomes the first President of the United States. There are many ways in which I could sit here and say, George Washington, what a leader.

But the thing I want to focus on in speaking about him as a leader is none of those things. It's actually almost the opposite of those things. Because to me, one of the most outstanding things about Washington was that he was always in a position of power, but he was someone who was very aware of the need to limit power. So he was not a person, although he was ambitious personally, he was not a person who was trying to see how much power he could get. He was a person who was very aware of the fact that in a sense, the most important aspect of holding power is to be willing to surrender it. And the most noteworthy time in which he did this was at the end of the American Revolution.

Traditionally speaking, if you're a general, and you're leading an army, and the army wins a war, you are then a person of great power and those kinds of victorious generals go on to seize power and in a variety of different ways, some of them pleasant, some of them not very pleasant at all. Washington basically just surrendered power and went home. This was not something that victorious generals did. And supposedly, the King of England when he heard this said something along the lines of, well, if he did that, he's going to be the greatest man in the world. He surrendered power, who does that? Who gives up power? And because of that act, he became someone that Americans trusted with power again and again, because he made it really clear, he wasn't claiming it, he was surrendering it. And I just wanted to show you-

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Joanne, why did he do that? Get inside his head or tell us about the culture. Why did he behave so differently?

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Well, I think like a number of people in that generation, they understood the fact that they were creating something new and they felt some responsibility to posterity. And they understood that the things that they were doing would set precedence. And I think it's not that they were wonderfully virtuous, they weren't. I mean, Washington is a slaveholder, so there are all kinds of ways in which we can attack these people. But I think one thing that was admirable about them was they felt responsible, they felt that they were creating something experimental, that they wanted to be better than what had happened in the old world, and because of that, they thought very hard about the precedent setting nature of what they were doing. And I think that's part of what was guiding Washington, was this is what should happen in a republic. This isn't a monarchy like Great Britain, this is a republic, a Republic is a different kind of a thing. So I think that's part of what was guiding him.

The thing I want to point out this document that I have alongside his portrait up above. I love this document. I saw it for the first time a number of years ago, and it just represents to me, everything that I just described to you about Washington, is someone who was aware of the responsibility of holding power and of the need to limit it. That's actually a page from his copy of the Constitution, from when he was president, from the first term of his presidency. And I know it's hard to see, but on the right hand side, you can kind of make out that there's pencil markings.

So Washington has his copy of the Constitution. There's never been a president before. This is a world of kings and monarchs. He's basically given this job description. Here you go, George, here's your Constitution. Your job is in there. And what he did was he very carefully went through and marked in the margin president everywhere where his job was mentioned, so that he would understand, like this is what he was supposed to do, and he wasn't supposed to do anything except for that. I just think that's such a powerful visual way of someone trying to figure out how much power he has and when he should stop. So I think that's a vital and it's kind of counterintuitive, but a vital part of being a good leader is being willing to limit power.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

So what about when it was time to run for reelection? He does run for reelection.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

He does.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

He wins. Presumably he could have run again.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Right. I mean, as long as George Washington stepped forward and said, "I want to be president", he would have been elected.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

So he's served for eight years now.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

He served for eight years, time for a third term, and he decided, now it's time to me to leave and go home. Now, I will say that Washington is someone spends his whole career going home, resigning things and saying, I'm done, I'm so done, and then gets yanked back in. But he does after two terms leave and go back to private life again. And that sets a precedent. The Constitution doesn't and this certainly not in this period, say the Presidents only serve for two terms, so Washington by doing that basically sets that precedent.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

We didn't decide to do that until someone's served for four terms.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Well, yes, that's coming. That'll be coming shortly. But yes. So he just, by doing that, set the precedent because who was going to step up and say, oh yes I'm better than Washington, so I deserve an extra term. So again, he in setting that limit for himself, I think was setting limits of power for other people as well. So that's George and the guy who surrenders or limits power would be leader number one that I wanted to point out.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

So let me just be clear. The takeaway lesson for these young people is they should surrender power.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

No.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

You guys agree with that? Does that attach to successful leadership?

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

That's half of the message. Half of the message. Once you have power-

Dr. Brian Balogh:

No, I think that's a really compelling message.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Yes, if you have power, use it responsibly and be willing to give it up.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Perhaps a more positive way to state that is to think of the larger community, what you're building-

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Why you have...

Dr. Brian Balogh:

...the larger whole. Certainly, I study recent American politics and ask myself all the time, why don't people ever decide to do the right thing, even if it means giving up power? And so the positive lesson that I take away from this piece of history is thinking of the whole and being willing to surrender power, even when it's there for the taking for the larger good of things. Is that-

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Thumbs up.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

...A- at least?

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

An A.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

An A. Wow.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

I give you an A. I give you an A.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Okay.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

So that was leader number one that I wanted to chat with you about. Leader number two is Ida B. Wells. Now, we're jumping ahead in time, more than 100 years, so we're now going to be largely

talking about the late 19th century versus Washington is the mid and late 18th century. Ida B. Wells, to me is a really remarkable person. I got to know her a little bit through actually backstory. And through doing our podcast, we did an episode where she was on it and I got to read a little bit about her. I knew of her before, but then I left-

Dr. Brian Balogh:
She is not alive.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:
No.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
Joanne makes history come alive-

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:
She is to me.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
...and sometimes you think we actually interviewed Ida B. Wells. We have a president who sometimes confuses dead people with living. Ida B. Wells is not alive and Joanne did not interview her.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:
No, I did not interview her.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
Just want to be very clear.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:
I got to know her on paper.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
Thank you Joanne.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:
Thank you Brian.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
She gets very carried away.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:
I get very excited. So at any rate, I wanted to bring her to your attention because to me, she represents a leader who really bore witness to what was happening around her, to wrongs that were happening around her, and really aggressively, in a sense, spoke truth to power, stood up

and said what needed to be said despite people really opposing her. She was born into slavery. She was born during the Civil War. She goes on to become a really leading activist and journalist for civil rights, for black rights, for women's rights in any variety of ways. And constantly, she's doing that in the face of enormous opposition. So for example, she goes on and establishes her own newspaper. There's a black press in this period and a white person's period. She establishes her own newspaper. And in that newspaper, she begins to write stories about the practice of lynching. And this is mostly, I mean, it's, I suppose, happening everywhere, but it's largely in the south, the practice of publicly hanging and even torturing, usually black men, the claim being that these men were criminals, and were being punished.

So she begins to write about this practice, investigate this practice, really, basically wants to find out what's really going on here.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Which is life threatening to do this.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Exactly. Exactly. So she writes for her new paper about this practice and ultimately her newspaper is burned down, her office is burned down, she's driven out of town. So she moves further north and continues in this vein. She investigates and she makes a point of saying she's looking at White newspapers, she's reading about things that white reporters say, and is pulling all of that data to draw conclusions about what was actually happening in the south, and of course, what she proves is that lynching has nothing to do with criminality. People weren't being lynched. These black men were not being lynched because they were criminals. They were being lynched because they were growing economically and they were opposition, they were competition for the white community, and so-

Dr. Brian Balogh:

An example would be an African American business, basically, what we would call a grocery store today that was set up and-

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Doing business too well.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

...doing too well competing with the white competition actually succeeding, doing better and that led to a horrific lynching.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Right, exactly.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

I think was a catalyst for her being involved.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Right. It's someone that she knows actually is lynched in that case. And she really then goes out to investigate compiled data and she writes this pamphlet, "Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases," and what she sets out and she writes a second one after this. She sets out all her data. She says, look, here are the lynchings that have happened. Here are the reasons why they happen. Let's look at this practice. Let's talk about what this really means and what this really does. This was a radical thing for her to do. And she never backed away from that. She stood up, as I said, she spoke truth to power. She knew what was wrong, she stood up as a woman, which in and of itself was difficult, and then as a black woman even more difficult. And so as a leader, the thing that she did in the face of enormous opposition to me that's worth noting, is being that person who was willing to push and investigate and get to the truth and then stand up and declare it despite the fact that many people didn't want to hear it.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

And one of the things that was so impressive about her is what that power was, was not what we would call fake news today. One of the strongest emerging powers in the press were papers like the New York Times, paper of record, papers that scholars today call objective newspapers and they were objective. They weighed in and they said this lynching is wrong, these African American men who committed these crimes, should be tried by a jury and go to jail, if they're convicted, they shouldn't be lynched.

Well, what's missing in that picture? What was missing was what Ida B. Wells was documenting, which is that these men hadn't committed crimes in the first place. Yet objective newspapers, northern objective newspapers simply took for granted that these African American men had committed heinous crimes. And that's tough when you're fighting objective news in the name of objectivity.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Which is why she was so powerful. She compiled data. She compiled data from the very sources that were buying into that message. So she was a savvy leader, but a really persistent and aggressive leader in getting to the heart of something, seeing what it really meant, and then finding ways to communicate that to a broader audience, some to the north, and then ultimately, actually to England as well. She took that message overseas to spread it and then moved on to other forms of rights that she began to fight for. But she's remarkable just for her stick-to-itiveness and power and aggression with which she stood up and communicated that message at a time where it was so hard to do.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

So your takeaway is first, give up power, and now you're telling them to stick to it.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Or to speak to it aggressively if you need to.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Yes. No, I'm just teasing. I think persistence will ... Look, we're going to talk about different styles and approaches to leadership. All of you are leaders and you know that a lot of this is deciding how to be in a particular historical context, in a particular situation. But I think what Joanne is underscoring through this is the power of persistence, even when you're marginalized, even when you're made fun of and of course, Ida B. Wells faced threats on her life on a daily basis. And so, I would imagine just being courageous is part of that formula as well.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

On an ongoing basis. Yes. For sure. And now I'm going to turn the tables on you Brian.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

That's all the time we have for today.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Okay Brian. So what do you got? What do you want to talk about?

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Well, I want to start with a courageous woman of a very different sort than Ida B. Wells. Her name was Jane Addams, and she was born into modern wealth in Cedarville, Illinois, a little town of about 10,000. Her father owned the local mill, and she grew up getting a good education. She went to a female seminary. She imbibed what at the time was called Christian socialism. She was very Christian, but she endorsed what today we might call a moderate form of socialism that was very popular in Great Britain at the time.

And Jane Addams is best known for starting a settlement house, which was called Hull House in her case, which she started in 1889 in Chicago in a very poor neighborhood that was surrounded by immigrants, Polish Jews, Italians, a good number of Germans. That settlement house started out with very, very moderate goals. What she wanted to do was simply read to the kids in the surrounding neighborhoods who were not learning how to read. She wanted to expose them to art. It was a very classic kind of do gooding by a wealthy person who wanted to do good for others.

What she did from that start was build Hull House into a model for basically all of the social services and the social safety net that eventually the government would provide in the 20th century. She went on to be a major peace activist during World War I. She opposed very courageously World War I and she was the first woman, American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, which she was awarded in 1931.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Let me ask you, did you face a lot of opposition as a woman being in those kinds of positions or not?

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Some of the opposition was so gross. Chicago was pretty rough place for politics, a lot of machine politics, you're supposed to clear things with the boss. And when she started getting more involved in providing social services, one of the aldermen suggested that, well, let's just say she should change her anatomy if she wanted to continue in this pursuit. I'm not going to be more graphic than that with this crowd.

The point I want to make about Jane Addams is that at the heart of everything she did, and I think the lesson to be learned historically from her is empathy, she was an empathetic leader. And I'm going to just read a short excerpt from her book 20 years at Hull House. This is from her... the excerpt is from the first six months. She says, "That neglected and forewarn old age is daily brought to the attention of a settlement, which undertakes to bear its share of the neighborhood burden imposed by poverty was pathetically clear to us our first months of residence at Hull House.

One day a boy of 10 led a tottering old lady into the house, saying that she had slept for six weeks in their kitchen, on a bed made up next to the stove. That she had come when her son had died. Although none of them had ever seen her before, her son went there because he had once worked in the same shop with Pa." She thought of this guy, this family to come ask for help. "The little fellow concluded by saying that our house was so much bigger than theirs, that he thought we would have more room for beds. That old woman herself said absolutely nothing. But looking on with that gripping fear of the poor house in her eyes. She was a living embodiment of that dread, which is so heartbreaking that the occupants of the county infirmary themselves seemed scarcely less wretched than those who are making their last stand against it."

What happened in the United States in the 1890s, if you were poor, if you couldn't afford a house, if you couldn't afford ... you were sent to the poorhouse. And today we look at advertisements for ... do you know what Applebee's, popular restaurants, Chili's. The ads all have people that are even older than me. Old people have money in the United States and they have money because of things like social security.

In the 1890s, when you got old and you stop working, you became poor. And you went to the poorhouse if you didn't have family to take care of you. Jane Addams didn't set up Hull House in order to provide services to the elderly. What happened was, she set up the settlement house to read to kids, to expose them to literature, and she herself was exposed to all of the elements that came from poverty, from immigration to a different country, from discrimination. And one by one, she fought to set up juvenile courts so that kids would be tried differently than adults, she set up services for the elderly, she created a kindergarten for kids, and she attracted a lot of women like herself to Hull House, who provided voluntarily these social services.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

But what you're describing when you're talking about empathy is really a process of her learning from the people she's engaging with.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Listening, paying attention, and being willing to grow and change. So it's not like when I say she was a Christian socialist, it's not like she had some ideological agenda she was going to impose on the neighborhood, it was almost exactly the opposite. She realized that these were good people who were really just lacking in some of the basic ingredients of her own environment, and she sought to bring that to their environment. And this leadership through empathy led her ultimately to the Nobel Peace Prize. Time is marching on.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Time is marching on and we have someone now very different to talk about.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Yes, Franklin D. Roosevelt. He's less different than you might think, because he too, came from a very privileged background and he too, ended up connecting with millions of Americans from a very different background himself. I'll spend less time on Franklin D. Roosevelt's biography. I think most of you have heard of him. He was elected president in the election of 1932. He's the guy who served for four terms as president. He didn't listen to Joanne when talked about giving up power. He died in office, if he hadn't, who knows, he might have been elected to a fifth term.

Most people remember Franklin D. Roosevelt for the New Deal. For starting programs like social security that would have taken care of this woman that Jane Addams had to let sleep in Hull House. But what I want to emphasize in terms of Roosevelt's leadership is personally connecting with 10s of millions of voters. And he did that by accessing a new technology, the radio. Now the radio was not invented during Roosevelt's term. In fact, Coolidge had given addresses, these are earlier presidents, Herbert Hoover, who presided over the great crash in the Great Depression that was raging when Roosevelt was elected. Hoover gave a lot of radio addresses. And he sounded like this. And he talked for about an hour and a half. And I am going to go on talking like this for an hour and a half, so that you can just see why people really did not connect to Herbert Hoover when he used this technology. So my point is a simple one, which is, it's not that technology's stupid. It's the way leaders access that technology. And Roosevelt, and I don't know whether he listened to the show or not, but during the 1930s, the most popular show on radio was a show called Your Lover.

And a guy with a much deeper voice than me would tell stories. And he'd say, "Snuggle up. Get closer to the radio, I'm going to tell you a story." And he would go on like that. He talked in a soft, soothing voice. And millions of people, disproportionately women, felt like this was their friend. Well, this is the technique that Roosevelt mastered in what you know as the fire side chats.

He talked about mobilizing the nation to fight the Nazis, which the United States did not want to do in the late 1930s. Not by talking about policy or ideology, he mobilized the Lend Lease program by talking about lending a garden hose to your neighbor, right. If your neighbor's houses burning down, are you not going to lease lend them, he didn't even say give them by the way, Congress would never have approved that. Are you not going to at least lend them a garden hose to help them out?

And this intimate connection with millions of voters is something that leaders have sought to recreate again and again, some with very little success, some with great success. And they've used television to do that, after Roosevelt, and today, they use Twitter to do that. And that sense of intimacy, that sense of real one to one, he's talking to me ... Sorry, I'm not so good with technology. He's talking to me personally, when he's talking to millions of people, was really one of the most under-appreciated elements of Roosevelt's leadership style.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

And of course in a democratic mode of government.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Absolutely.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

If you can touch the public that way, if you can make the public feel that they personally, are being touched and pulled in, that's power.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

And we can see this in an older form of communications, letters, right. Roosevelt received millions of letters from people. He had to hire dozens of people just to read through those letters. And if you read those letters, people are writing to him as though they know him. They're telling him personal stories, you can see it in the quality of the way people tried to communicate back to their president. So, I think we better move along a little bit. I'm getting the hurry up signal from our leaders.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Okay. So what we next want to do, and I'm going to introduce them first, is call up two people from among your number. And as Brian was saying, you are all leaders. So we want to talk about leadership in a different way. But I want to introduce them briefly and then we'll bring them up on stage.

So Tobi Ajayi is an author and an advocate for the rights of people who live with disabilities in Nigeria. And has worked with a remarkable range of programs, many of them having to do with outreach, and that's, of course, some of what we've been talking about here in the realm of leadership. How do you reach people? How do you get people engaged in a cause?

Collins Santhanasamy is a doctor who his efforts are focused on providing medical care for the poorest people of Bangladesh and, among other things, founded a program called the M-exchange in Malaysia which is about providing free medical care camps for thousands of people there as well. So these are both people who are certainly leaders, and will you both come on and come up on the stage. Welcome.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Welcome. Thank you for joining us.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:
Thank you for coming.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
Thank you for joining us.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:
Okay, so we get to ask you guys questions now. We have one question we want to ask you and we're very curious about the response. And the question is, if you could invent a leader for this moment to beam into your countries, what kind of a leader would you invent and why?

Dr. Collins Santhanasamy:
Tobi goes first.

Oluwatobiloba Ajayi:
Okay.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
See, he's giving up power. He was listening to this.

Oluwatobiloba Ajayi:
Thank you so much for having me. So if I could invent a leader to beam into Nigeria right now. I would be inventing a leader with empathy. I was listening to you when you were talking about Roosevelt and how he was able to connect with his people. So he probably ... I mean, I read about him and he didn't do everything right. I mean, he made mistakes, some big ones, but the fact that he was able to connect with the people, he actually served four terms and died in office. And like you said, if he had run the fifth time, probably had gotten elected again.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
So how would one do that in Nigeria today?

Oluwatobiloba Ajayi:
So, how would you ... So I don't know how we're going to get an empathetic leader in Nigeria today. But what would empathy look like in Nigeria today? And when I say leaders, I'm not just talking about the president or the governor's, I'm talking about everybody that's leading in whatever space. And it's about really taking the time to connect to those that you're leading, because I always say this, people don't really care how much you know, and they don't even really care how much you have to offer, they don't know that you truly care.

And the truth is, we might think, a lot of us are civic leaders so we're saving people who are poor and who are in need, but they know when they're being used. They may not feel like they have the right to complain about being used, but they know. And when you truly care, they also know.

So the biggest up thing they have found is that people want to be sure that you really care about them, and it's not just about you, because the truth is we can do civic work from selfish places. And the truth is that people can tell if what you're doing is from a selfish place, or from a place where it's really about those that we're serving. And so for me, the way that we need to lead is that we should sell from a place of empathy. Lead people in a way that it's about them, and not really about you, because the funny thing is that when you put the focus on the people that you're serving, somehow the focus comes back to you. Case in point, Roosevelt four terms.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
Thank you.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:
Thank you.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
That's very illuminating for me. Collins, what would you say?

Dr. Collins Santhanasamy:
I think for Malaysia, we are in a transition period right now, so we've just had maybe five to 10 years of a very difficult leadership, and what we need right now in our country is basically ethical leadership as a foundation. We need leaders who are visionaries, who can look into the future, and also come with the skill set that is required to implement programs that are sustainable to carry out these visions and to see these visions come to life.

A lot of the communities in Malaysia that are from the rural areas and the minorities, are not being represented the way that they should be, and these are some of the issues that we really, really need to address in Malaysia now, since we just have our new election and new government. And the government is trying really hard to do all this but it takes time and we are building from zero right now, to be honest.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
Are you optimistic?

Dr. Collins Santhanasamy:
I am. I think that the younger generation in Malaysia is very aware about all of this. And with social media, with the internet, with access to information, I think we have a lot of opportunity now that we did not have in the past. Yes.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
Well, terrific. We have a little less than 15 minutes left and I think maybe we should just open it up to questions from the audience but I want to give our special guests the first crack at a question. Please be sure to direct the difficult questions that Joanne.

Oluwatobiloba Ajayi:

Great. You want to go first?

Dr. Collins Santhanasamy:

Yes, sure. So we learned a lot about different leadership styles. I just want to ask, as young leaders because there's so many of us from so many different countries, how can we integrate all these leadership styles into our own personal leadership? And how can we keep the balance moving forward in this different era because all of this was in it from a different age, and now we're in a different era?

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Yes, it's for you.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Well, I think your answer to the question that we asked is the beginning of an answer. And you just talked about younger people being aware of possibilities, and the chance for change, and opportunities. I mean, I think part of the answer to the question is being aware and willing to walk down that kind of path, knowing about, in the past, leaders who have been affected for reasons that we've been talking about here for empathy, for outreach. But also being willing to implement change and being not just willing, but aware and eager to do that.

I mean, here in the United States, I'm always really encouraged by my students because I feel that from them, right. If there are things happening here politically that I am less than thrilled about, I feel like my students are the future leaders, and for the very reasons that you just said, they're going to understand what's happening, and hopefully, given people like Brian and I understand the past and things that have happened and worked in the past that represent good leadership, are going to be really willing and able to implement change.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Yes, and I would just add that local knowledge, which both of you have in spades I'm guessing, and which I have none of, is really a crucial base for deciding which combination and which sets of skills are most appropriate at any given time, because I think we would both agree, we're historians, we always go back to the archives and the documents, and there is no theory, at least for me, that Trumps, if you'll excuse the verb, an understanding of the specific historical context, the culture, and the set of social relations that you're trying to understand.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Where was this person? What was their world like? What is the experience of that person's life? And once I understand that, how can I understand that person and their perspective?

Dr. Brian Balogh:

And to go back to Tobi's point, who are they connected with? Who are their communities? What are the interests beyond their own self-interest that they're serving?

Oluwatobiloba Ajayi:

Right. So I took a crack and looked at *Backstory*. And so I have this question. So from your experience as a student, do you think that leaders today learn from history and do we have a lot to learn from history so that we don't repeat the same mistakes?

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Okay, I will start but...

Dr. Brian Balogh:

I'm pointing at you because here is my answer, I think leaders in early republic took care of history much more seriously and valued it much more than any, if we're talking about presidents, than any president in the 20th century, and more than most leaders broadly defined in the 20th century, that's why I'm pointing at you, because I want history to win. And history doesn't win among recent leaders.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

No, and that was going to be my short answer to part of your question is, our current leaders aware of history, and I would say, well, the short answer really depends on the leader. And the answer in a lot of cases is, no. And that is something that you can say for the earlier generation of Americans and people in leadership positions is that they really aggressively look to the past and try to understand patterns of the past, not so that they could predict what was to come, but so that they understood interactions, and pathways of power, and how things were likely to happen, and how that kind of knowledge might shape what they were doing. So, I guess-

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Go ahead Joanne, hit her with the cyclical notion of history. I mean, they believed, especially Republics, were destined to repeat past history, right.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Yes and collapse.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

And collapse. That's where they were absolutely bound to end unless they really understood-

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

They were trying to fend off the negative with that knowledge of what had caused the collapses of the past.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Great question.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Yes.

Oluwatobiloba Ajayi:
Thank you.

Dr. Brian Balogh:
Okay, it's your turn.

Georquel Goodwin:
I know you guys are probably tired of hearing me but good morning, my name is ... Good afternoon. My name is Georquel Goodwin. I am a student at-

Dr. Brian Balogh:
It's technically morning. Good morning.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:
Two minutes.

Georquel Goodwin:
Got a couple of minutes. I'm a student of Hampton University and my question is, you guys talked about the willingness to limit power. This country has a great, I guess, saturation of wealth, do you feel like that plays a great part in limiting your power and looking towards the future and understanding when to know how to disperse it?

Dr. Brian Balogh:
So I'll promote an upcoming backstory show on reparations. In this case, specifically reparations for the families of formerly enslaved African Americans. And a lot of the show is actually about the wealth gap and how that was created. And there are many reasons for the wealth gap in the United States, but a lot of it, of course, goes back to slavery, and then what happened to emancipated slaves when the 40 acres and a mule that they were promised by some never came to pass.

A lot of Americans today look at 40, a government handout, the government had was handing out stuff to white people throughout its entire history. It was handing out land, it was handing out support for agricultural equipment, it was handing out free college education for white service people, mainly men who served in World War Two, but not for African Americans.

So to get back to your question, I think one of the things that's really impeding the United States in terms of moving towards a more just and equitable society is not acknowledging the history of the ways in which this nation has empowered and literally handed out a lot of things to some citizens when it's taken away systematically things from other citizens. And I think until that's acknowledged, we're going to have a lot of trouble achieving a really just and equitable society.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Which gets back to what Tobi was saying, right, is that you have to acknowledge the past, you have to understand the history of how we got to where we are to be able to implement that kind of change.

Fionnuala Fisk:

Hi, my name is Finn, I'm a Virginia delegate. I keep hearing on the news that universities are cutting their history departments, and I guess I wanted to hear your perspectives on that, I'm sure as historians are not super happy about it. But I guess, what are the broader implications? Because I think it's been-

Dr. Brian Balogh:

You're the problem, we're not cutting history departments, you're not taking history. Your turn.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

My turn. Well, and it's not unconnected to the first question, right, I think in the current climate, there's a focus on pragmatic, and I want to even say economic success. And I think history and the humanities in general, for many people, it's harder to peg them into that hole, which is a very defined hole.

So I think the elimination of history departments goes along with the elimination of a lot of other humanity courses, which seemingly don't have value because what they accomplish. Now, of course, what they accomplish is exactly what we've been talking about here. You can't understand where you are in the present without understanding how you got here. And so, yes, we have strong feelings about it. It's wrong and stunningly wrongheaded. I can't believe we're at a point where that is happening anywhere.

But it's self-defeating, self-destructive and ultimately, at cross purposes with everything that should be happening in education and with the country creating people to go on to succeed in ways that get beyond what we were just talking about, in ways to get beyond how much money can I make, and keep, and use, and to think more broadly about what the nation represents.

Patience Andrew:

Good afternoon, my name is Patience, I'm from Nigeria. And my question is, as a student of history, you're told to interpret history objectively. And sometimes we forget the fact that the figures in history were at some point subjective and that's why we study them. And coming to my activism on radio, sometimes you hear comments as you're being too emotional, you just react in any has sexist comments even from people will come to your show as a guest, so how do you balance subjectivity and activism?

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

Well, so you're right, as historians we need to be objective. We're also people studying people. And I think part of understanding history is understanding that human element. Now part of what you're suggesting there, I think is very true, right. So, as women, particularly, you're accused of being over emotional or paying too much attention to emotion. A lot of the work that I happen to

do as a historian is centered on understanding the emotions of the people who I study in the 18th century, in the 19th century, because once you understand how people are responding to things, you can understand why they act the way they act better.

But you're right. It's really easy to dismiss that as not hard evidence. It's something that doesn't really teach you anything. Obviously, talking to me, I think that, that's wrongheaded. I think it's partly sexist. So it is partly a way of eliminating a way of thinking about history. But I also think it's a way of pigeonholing history is being some very small thing that has to do with data collection and facts. And this gets back to the idea of history as a humanity, history is about the human condition, and the human component of that is enormously important. I just don't think you can understand the past or the present without understanding that what you're talking about is people, flawed people who make choices, some of them good, some of them really not good for all kinds of reasons, some of them seemingly foreign to us. But understanding their subjectivity is part of understanding the past and acknowledging that we do or don't feel connected with those people is also part of understanding that past.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Yes, I just want to second Joanne, I think she was way too emotional. I just want a second what Joanne said and I'll just say that I think historians, ourselves as a profession, as a history of history are at fault because until quite recently, to take US history as an example, almost all historians were white males, almost all historians worked on topics about white elite males, and it's only in the last 25 or 30 years that US historians have looked at the history of African Americans, the history of women, the history of environment and looked at history in a much more transnational context.

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

And have allowed for the fact that women study the ... The first thing I wrote was about the practice of dueling, right, in the 18th century, very male. And I know for a fact that people who didn't know who'd written that article assumed it must be a man. It's a male topic, it's writing about men.

Dr. Brian Balogh:

And why was he named Joanne?

Dr. Joanne B. Freeman:

I know, what a strange name for a man? But again, it's the range of topics and the understanding the different kinds of people can focus on different kinds of things.

Speaker 9:

Last question.

Gentian Xhaxhiu:

Okay. Hi, I'm Genti from Albania. I'd like to touch a little upon the so called global leadership in the area of Trump. It perfectly makes sense, he's voted from American people, he's thinking to

work, fix things in house domestically. But to us a third parties it seems that the throne is empty. I mean, US is not anymore there being the guardian of not taking care for other countries but being the guardian of some standards, some democracy, some inspiration.

I emphasize, it totally makes sense for an administration to focus on its domestic issues hoping maybe that later, after improving things in house, they might come and fill the throne again. Do you see that possibly like other countries like China or Russia might seek to jump in that throne or have little small, shining stars on a regional level like Turkey, for example, in its region, or France in each region? So, how do you see this moment in this global leadership perspective?

Dr. Brian Balogh:

Well, I think Trump's approach to governance and his philosophy, if you can call it that, has left an incredible vacuum in the existing world order. Now, as an historian, I'm well aware that world orders change from time to time. Many of us thought that it was changing at the end of the Cold War with when the Berlin Wall was torn down, and many of us thought that it was moving towards an acceptance of free trade, an acceptance of the essential nature of human rights, it now seems to be moving in a very different direction. And yes, there is a vacuum.

One of those topics that American historians have spent much more time studying is American imperialism and colonialism. So, a lot of people would say, good riddance America in terms of defining the world order. I personally, my own political view, I'm very worried about throwing the baby out with the bathwater. I think the United States has dominated what has been the current international system. I think there have been some very good things about that and some bad things. I would love to see evolutionary change in what has created a certain degree of stability in the international order over the last 70 years, 75 years, not a precipitous withdrawal from it.

Although if you are paying attention to the newspaper, we may come out of this meeting and discover that Donald Trump has engaged quite precipitously in a war against Iran. So it's not a complete withdrawal.

Speaker 9:

Thank you. That was both informative and enjoyable. To Brian and Joanne, thank you.

Ignite Talks

**Lynette Evans-Tiernan, Director of Communications for Exchange Visitor Program (EVP)
at U.S. Department of State**

Jonathan Toms, Charitable Initiatives Manager at Smithfield Foods

Cassie Cunningham, Policy Director, Children's Home Society of Virginia

Gentian Xhaxhiu, Research Fellow at YIVO Institute for Jewish Research

Edith Mecha, Fellow, Atlas Corps

Lynette Evans-Tiernan:

So good afternoon. As Nancy said, I'm Lynette Evans-Tiernan. I'm part of the Virginia Delegation and I work for the U.S Department of State. Which is the U.S. Government's Foreign Affairs Agency, just to give you the context. So we move people to move ideas. That is the motto of the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs. We do that by sending talented Americans abroad and bringing emerging young leaders to the United States. When most people think about diplomacy, they think about high level ministerial, international summits, trade negotiations. While these government to government interactions are important in my bureau, we believe that the grassroots interactions between us citizens and people of other countries are also important to strengthening individual ties and promoting cooperation. This is what we call public diplomacy or people to people diplomacy.

People to people diplomacy allows the State Department to achieve a number of key foreign policy goals. The first one is what we call creating citizen ambassadors. It's the idea that by sending people abroad and bringing them to the U.S. they're exposed to new cultures and they come back home and they can foster intercultural learning and understanding within their communities.

Secondly, exchanges help us build a much more peaceful and prosperous world. It's the idea that when you're in your host community, you form a long lasting friendships across borders, across time zones, across oceans. So when you look at the globe or you look at a map, you're no longer seeing these countries that you don't know anything about. You're seeing places where your friends live in countries that you know something about. So when countries have issues as they often do five years from now, 10 years from now, 20 years from now, instead of wanting to go to war, the idea is that you'll want to call your friends in other countries, sit down at the negotiation table and find a solution to the problem. So we call this words not war.

The third thing that the State Department uses exchanges for is to cultivate the next generation of leaders, a lot about what we're trying to accomplish at this summit this week. We want to allow people to create networks around issues that they're passionate about so that they can have the tools and the resources and the networks to take these ideas and to transform them into action. Some of the themes and topics that we care about are some of the same ones here at the summit. Some of them are more broad, and I'll just go through them quickly. Things like disability rights, volunteerism, social inclusion, economic prosperity, entrepreneurship, combating violent extremism, and counter terrorism. So these are just issues that the state department wants people to kind of cluster around and find solutions. So this is why exchanges matter and exchanges are important to U.S. Foreign Policy goals.

One final thought for you on youth activism and voice. Are there any other folks out in the audience who are Harry Potter fans who've read the book series? Okay, a lot of you. So several years ago, J.K. Rowling gave a speech to Harvard graduates called the "Fringe Benefits of Failure and the Power of Imagination". Quick summary of the speech. Before she became a worldwide sensation. J.K. Rowling lived in poverty, she was a single mother, and by most people's definition she was a failure. In her speech, she spends a lot of time explaining that she does not glamorize this experience at all because she did not know that it would have a fairy tale

ending. But she talks about how failure stripped away the inessential. It allowed her to pour all of her energy into the one thing that mattered most to her, which was being a writer.

It also taught her things about herself, that she had a strong sense of determination, the will to survive, and she found out that she had friends that were more valuable than rubies. Imagination. A lot of you might think that that has to do with her rebuilding her life. But she talks about how she worked at Amnesty International, working with people who were experiencing human rights violations. She said the unique thing about humans is we have the power of imagination. That gives us the capacity to imagine ourselves and other people's shoes. We can understand and learn things just by hearing about them. So that gives us the ability to take collective action on issues that we identify and want to find a solution to.

So the reason that I bring this speech up, because it's something that has really inspired me. But I also feel like the U.S. government's goal of creating mutual understanding between people in different countries and this idea about imagination have three things in common. They require us to have understanding, they require us to have awareness, and they also require us to have empathy. Empathy for other people's cultures, empathy for other people's experiences, empathy for other people's struggles. So my message to you is this, as global pathfinders, if you can be imaginative, if you can be culturally aware, if you can use your efforts to build networks... I'm losing my thought. But if you can use your efforts to build networks, if you can come together and take collective action, and if you can use failure as an opportunity to learn and move forward, then you have all the tools you need to shape the future and to change the world. Thank you.

Jonathan Toms:

All right, well thank you Nancy, and I just want to start off by saying I am so impressed by the people that I've met this week, or I guess just these last two days. The conversations that we've had, it's really inspiring. So thank you to the American Evolution and all of the partners that it's taken to put this Global Pathfinder summit on. My name is Jonathan Toms and I'm the Associate Manager of Charitable Initiatives for Smithfield Foods. We're a global consumer packaged goods and protein company. In this role, I lead our nationwide hunger relief initiative helping hungry homes. I also oversee our charitable giving activities in the communities where Smithfield's employees live, work and raise their families.

So with a background in communications and a passion for philanthropy, I believe in the power of storytelling, and lived experience, and raising awareness of complex social issues, and igniting change. According to a Harvard professor and author of *Changing Minds*, Howard Gardner, the principle vehicle of leadership is the story the leader affects individual behavior, thought and feelings through the stories that he and she tells. But why is storytelling important to our success? Well, as a for-profit company, it allows you to tell why you are passionate about supporting the causes that you are. It gives the justification to your stakeholders for taking a stand in the areas that you care about. As a nonprofit organization, storytelling allows you to raise awareness of the key issues you face every day and enables your organization to raise funds in support of your mission. As a policy maker or influencer, an inspiring story can encourage

others to join your cause. In any example, telling your story is the number one way to sway public opinion and create meaningful change.

But no one wants to make an important decision or commitment without having the relevant experts involved, right? Let's think about it. You wouldn't purchase or live in a home that was built without the input of an engineer. For anyone that flew here for this summit, how many of you would have boarded the plane if the gate agent said, "I'm sorry, the pilot isn't available today to fly the plane, but we're going to give it our best shot"? Hopefully none of you would have. So then why as an organization would we expect the public to believe in our cause or support our mission without involving an expert? Now, as important as a CEO, a director, or even a Senator, may be the experts in this case are the people that we serve. Those clients who have received help from your organization or whose lives have changed for the better because of the policy that you've advocated for. They are the reason why we do what we do and they are the proof that what you are doing works.

So then why do we so often leave out the most important people when telling our stories? Oftentimes a certain stigma exists. A set of negative stereotypes that makes individuals who are in need of help an out-group. So our society assigns a level of shame with receiving assistance. But that is so far from the reality. More often than not, these are working families, people just like you and me. But we leave them out of the narrative. That rhetoric does more than just prevent us from telling a compelling story. It creates boundaries and divisions for so many others. People who will actively deny receiving the help that they qualify for because they think that's not something that someone like me does.

I serve on the board of directors of my local food bank in Newport News, the Virginia Peninsula food bank. During the government shutdown last winter, our food bank offered assistance to TSA agents at the local airport while they were working without paychecks. But because of the stigma that's so often associated with receiving assistance, they refuse to visit the food bank. We ended up taking food to the airport and placing it in a closed conference room so that the agents could receive the help they needed in private.

So we know that making lived experience part of the story is important, but how do we do it? Well, we need to start by shifting our narrative to focus on the pathways of promise that we're able to provide. Rather than treating your clients or the populations you serve as helpless and hopeless let's concentrate our story on empowering others. That's how we create change. But we have to do it through the eyes of the client through the lens of lived experience. Now you might be thinking, well, I don't want to invade their privacy. They don't want to tell their story. I encourage you to ask. I think you'd be surprised at just how many people want the opportunity to show how you have impacted their lives. It's an opportunity to say, "I am not defined by the challenges or difficulties I have faced and through the work of this organization, or this advocate, I have overcome those challenges for a better tomorrow."

For the Game of Thrones fans, according to Tyrion Lannister and the season finale of Game of Thrones, there's nothing in the world more powerful than a good story. Whether it's your own

personal lived experience or that of a client you serve, we all have a good story to tell, so let's go out there and tell it. Thank you.

Cassie Cunningham:

I want to start a conversation on civic engagement through the lens of systemic change. Focusing on really one issue in particular the foster care and adoption crisis in Virginia, and looking at how we engage that community to make sustainable systemic change. So a little bit about me. I'm an attorney, and I served as a guardian ad litem for about seven years representing the interests of children in court. All of that led me to my current role as a Policy Research Analyst for Children's Home Society of Virginia. So I work on issues with foster care adoption and youth aging out of foster care.

So civic engagement. I think I could ask this room how many of you are engaged in civic engagement activities in your community? But I know you would always your hands because you're here. So serving on a nonprofit board, volunteering with survivors of domestic and sexual violence, empowering women in your community. I think we can all agree that, that is civic engagement.

But I want to challenge it a little bit because it's really just one aspect of civic engagement. True civic engagement in the context of systemic change has to go much further and much deeper. Holistically engaging a community has to be more than siloed volunteer activities. We have to understand the community we're seeking to engage. We have to understand their needs. How do we do this? We do it by listening to the community, right? Really listening to them. So how does this work with the foster care and adoption crisis in Virginia? So I'll pause briefly to talk a little bit about that.

So in Virginia, for those of you that are not familiar, when a child is abused or neglected, they often enter the foster care system, meaning they live temporarily with a family, sometimes multiple families, sometimes in a group home until they're either reunited with their family or adopted. But sometimes this never happens. Sometimes youth are never reunited with their family, they're never adopted, meaning they turn 18 and have to navigate adulthood with no family supports. We know through research that youth who age out of foster care are far more likely to become incarcerated, to become homeless, to face a multitude of harsh life outcomes. We know from talking with the youth, but they need a support system to become independent, to navigate adulthood.

But Virginia is in the midst of a crisis with this. We don't have enough foster parents and we don't have enough adoptive parents. Virginia has the second highest rate of youth aging out of foster care in the entire country. So when you think about foster care and engaging in foster care and giving back, you might think about donating clothes or mentoring children or tutoring children, and we need all of that, absolutely need all of that. But if we're going to make systemic change, we need much more. And we know that because we've engaged the community.

So how do we really actually engage the community to learn what the needs are? There are a variety of ways, but I can share what I do in my role as an advocate. First, I have to identify who is the community that I need to engage. So in this case, it obviously includes youth and foster care and youth who have aged out of foster care. But it also includes the social workers who work with the youth. It includes the families who foster and adopt the youth. It includes the change makers, the policy makers, the community leaders, and then I listen. So I hold meetings just... The only purpose is to listen to the youth and the families, to hear their stories, their experiences, to hear their needs and what's most important to them.

I regularly attend programmatic meetings to hear what the social workers are working through, to hear their frustrations and their concerns. I work with other advocates to make sure that we're all sharing what we're hearing and we take all of that to create an advocacy agenda for systemic change. It's my job to take all of those stories, and experiences, and perspectives, and needs and convey that to the people who can make the systemic change, the policy makers and the community leaders. So how does all of this work together? Systemic change, the foster care crisis, civic engagement? When we've engaged our community, we've learned that one of the overarching needs is permanency, a permanent support system. So we create an advocacy agenda that is rooted in permanency, rooted in the need identified by the community itself. But then we also take that one step further and we engage the broader community to become a part of filling that need, to become a part of that change, to be the permanent support systems, to become the adoptive parents.

So what have we done? We've engaged the community, we've listened to the needs, we've taken those needs and advocated for change rooted in those needs. Then we've engaged the broader community to be a part of fulfilling that need. Creating systemic change is a cycle that starts and ends with the community. We have to engage the community at every step of the way. So while I would love to walk away from here having inspired all of you to become adoptive parents and engaged in the foster care issues, just as importantly, I hope that this is ignited in you, the desire to think a little bit differently about how you're engaging your community at a deeper and more holistic level.

Gentian Xhaxhiu:

Thank you very much. Hi everyone. I would perfectly understand if I see some sleepy faces, it makes totally sense. It's like 6:00 PM. We're behind the schedule, but that's perfect. I will not bother you with boring things. I'll try to bring a piece of Albania and a piece of civic engagement related to students because most of you and me and us are students or have been students in the recent years. There have been two big students protest in Albania. The first one was in the 1991 and collapsed the communist regime. So we brought the democracy in the country, brought pluralism. Thanks to that big demonstration it was not even a protest. Now we'll be as a pluralist country as a whole, Eastern Europe. Whole Europe of course, but Eastern Europe was the only one who was under the communist influence.

The second big students protest happened only few months ago. It started in December 2018 and ended in February 2019. But what happened? Why students again after 28 years thought that the

government was doing something wrong? In the frame of the educational reform, higher education reform, Albania government introduced many changes in the higher educational system. But one of them really pissed off the students. If they had to retake an exam... So for example, we all have failed in exams and we had the chance to retake it and pass it. But according to this new rule and regulation in case a student was failing to an exam, he or she had to pay a fee if he or she wanted to retake the exam. So imagine if you have failed in three or four exam, you should multiply the fee.

So a bunch of 50 or 60 of the Faculty of Architecture went in front of the ministry of education with memes saying, "Reform my ass". And things like that. Or, "Make university great again." So and said, "We are not going to accept this rule." As they passed and went on many students from other faculties... So not only those of University of Tirana but also of other universities in the country join to the people. At this stage the students understood and the government understood that they had to do something. But as the crowd was becoming bigger, the students were also thinking bigger. They introduced a document of eight points. They called it the "Eight Points Document" asking to the government to make exactly those eight changes in the higher education reform that was just introduced by the government.

Only 24 hours after this document was introduced the government tried to fulfill one, the initial request. So they canceled the fee. If you fail an exam, you want to retake it, it will be for free. The government thought that this would bring the protest to an end. But no, the students now we're looking for the fulfillment of the eight points that they had already introduced publicly, in media. They have also sent it to Minister of Education and things like that.

So as the days went on the crowd became bigger and the products became even more, not only of the students but also their parents, general public, the media. So everyone was supporting this protest. So at this stage the government understood that they had to negotiate with the students. They had to do something, they had to talk to them and see what they could do with this eight points plan. So they asked to the students to set up a representatives groups, a group of three, four or five or, or even 10 students and go into the office of the Minister of the Prime Minister and talk with them, negotiate with them. But the students gave another lecture of democracy. They said, "We're sorry, you're going to talk with all of us. You're not going to talk with five of us because you might influence them. You might offer them something or whatever. I'm not going into that discussion. So if you want to talk with us, you should come and talk with us here in front of the media and in front of everyone."

So the Prime Minister himself, the Minister of Education, and a bunch of experts of education traveled in every Albania city where there is a university and they are like seven or eight Albanian cities with universities. They skip their agenda, they skip their international meetings, and met the students in group outing in big auditorium like this, like 500, 300 students. Each of them took the mic if they wanted to talk and they said their concern and their issue.

After this big consultation process the government came with not few but 11 governmental decrees to change what was already introduced as the new education, higher education reform.

So 11 changes, 11 huge documents were introduced by the government to intervene in the higher education system in Albania. At this stage still students were not happy. Their eight points were addressed, everything looked better than before but they wanted something more strategic. They didn't leave the products they still were continuing in every city trying to look for more autonomy for the universities. What happened? What was the final thing that made students really happy and brought the protest to an end was a higher representation of students in the management board of the universities. Now it's not only directors, deans, the professors or someone coming from Ministry with a tie, now students have a very high presentation in the decisions that the management board of the universities are taking.

Only at this stage, the government introduced the so called the Pact for the University. A big strategic document which introduced all the changes that I already mentioned. So at this stage the product went to an end. It started as a tiny thing, they just didn't want to pay the fee for additional exams. It ended to amend, and to change, and to bring quite a new imperatives to the higher education reform introduced by the government. But what actually made this product the power of change? I think it was the worthiness of the cause. This product had a cause, has a reason, had a very good reason. The unity. The students were never divided. They didn't choose their leader. They didn't choose any representative group. They always stayed together. The numbers which was becoming bigger and bigger each day and the commitment. They were committed to go to the end to this process.

So this process proved that any government, whenever they want to introduce a reform, a law, or regulation, they should beforehand, not a posterior, but beforehand they should listen and ask the end users, "What do you think of this initial draft? Let's think all together. What do you think of this new regulation? What do you think of this?" So they should consult and listen to the people, which in the end of the day will be those, the real subject of this new regulation of this new policy, of this new reform.

I'm really happy that the government heard the people, heard the students, they made the necessary changes. This show that democracy in our country despite Albania is still struggling with democracy and all other standards when it comes to being a real Western European country. But it's a good message that the government heard them, and it's a very good, even better message that the students did not surrender at any stage. I think that if we want to propose a new regulation or whatever it should be, the policymakers sitting on their desks with their PC in front of them will fail to see the whole reality. They should wear the shoes of the end users and walk on those shoes. In the best scenario, they should go down on the ground and ask them.

I will conclude this short intervention with saying that there is no citizenship without civil society and without civic engagement. Democracy is a metamorphosis is something that constantly changing. We should not see as, we and them. We are the good guys. They're the bad guys. No. Everyone should be on, on the same side and should see on the same direction. Thank you.

Speaker 4:

Edith.

Edith Mecha:

Okay. So hello everyone. I'm Edith Mecha, Alaska Fellow from Kenya. Today I'm going to talk about breaking the silence about a topic that is really embarrassing to talk from maybe many continents. Many people are very shy to talk about it, but it's really something that is affecting a lot of people. So I'm going to look at how we can use communication to alleviate gender based violence among vulnerable populations. So by show of hands... I know this is really very sensitive, but this is really a global issue that is affecting a lot of people. So by show of hands how many have been affected, or know somebody who's been affected by gender based violence? By gender based violence I mean it can be physical, emotional, sexual, economical, psychological. Yeah, clearly each one of us has been affected. So this is an issue that we need to start talking about it.

So according to the UN statistics one of the key things that they keep on talking about is that one out of three women in their lifetime, they will face gender-based violence. Something that is really disturbing is that you find that this violence is usually propagated by somebody, it can even be a family member. It can even be a sibling, a father, like a father doing harm to the daughter. It can even be a colleague at work. It can be even be a total stranger. So it's really frustrating and disturbing. So we really need to come up with interventions. We need really need to talk about it as much as possible.

So I'm going to give examples about organizations in Kenya where I come from about some of interventions around communication that they have been able to apply in order to combat this problem. So back in Kenya, so there's this called a Coexist Kenya. It was formed with this mission of using advocacy to be able to... Advocacy as a way to create awareness about gender based violence. One of the key things about gender based violence it's something that is rooted against gender. For instance you find because of imbalance in power dynamics people don't respect women.

So this organization called Coexist Kenya. So the founder, the mission he had all the objective was to use men to be the agents of bringing change, to be the agents of being able to address attitudes, beliefs, or values. So now he is using like men and young boys to be able to advocate for respects for women and even respecting... Respect for women and even valuing women. So these as really been effective. Then we've seen some changes in terms of the way our men are able to look at a women. Though it's not something that has really achieved a lot of progress but slowly by slowly we are seeing some lights at the end of the day.

Then of course Coexist Kenya as also like being able to use social media as a way to be able to come up with hashtags. Especially when we have an occasion whereby somebody like a husband beats the wife, and then the wife has been taken to hospital. They have been able to come up with hashtags that have been able to make people to engage create a lot of public discourse about it, and fight for justice for these a woman who has been abused. So social media is one of the ways that we can be able to teach people on using social media to start discussions that look at

the way... Discussions that promote changing our attitude, creating awareness about the effects of gender based violence.

The other way that communication can be applied and something that I've seen in different other organizations is like making sure the website, because I think each and every person all over the world everybody knows how to use the internet. The internet, everybody knows how to use the, website to search for information. So websites is also one of an effective tool as a communication approach. Making sure that the website is easily accessible, especially for like... Easily accessible so that it is inclusive of visually impaired or people who are the vulnerable population. Makes sure like the visually impaired can be able to check the website for resources. In case somebody goes through violence, you know you can go and check through and know where you can seek for assistance.

Another way that the websites can be a useful tool is to ensure that your website maybe should be able to be translated into different languages. So that for instance if somebody is a Spanish speaker they can be able to access the resources in Spanish, they can be able to access the resources in Portuguese, they can be able to access the resources in French. So websites is really a powerful communication tool that can be used to combat gender based violence. Then of course another thing is advocating. Making sure that we bring aboard all actors, including the government, civic space actors, and even people like organizations that are dealing with issues to do with gender. Make sure that we have discussions with them so that they can understand how they can be able to advocate to have curricula that includes our discussions around gender respect for girls, respects for all groups of people. So that we can be able to grow a generation of people from a younger age that have respect for women and also the vulnerable populations.

So these are just a few ways that communication can be very effective in addressing this big issue. There are so many other ways, but I think if we continue like right now we are all global change leaders so it's actually a call to action. Because one way that we can address this issue is if we have collective action, both men and women. So both men and women today at this Global Pathfinder Summit so it's a call to action. Let's all join hands together because this is an issue clearly that affects all of us. So let's join hands and be ambassadors of advocating for respect for all people, and looking for better solutions to address anger. Because most times you find sometimes abuse is perpetrated because someone feels the other person is powerless, or maybe they have annoyed him or something. So, let's be ambassadors and let's carry that message out there. Thank you.

Building a Movement

Casey Gerald, Co-Founder and CEO, MBAs across America

Liam O'Doherty, Director, Digital Youth Engagement Programs, TakeITGlobal

Samson Itodo, Executive Director, YIAGA Africa

Casey Gerald:

I heard there was a lot of barbecue and bourbon last night, so we'll try to be entertaining for the people who are falling asleep. I do want to recognize one of our panelists who cannot be with us this morning due to an illness, so we'll send her our thoughts. Greisa Martinez Rosas is the Deputy Executive Director at United We Dream. Originally from Hidalgo, Mexico, Greisa immigrated to the U.S. with her family at an early age and grew up in Dallas, Texas, as an undocumented immigrant.

Greisa has organized immigrant youth and workers for the passage of pro-immigrant policies at the local and national level for the past 10 years. She's an extraordinary leader, and champion, and change agent. We hate that she can't be with us, but in your time afterwards, definitely track down her and her work. I understand it's been a fantastically inspiring week, so you might not totally be aware that the world is still a mess outside. I saw the first thing this morning was an Instagram post, a high school student. She was at a protest and the sign said, "Why are we studying for a future that we won't have?" I think that is the context in which we have Liam and Samson to help us answer that question and give some sense of where to go from here.

Liam O'Doherty is the Director of Digital Youth Engagement Programs at TakingITGlobal. He designs and implements initiatives to inspire, inform, and involve young people in making a difference in their communities. With a background in sustainable development, communications theory, and theatrical improvisation, which maybe we'll get to, he has extensive experience in advancing youth rights, gender equality, inclusive design, and climate change initiatives, the range of context from grassroots mobilizations to international policy processes.

Samson Itodo heads one of Nigeria's foremost youth think tanks on democratic governance and citizens participation, the Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth and Advancement, which is a youth non-profit promoting democratic governance and youth participation in Africa through research, capacity development, and policy advocacy.

They've won plenty of awards, they come highly praised and recommended, and I think they'll leave us very inspired. I understand that yesterday was a lot about your personal narrative, your public narrative in the spirit of Marshall Ganz, the great teacher. I thought maybe we'd start there. You all are working at the intersection of ginormous issues with very important organizations under your helm, but I know this is very personal work for you. I'd love if we could just start with, why in the world are you doing what you're doing today?

Liam O'Doherty:
Do you want to start? Should I?

Samson Itodo:
Go ahead.

Liam O'Doherty:
Okay. I do the work that I do because I get to work with amazing people, and I get to move forward with them to create a better world. That's really exciting, and engaging, and fun work.

It's not always easy, but bringing people together and building commonality and understanding what we need in order to make the world work better is, I think, what is needed in the world. To be able to see a need and respond to that is incredibly rewarding. As our agency and our ability to effect change gets bigger and bigger, those rewards become bigger and bigger. Seeing the influence and the feedback loops of what working together across racial lines and working with people, who don't seem to have that much in common with you in the first place, is incredibly amazing work and has led to a huge amount of experiences and practical outcomes, which I hope has improved a bunch of people's lives.

Casey Gerald:

One follow-up question to sort of double-click on that. Was there a moment when you first got on fire for the issues that consume you now?

Liam O'Doherty:

One moment that I remember was in grade three. There was a movement in my city to amalgamate all of the different suburbs into what is called a Mega City. I remember asking my teacher if I could get up in front of the class and explain why I didn't think this was a good idea, and how decentralizing and moving the boundaries and having decisions that would be made for the city happen outside of the city was not a good thing. I remember just thinking, that's an odd thing to do, to get up in front of your class before a math test and to make an emotional plea to my comrades who are in grade three, because they don't have power or decision making in this. That moment is one that I look back on. That started this kind of cascade of trying to advocate for things that I felt were just and right.

Casey Gerald:

Samson.

Samson Itodo:

Thank you. Good morning. Thanks for inviting me to speak on a very important issue, excuse me, around movements, and just to talk about my story. Because I come from a continent where over 60 to 70% of the population is dominated by young people, and whilst we were in a demographic majority, we're a political minority. The average age of African presidents is about 65. That's the youngest continent in the world, and every part of the world is interested in Africa. For us as young people in the continent of Africa, we believe that leadership has been the bane of our development. We can say that young people are demographically a majority, but led by people who are actually on the way either to their graves, or they're actually retiring from politics. I come from a continent where when they say, "You're a youth leader," you're somewhere at about 60 or 70. We've got a traditional recycling of leadership, so people who were military dictators 10, 20, 50 years ago are still in electoral politics. We felt very, very disenchanted.

Part of what I do in working with young people across Africa is, "How do we disrupt the political space?" For those that I've interacted with over the last couple of days, I am a disrupter. I believe in changing the business of public governance as well as politics. We've got to get

young people who have content and character into the room. That's why working together with other young people in Africa, we started a Not Too Young to Run campaign, which is reducing the age for running for office so we get young people to the center. Because democracy cannot deliver developments to the people if the people who are in the leadership, people who are in public leadership, do not provide the necessary capacity and competence that is desired. Young people do have competence, young people have character, and young people have the capacity to take Africa to the next level. That's what I do in Africa. That's my story.

Casey Gerald:

That's great, that's great. When you said you're a disrupter, I thought of what Yvon Chouinard, the founder of Patagonia, says. He says, "If you want to understand the entrepreneur, the social entrepreneur, study the juvenile delinquent." Because what the delinquent is doing with their behavior, saying, "This sucks, I want to do my own thing." Was there a moment for you, seven-year-old Samson gets kicked out of school or something for disrupting? I ask these questions because, so often, we meet people who are at the helm of these giant movements, and the thing that keeps them going, winning that Nobel Peace Prize, or whatever, is the same thing that got them in trouble or got them noticed when they were six or seven or eight years old. I often try to figure out, what was that initial spark as a human being before you became...

Samson Itodo:

I was a student in the university, and as a student ... I'm not sure in your country, perhaps, or South African countries where Student Union governments are banned because of the role that students actually play in galvanizing and articulating students' rights. You can't talk about human rights when you suppress the voices of students. Students wouldn't have access to quality welfare or infrastructure within universities. They paid their fees, and then, "Why don't we have access to quality water? Or our hostel accommodation is like ..." Students are subjected to very dehumanizing conditions, and when student leaders speak, they are asked to either shut up or some of them are rusticated. We thought, "This cannot continue. This was not the society that we ought to inherit."

One of the things we always do, my brothers and sisters from Africa will understand this. Our parents would tell us, "Oh, back in the days, this was not the case. We had it all good. We're coming out of the university. The jobs are there waiting for us." We thought, "No, then where did we get it wrong? We have to take action." For us, there are two opportunities to change. You can either be revolutionary or reformist. You can be a mixture of both. One is about altering the balance of power in a very radical manner, which is a revolutionary approach. One is reformist. I am a mixture of both.

I have protested before and been arrested, and kept behind bars for two days. That's not what I'm saying you have to do, but that's my own story. We can still get change without being negatively disruptive. I think it's important to qualify the disruption I'm talking about. It's about positive disruption that engenders change, because you can disrupt and not get change. Because change is concrete, change is specific. It's important for we who are organizers and movement builders, we understand these dynamics of change in our engagement.

Casey Gerald:

I love that. Well, we'll come back to this revolutionary reformist thing as we continue. Think a lot about, we're here to talk about movements. There's a great, very short TED Talk, How to Build a Movement, and the guy's dancing on the ... Has anybody seen this? It's like two minutes, it's great. Watch it today. It's a guy that's dancing on the side of a hill. The speaker is saying that the most important thing in building a movement is getting the first follower. The whole video that he's showing and talking about is this guy dancing.

The most important thing that happens is one person comes and starts dancing with him. Then everybody else on the side of the hill comes and dances, but that first person took a long time to get it. How do you think about getting, as you build these movements, as you build your organizations, as you do your work, how do you think about getting that first person onboard, and then how do you go from there?

Samson Itodo:

Well ... Excuse me. Five things that are very central to building movements, and I'll end on how to get the first person. First, as we approach organizing or movement building, we must look at, we must approach change from a standpoint of a process, that change is a process and not an event. That understanding needs to be deeply appreciated, because what we see with organizers across the world is we focus on activities. We come to change our organizing from a point of activity. The second is, movements are driven by principles and values, because these are basic fundamentals. Before you start thinking about organizing or getting the first person, movements are about principles and values. Because movements are simply a collection of people who are involved in collective action and driven by common identity. The third is about relationships, and it taps on the point that you make about getting a person. In movement building, relationships are king.

That's why I loved the session yesterday around telling your stories. The public narrative, and you talk about Marshall Ganz. First is, how to you assess the person's emotions to mobilize their resources that they have, and then convert it to the power that they need to get the change that they want? First is, we talk about, there's a difference between movement building and mobilization. Mobilization is not value-based. If you're going to be engaged in mobilizing anyone into your movement, focus on the values. That's why it's important for us to know who we're organizing, who were mobilizing. Get to know them, get to know their values. Then engage from the point of values and not because you want them to support a particular activity or a particular cause. Even if they're doing that, let that engagement be based on values, so when they connect with those values it becomes the resource, or it becomes the source of harnessing the power that you need to actually engage. It's very important.

The thought is around structure and leadership. Leadership is very, very key and I know we'll talk about that. Before we start talking about getting that one person into whatever cause, to support whatever cause we're involved in, it's important to answer these questions, and that is where movements actually fail. Because we don't spend time thinking about these values, we

don't spend time thinking about ideals, norms and standards, and so we get people onboard. When people come onboard and they discover, "Oh, it's just an empty shell," it dissipates energy and they turn back.

Liam O'Doherty:

How do we get our first followers? One thing I like to think about, first we invite them and we find out, what do we need in order to make our movement, our dance accessible to them? What do they need, and what's in it for them to join us? In the case of the video, dancing is fun and people have a good time while doing it. I like to think about, how can we make our movements, via the stories that we tell, and how we talk about ourselves, and how we conduct ourselves, how do we make that magnetic so that people want to join us? Because it looks like we're having a good time and probably because we are.

Obviously, this work isn't always fun but it can be meaningful as well. Either by presenting a good time or presenting a meaningful outcome that is going to enrich our lives and move our societies forward, I think these are the things that people look for and that they cling to. Because there's so much information in our world today, but I think we struggle for a lack of meaning. The other thing that I like to think about is I'm not as fond of the kind of follower-leader mentality. I'm more around collaborators and co-conspirator. Instead of having someone follow the dance that I'm doing, I want to learn their dance. I want to dance with them and engage in what they do. That helps to build leaderless movements and very resilient, horizontal frameworks, which I think are stronger and more capable in terms of implementing change in the long term.

Samson Itodo:

Absolutely.

Casey Gerald:

Actually, before we move on, I want to touch on this, because one of the big questions is, in some ways, it's almost an obsession with the word "movement." Yeah? I used to tell people all the time, "Go change the world," and then a decade past and now I tell people, "Leave the world alone. I mean, relax a little bit," in a way. There is such a rush to claim, "I'm building a movement," which is value neutral perhaps.

What do you think about, "I'm going to build a leaderless movement" versus "I'm going to be the Chair of an organization that has committees and initiatives"? Et cetera, et cetera. Is that, I'm assuming it's not an either/or, but do you have any thought or guidance around, "I've got this problem in the world that is really pissing me off, and I want to do something about it. Now I can go out and I go to a protest, I can start a leaderless movement, whatever that means, or I can start an organization, a traditional NGO, and raise resources, and have a board," et cetera, et cetera. What do you think about when somebody comes to you with this burning passion, giving them some direction as to how to move forward?

Samson Itodo:

You go first.

Casey Gerald:

Sam, you seem to be anti-movement. Let's...

Samson Itodo:

Okay. If someone comes to me with this problem, the first thing that I would hop on as the four dilemmas that organizers face when they want to start a movement. The first is around bounding an organization, which is in the domain of whether you're going to be inclusive or exclusive. Because one of the dilemmas we face is, "How do we define those who ought to be members of our movement?" Because the moment we determine who is a member of the movement, we're also defining who cannot be a member of a movement. We're bound with this, we're faced with this dilemma of inclusion versus exclusion.

It's very, very important because any movement that does not have commitment or obligations cannot generate the kind of strategic capacity or social capital that it needs to get the change that it wants. For movements in our communities, communities without obligations cannot be very, very effective. You're going to be grappling with people coming in and out of that particular organization or that particular group. It's not whether you are bounded as a group, but it's whether having bounded, you've generated an identity that everyone who wants to be part of that movement actually shares, so we always have this dilemma.

The second is actually in the domain of organizational creativity, where we deal with, "When do we expand, or when do we limit ourselves?" Because you find a situation where movements begin and they are successful, it changes, one, things like resource configurations and leadership, as well as the energy that you need. You now have situations where you're grappling with, "Do we maintain this small organization, or we need to expand?" This can actually be addressed either by building synergy, constructive synergy within the team, as well as you're going to start having fragmentation within the team. These are things that actually need to be addressed. To build on...

I'd like to end on this note. When we talk about movements, just like we say that there's no universally accepted definition of a movement across the world, but there are three things that are distinct about movements. One, it's about identity and getting involved in collective action, as well as people. It's about people. When we talk about movement, it's people, identity and collective action. That is what movements do across the board. You need to have that clarity, which Liam talked about, from the word "go," and that will define how, as a movement, you lead.

To end on, because this issue dwells largely on how you structure your leadership within a movement, whether you call it leaderless movement? Yeah, or movement with leaders, and tied to this is actually a structure. Sometimes, as leaders, we're grappling with, "Do we want to have a very formal or flexible movement that isn't a coalition?" Because when a movement becomes a...

There's a difference between a movement and a coalition. Coalitions are probably sets of organizations who are working together. They've got a very definite structure. It's got its own pros and cons. You can adopt that if it works for you, but for movements, it's about people. That's where the aspects about relationships and identity come into play. Don't forget, in talking about movements, it's about people, it's about identity, it's about collective action.

Liam O'Doherty:

One way that I like to think about this is starting an organization is a little bit like starting a band. Whereas, starting a movement or joining a movement, because I'm not sure necessarily that movements can be intentionally started as opposed to realized from understanding a common goal or a common thread. A movement is a little bit more like an orchestra or a symphony, except without a conductor. Within that broad collection of people making noise, different pockets of those folks can come together to play on the same key or play in the same time signature and, hopefully, make something that's worth listening to.

I see movements as much more cacophonous, much harder to control or steer, and focused more on that kind of relationships and commonalities. Whereas, organizations can be created in many different ways, but they usually have a structure. Someone who is ultimately going to be responsible, often this is the founder at first, but then there can be succession. Usually, organizations have some kind of formal government structure, and constitution or laws. Usually more hierarchy, whereas most of the movements that I've been a part of, you just say, "Hey, we all care about climate. What can we all do?" What we're prepared to do, what we're capable of, what our skills, what we're able to bring to that movement is going to be much more organic. Probably a lot noisier, but you can make a lot more noise with an orchestra than you can with a band.

Casey Gerald:

It makes me think of, I was having dinner a few weeks ago with a friend of mine who was one of the first protesters at Ferguson, Missouri, in the Black Lives Matter Movement in 2014. I asked her, I said, "What's the state of the movement these days?" She said, "Well, is there even a movement?" You'd never get that answer if you asked them, "What's the status of TakingITGlobal? Well, is there even a TakingITGlobal?" This, again, it's value neutral, but it's a different challenge. Let's talk a bit about scale, which I feel like every donor wants to talk about and no leader wants to talk about. First year, we ran a pilot of MBAs Across America, which was basically kind of a domestic Peace Corp for business students.

We had a great time, we thought it really worked. I went to a business school professor of mine and I said, "All right, Len, it's time to scale." He said, "But you don't know anything." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You've done one summer, it was fine, but you don't know anything." He said, "More importantly, you don't scale programs, you scale answers to questions, so go figure out what your questions are and then we'll talk about whether you have the right answer." Can you talk a bit about, one, how you think about the question that you're trying to answer in your work, and two, how the answers to that question have changed over time?

Liam O'Doherty:

One of the questions I see as central to my work is, "How can we create a better world and a better community together?" I feel like the different angles, and different approaches, and different issues that come up, for me, have changed. I started as an environmental activist and a sustainable development activist, and then got more into gender rights, accessibility rights, and indigenous rights. As these movements and different issues have come up for me, the way in which we approach these questions, the way in which we frame our goals changes and evolves over time based on the people who I'm associated with and who I'm working with. The question, I think, becomes much more context-based as I've evolved and moved forward in my movement building.

Because the question that we're trying to answer is answered differently in every single context that we work in, because every community, every individual, every theme is responded to differently. The vocabulary, the resources, those are all going to be different, and so I think it becomes much more nuanced. I'm now more satisfied with many different answers, because I know that the answer can't be the same for everyone, because we're not the same. Being more comfortable with uncomfortableness, and also being more uncomfortable ... Or being more comfortable with just difference and different answers has evolved over time.

Samson Itodo:

Yeah, so how do you scale and what should be the preconditions or considerations for scaling? I completely agree with Liam. It has to be context-specific. What are the issues? There are some issues that are localized. Although, even though an issue is localized, one of the dilemmas that movements also face is, "Should we have a national goal, but local action? How do we connect our work at the local level with what happens at a national level?" If you dig deep and you look at structures, the more localized a movement is, the more hierarchical, the more oligarchic and the more exclusionary it becomes.

That's why it's always important, as we scale, we're very clear about what's the purpose, what's the goal of scaling? Is it to expand the scope of our impact, or to build our leadership competencies and capacities? Or to connect with other movements who are doing great work just to draw strength and solidarity? I'm pro-solidarity. I think that in whatever we do, and when we think about scaling, we should also think about solidarity. How do we strengthen and deepen solidarity amongst ourselves, whether at the local level, or at the national level, or at the international level? It's a huge source of ... I would look at scalability as a source of generating more power as a movement to get the change that you want.

Liam O'Doherty:

One more thing to add here. When I think about scaling, which I largely just think about growing, there's two general ways of scaling that I understand. One of them is scaling vertically, which is basically doing what you're doing in more locations with more people. Then the other way is scaling horizontally, which increases your own capacity to address the challenges that you're working on. At certain points, the efficiency of just scaling vertically reaches a limit. Looking at new ways, and new ideas and methods for implementing that change is necessary

after a while. At a certain point, I think it's really important to revisit some of the presumptions about how you're going to grow, and think about how you can address the challenges in new ways that make your job easier in the first place as an organizer.

Casey Gerald:

That sort of calls to mind a question that's on my mind often, which is sort of, and is troubled by this push that I think both of you all are making in very important ways that also reflect what change making looks like in a different way, which is to sort of reduce the profile in a way of a charismatic leader. A generation that taught us to do this work. It's like it's one person, they go to the deal, they give the talks, they get the ... At the same time, Samson, you do a lot of television. Liam, you're a digital media expert.

It is a gift and a curse. If you're going to scale horizontally, expand capacity, raise awareness, you have to use the tools of the media. What do you think about doing that in a way that gets the message to the most people? Whether it's on Instagram and Twitter, whether it's on local access news or CNN, which Greisa also does a great deal of. How do you navigate doing that using the tools of media that are unprecedented while, one, not falling into hashtag activism, or falling into being a celebrity? Which, I guess, you're already a celebrity, so it's too late.

Samson Itodo:

Oh, come on. First is, I think that for we who are organizers and community organizers in this room, over the last few days, we've talked about leadership. We need to see movement building and organizing as a leadership practice, which is simply taking responsibility for enabling others to achieve a common purpose. The underlying concept is taking responsibility. It's not viewing leadership as organizers from a standpoint of a position or an individual, but to look at leadership as a way of life, even for members of your movement and those who you recruit. Because what movement is about is about leadership recruitment.

Anyone who is a member of your movement or your organization, they need to come to that movement or to that organization viewing themselves as leaders, because leadership is not a position. As community organizers, we don't see leadership as a position, we see it as a way of life. I think that understanding informs the way we structure our movements. Marshall Ganz will call it the Snowflake Model, which is rather than being dependent, you adopt an interdependent model, where we all consider ourselves as leaders, and so everyone has a critical role to play. We're depending on each other to get the results to achieve a common goal or objective. If you've got that understanding, you know that it's about the people and it's not about yourself.

Usually, identity is an issue that movements deal with. If you look at South Africa, or you look at the Liberation Movement, oftentimes, people talk about Nelson Mandela, but they forget that there are also other leaders in the Movement. You have Walter Sisulu, you have O.R. Tambo, even Winnie Mandela. If you look at the Civil Rights Movement, everyone talks about Martin Luther, but there were other leaders in the movement. That is why we who are taking responsibility as leaders, we have to be very, very intentional in our engagement not to create the

impression out there that it's about us, so in our decision, and that is why when you're structuring leadership, you need to set norms, and from the word "go."

Even though, yeah, norms actually evolve, but you need to set those norms. Once you do that and everyone has got the commitment, they see themselves as leaders, so they don't wait for you to make a decision before they get to act. That is why, when you look at movements across the world, that's why the whole concept of collective action generates that part. Even when you're engaging with the media and the press, be it on social media or using a hashtag, yes, and this sometimes is controversial, but the truth is, it's a hashtag, "I too for mobilization," but they are not necessarily changing that we seek, it can be it's ... Oftentimes, we come to technology as an end, but not a means to an end.

What it does, it helps galvanize people, but yes, galvanizing, or organizing people can be a goal, but it's not change. If your goal is change a particular policy, the fact that you're trained on social media, a million, you've got a million followers, if at the end of the day that policy is not changed, then I don't think you've achieved anything, and so we need to go beyond that to get in change, because change is concrete and change is specific. If your goal is simply to get people aware, yes, it's very good. Everyone can actually get people aware, and if that's your goal and your objective, fine, but we need to go beyond that. Especially when we're involved in community organizing.

Casey Gerald:
Sure.

Liam O'Doherty:

One thing that comes up from me on this is before, and in my past, I was looking for a way to amplify my own voice, to find a way to reach more people with my messages. Now I see my work as finding other people and amplifying their voices, and there's much more nuance in that. I see part of my role in terms of how we use media as finding many different voices that are all saying the same thing in slightly different ways, and finding ways of improving the efficacy of spreading those messages to their respective bases. Less of a one size fits all approach and more of a flotilla or like, again, using the metaphor of the symphony. Wanting everyone to be more adroit and more capable of playing their instrument as opposed to getting everyone to follow what I'm asking them to play.

Casey Gerald:

Sure, sure, sure. That calls up the question of metrics and measurement. I want to start with you, Liam, but I want to start with something that Samson said, which is that, "At the end of the day," x, y, z. A big question is, what's the end of the day? I mean, you take something like climate change, what's the end of ... You see, what's the end of the day? In some ways, I saw someone that was speaking after the church, after Notre Dame burned, and a climate activist said soon after that, so hearkening to the original folks who built the church, and they said, "We'll never see this thing finished, but our great grandchildren will see it finished, and so we'll go to work today to do that."

This climate activist was saying that climate activism is a bit like that. Nothing we do today will be realized fully in our lifetime, but if we don't do it today, the consequence ... How do you think about measuring the work you're doing now, and then communicating that to people who are expecting to see some tangible result? Because you take, for example, the Occupy Wall Street Movement, for example. You could say, at the end of the day, if you measure the end of the day by 2012, nothing happened, but if you look at the fact that two of the leading presidential candidates and for the 2020 race are running, basically, on Occupy Wall Street themes, then you have a different end of the day. Not saying they succeeded, but it's just a different context. What do you think about measuring something as nebulous, overwhelming, depressing, hard, complicated?

Liam O'Doherty:

The end of the day, for me, is the end of the story that we're telling. Those stories are going to change, obviously, based on the context. It's really interesting to take on issues that are much bigger than we can possibly hope to solve in one lifetime. I feel like every challenge that is worth solving is bigger than ourselves. For me, it splits into qualitative and quantitative, and also inner and outward metrics. Just, how do people feel about being a part of this movement? Do they feel their own agency? Do they have a feedback loop so that when they take an action, they get some kind of positive or negative response and can verify whether or not that had the intended consequence, or something else?

There's also hard metrics for some of our movements like the percentage of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and so that's an important thing to keep your eye on. In a lot of ways, some of those big, external metrics are beyond our control, and so I like to focus on, what are the outcomes of the things that we're doing right now, and how do the people in our movement feel? Do they feel supported? Do they feel like they're getting anywhere? Because if they feel good, then they'll continue. If it's very frustrating, there's a challenge there to be overcome. Part of this is just the stories that we tell to ourselves. Sometimes, something that is a failure can be reframed as having unintended consequences that we couldn't have seen coming, like ripples on a pond in ways that we could have never anticipated.

Samson Itodo:

Well, thanks Liam. Reflecting on what you said, how do we measure impact? There are different tools to measure impact, but I won't dwell on that. Movements do three things, they meet, they take action, and they celebrate. Now, all these are opportunities for renewal. As you meet, you're asking those questions on whether our goal is achieved, and we get to reflect more on those goals. They are marginal gains, they are marginal wins. We celebrate those wins because it inspires members of the movement. Oftentimes, movements, there are some movements that don't like to celebrate. They want the big, the macro change, but there are marginal gains. For those who participated in one of the sessions Aaron did over the week, and it looked at the ladder. The same way you've got that ladder, there are turning points in that particular movement or advocacy effort that you're involved in.

Even if it's just securing a meeting with a particular public official who has shut his doors on campaign ads or advocates, just even having access to that meeting and pleading and advocating your issues is something that is worth celebrating. When you celebrate that, it inspires members of the movement, because they are seeing a result, but is there going to be at the end of the day? Sure, they will.

One challenge that we have is organizers is we don't know when to call it quits. Even when we achieve a particular goal or objective, there's always the desire to continue.

That's a dilemma you would face, because you build so much social capital. There are people who are so energetic, and they want to keep going, yes, whilst that is good and it's fine but, "My dear brothers and sisters, there are times that just call it quits. We have achieved our objective, everybody go home." If there's another issue, we can organize around that issue again, but until we get to that point, and looking at relationships and dynamics in society and the fact that we live in a very [inaudible] world, I don't think there's ever going to be that, at the end of the day.

Casey Gerald:

At the end of the day, yeah. I too am inclined to keep going, but I'm going to temporarily call it quits to see if we have questions from folks. I hate to do this, but I am not going to ... The first question is going to come from a woman because we don't have any on the panel, which breaks my heart, and hopefully, we never have panels like that.

Kouassi Jacmen Kouakou:

Okay, thank you-

Casey Gerald:

I'm sorry, sorry. We're not going to hear from another man for a sec. There you go. No, I want to take your question but I just want to be sure we're not so-

Speaker 7:

Gender balanced.

Casey Gerald:

Yeah, so male dominated. Yeah. You had a question? Go ahead.

Catherine Constantinides:

Yeah.

Casey Gerald:

I'm sorry. Can we get the mic right here? Then we'll come back to you. I'm sorry. Thank you so much.

Catherine Constantinides:

Thank you so much. That was really, really fantastic. My question is, specifically, to you ... Oh, sorry. I want to ask you, you mentioned how we need to actually, as leaders within these

movements and within these capacity building exercises we do, we have to stand on the shoulders of other giants. We look at Nelson Mandela, but we don't realize that he stood on the shoulders of great giants. We see him, but we didn't see the giants underneath him who are an imperative part of not only the movement he was a part of but also, in order for him to rise, there had to be those that were on the ground.

How do we make sure that within these movements, we are constantly feeding the soul and the energy of those giants? Because those people are greatly needed, but sometimes within these movements that we see the world over, we do see that figurehead, and we see that one person, and then the entire world wants to be just that one person, and we don't remember or we forget that that one person didn't just fall there. They got there with the assistance, guidance, and often the greater leadership from others who've made sure that they pushed that person forward. How do we build capacity on the ground to make sure that we're building giants who are not only going to be in the forefront, but are going to be the men and women on the ground?

Casey Gerald:

Thank you, thank you. Somebody wants to take it?

Samson Itodo:

Okay. I told her we'd take a couple before we respond.

Casey Gerald:

What's that?

Samson Itodo:

I told her we'd take a couple.

Casey Gerald:

Oh, sure, sure, sure. That's great. Yeah. We'll take a couple questions, then we'll let them...

Kouassi Jacmen Kouakou:

I come from Côte d'Ivoire, and I'm the founder of Corruption Quitte Ma Cité that is a youth platform, where we teach service and ethical leadership, and also teach principles of governance.

I would like to talk about the scalability concerning money, because most of the time it's very difficult for us to scale up, and take my kids, for example, when I have to organize some conferences, I use my own salary. Because fighting corruption is very difficult. When you find partners, finding funding, people even escape you because you are fighting corruption. How can we make sure to get access to grants and funding to scale up our work?

Casey Gerald:

Great question. Thank you. Yes? Can we get the microphone ready?

Joshua Eyar:

Good morning. My name is Joshua. I'm from Uganda. My question is, most of the time when I listen to stories of leaders that lead movements, there's always a painful story behind them. If you talk of Nelson Mandela, he started, we all know that he was in jail. If we talk about even just people who are in the civic movements here, they are doing what they are doing because it's something that maybe they face and they feel like they want to change it. In most cases, when we are leading these movements, based on our stories, there's a group of people that we normally leave out, and this a group of people who were privileged enough, they never went through what we are going through. When we talk about the pains we've had over time, this is not something that concerns them, and yet they have the influence that we need so that we can rally together and achieve the goal that we want.

My question comes in like, how can we influence these people? How can we inspire them that they will be able to join the movement? Possibly also that, how can we raise a generation of people that look at themselves, at the privilege they've had, "Someone never had this privilege, and I want to fight for them"? Because we don't only need people who lead us because they had a pain in their life and they want to solve it, we also need those who had the privilege because the fact that you had the privilege means you have the experience also to help others also enjoy what you enjoyed. Thank you.

Casey Gerald:

Yeah, thank you. There's a lot of...

Samson Itodo:

Okay.

Casey Gerald:

I think there's some things, Samson.

Samson Itodo:

Well, thanks, Joshua, let me start with this. Colleagues, as community organizers, one of the mentality that we must not hold onto is the savior mentality. I think what has killed movements over the years is individuals thinking they are actually saviors, that they're going to liberate the world, and that they're liberating people. Liam talked about agency, and that's why when we understand leadership as taking responsibility and not a position, and we tell those people that they are leaders, and they've got the power to exercise agency over their own future within their own community, we might change that sort of thinking. Because let's not abdicate ... Let's not encourage citizens to abdicate their responsibilities to us. Let's empower them with the information and the capacity that they need to lead the change. That's how movements are sustained, and not about the individuals.

The second point is around money for scalability. I'm sure even hosting this meeting required mobilizing resources, and bringing all of us together. In a space where the donor space is shrinking, money's always going to be a challenge. There are innovative strategies of doing that, but I would say that for those of us who are community organizers, yes, money is important but

can we put people first? Can we focus more on the people? There are several resources that people do have that does not actually require money. They can generate, number is a resource. There are technical resources that people do have that they can convert to the power that they need to get the change that they want.

Going for advocacy, we see it, or protest, yeah, sometimes it requires money but if you check, even the Black Rights Movement and the protests across the world, models are shifting. Organizations are not procuring t-shirts for people to come out to protest. Rather, they ask people, "Okay, if this is we're wearing yellow today or red, please, can you grab a red shirt and show up for this particular meeting or protest?" We just need to think about innovative ways of financing movements and this is not a platform to talk about that, but we just need to come to this with a different attitude. Talking about this intergenerational engagement from leaders of a movement and present day, there is a movement here in the U.S., I don't know if it's the Black Rights Movement or Black Lives Matter.

Casey Gerald:
Black Lives Matter, yeah.

Samson Itodo:
They've got this ideological construct around seven generations, so it's an ideology that what we do today is connected to what seven generations before actually did, it's connected to that struggle. Therefore, as we organize today, we're also building seven generations ahead of us. To make this happen, we need to document our stories more. One of the greatest disadvantages, or the sad part of movements is we don't spend time to document the contributions of women and persons with disability in organizing. When we tell stories, we're only telling stories of the men and the idol, so we need to be very intentional.

We, who are the new generation or these new order organizers, we just need to change the way business is done. If we're going to be telling stories, as we organize in our daily lives...

Yesterday, we were taught the value of journaling. As we document these stories, let's also document the stories of women and persons with disability, and put the information out there. It does help to create the repository of knowledge, so 25 years when people look at 2019 or 2018, they've got resources that they can leverage on.

Casey Gerald:
Liam, do you have any-

Liam O'Doherty:
One thing that comes to mind in responding to these questions is the power of questions, because questions can present a space for the people that you're asking the question to, to fill in for themselves. A couple of questions that came to me in thinking about how to answer your questions, who is not being heard in this movement and why? How can we amplify those voices? How can we make our movements more accessible? What do we need to do to get people who

are influenced by this but might not be showing up at the table? Who is negatively impacted by this issue? How can we present being a part of this in a way that will benefit them?

Like corruption, for example. There are probably many companies in your country that are subject to corruption, would see that as an inefficiency, and that they're being hurt by that. They have something to gain by eliminating or reducing the amount of corruption, and so finding someone who is already on the receiving end of that negativity, and telling compelling stories, and asking the right questions so that they can come to the table with what they have, I think, works very well. The other part that comes to mind is the difference between doing things for somebody else, and doing things with somebody else. I much prefer to do things with folks because otherwise, I'm perhaps making assumptions and doing things that I shouldn't be doing. If we bring along people, we are much stronger, and we can tell better stories to more people.

Casey Gerald:

Daenerys Targaryen should have had you all as her advisors. Do we have any other questions? Yes?

Talent Madungwe:

My name is Talent from Zimbabwe. I have a question for Sam and Liam. In relation to involvement or evolving of movements, particularly looking in the African context, where student politics, for instance, is compared in previous times and what's happening right now, how do movements evolve? Also, looking at political parties. Most political parties are one party states in Africa, and they associate with people who fought the liberation struggle, or made the countries independent. Young political parties or emerging parties do not have that identity, so evolving, the evolution of movements, what can you talk about, and the comparison between present movements with similar themes and movements from the past?

Liam O'Doherty:

One thing that comes to mind when we look at, "How do movements evolve?" In my opinion, movements evolve by continuously and iteratively aligning themselves with changing contexts. Our world continues to change and continues to move. It's important for our movements to see the change and figure out how we can chameleon and change ourselves, so that as the context changes, we change to match that context. One thing that comes to mind, and this is almost like a trope, but the Internet. We can now organize digitally, and so that has changed the way in which our attention spans come, the level of interactivity that we expect from our movements. If we don't continuously ask, what is the context and the environment? The context is also the people. What is the context and how is that changing? How can we change ourselves in order to be effective in that context? Then we're not speaking the right language that we might need to in order to move ourselves forward.

Samson Itodo:

I think the way the society and the world is structured is that every citizen is a born activist, because you wake up every morning, you are advocating for one issue or the other because we're fed-up with the way our society is structured. You're going to always have that quest for a better

society, because man naturally cherishes progress and prosperity. If you look at the movements of the past and now, I just think that context for organizing 10, 20 years ago is different from today's context. You talked about technology, yeah, that's, but even demographic, if you look at population shifts, that is also one issue to reflect on.

My thoughts will be that we just need to connect these movements, which harps on the earlier point I made around we need to invest in doing research around this movement. That's why I appreciate one of the sessions a few days ago that brought the images of founders and founders, and those who had led struggles. Because it helps us ask a new generation to think about our history, and history is very, very important. For us in Africa, we need to invest in history but also look at our academic institutions and how are they platforms for political socialization and citizens' empowerment? A lot of the leaders within the African movement, a lot of them were positively radicalized, and permit my word, positively radicalized in American institutions like Howard University.

If you look at Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and [inaudible]. They all had opportunities to understand human rights and civil rights in this institution, so it's very, very important. We must also know that there's a difference between movements, political parties that can be movements in their own respect, than movements that are simply driven by whatever ideologies that they have. I just want to just end on this note, and I'll go to Africa. I'm sorry I'm Africanizing this conversation, but because that's where I come from, so yeah. There's a country in West Africa called Gambia. I don't know how many of you know Gambia. Now, Gambia had a dictator called Yahya Jammeh, who had ruled the country for several years, and refused to relinquish power. Two, three years ago, there was an election and he lost that election, but unaccepted that he lost. A few days later, he refused to accept the outcome of the election and said he didn't lose the election. There was so much chaos because before Yahya Jammeh's exit ... It was very, very difficult, Gambia was a closed state and people were declared persona non grata and couldn't go to Gambia. Gambia is just like the Rwanda of today. It's highly policed. You can't go to conduct research or even ask questions about how the government is performing.

What happened was after this president refused to relinquish power, there were just young people who just said, "You know what? We've got to organize." All they did was to send out a tweet that, "Gambia has decided," because Gambia decided at the polls. It was just that one tweet, "Gambia has decided," that became a rallying force, and all the Gambians started organizing and people were using the tweets, the hashtag, Gambia Has Decided, and it was time for Yahya Jammeh to go. It was that assertiveness on the part of those young people in Gambia that made other regional institutions like ECOWAS and showed that Yahya Jammeh left power. That's also the story of the Bring Back Our Girls Movement in Nigeria. That's the story of the Not Too Young to Run Movement. That's the story of the Fees Must Fall Movement in South Africa.

Casey Gerald:

Yeah, well, that's a great ... One last question just to close. Coming back to that Instagram post, that was very depressing. These are huge issues that will take lifetimes to solve, questions of how do you heal from trauma? Avoid going broke, et cetera, et cetera. I mean, it's hard work that all of us are doing. What is one tangible thing that you do to maintain your joy?

Liam O'Doherty:

I play a lot. I think about the work I do as play. I also go back to the question, "What can I do today to make what is currently impossible more possible tomorrow?" As there's incremental progress day-by-day, and meeting-by-meeting, and interaction-by-interaction, what becomes possible gets bigger and bigger. That's one of the things that keeps me going.

Samson Itodo:

What keeps me going is simply just looking across Africa and seeing young people asking difficult questions. It just gives me hope. That is why I'll continue to do what I do every day.

Casey Gerald:

That's awesome. Well, Liam, Samson, thank you so much for your work, and for your wisdom, and for being with us today. Thank you all so much for your questions. Let's give them a hand.

Samson Itodo:

Thank you.

Creating Sustainable Change

Kennedy Odede, Co-Founder and CEO, Shining Hope for Communities

Jessica Posner, Co-Founder and COO, Shining Hope for Communities

Kennedy Odede:

Jessica and I we run an organization which is really interesting. It's about partnership. We work in Kenya and I will let her go first. Jessica welcome.

Jessica Posner:

Well hello everyone from Nairobi, Kenya. Very happy to join you today by video. I want to take a moment and tell you the story of how I first came to be here in Nairobi, Kenya. I'm sorry not to be with you today but some family circumstances have prevented me from traveling. Let me take you back to 12 years ago, when I was 21 years old and decided that I wanted to see the world. I grew up in Denver, Colorado. Growing up I never had the opportunity to travel. In fact, I lived quite a normal, American, insular life. But when I was 21 and went to college, I was so curious to see and understand what the world really looked like. This curiosity led me to Nairobi, Kenya, where soon after arriving, I was introduced to a young community organizer named Kennedy Odede.

Kennedy, whose story you'll hear in a moment, was an example for me of the type of change and local knowledge that can lead to a large-scale transformation. I wanted to become part of the

work that Kennedy was doing in his home town of Kibera. If you can imagine this with me for a moment. Kibera was as different as it could get from Denver, Colorado, my home. Kibera is about the size of Central Park but if you can imagine about a million people live in this space without access to consistent running water, healthcare, education, things that my whole life I had taken for granted.

Kennedy, as a local community organizer, saw both the challenges but also the potential, and I wanted to learn alongside him, to imbed myself in his movement, and to see what type of real, lasting change was possible.

The first time I saw Kibera, I remember just feeling so overwhelmed, and I thought about the accident of birth. How is it that some of us are born in places like Denver, Colorado, where others like Kennedy are born in Kibera? This question overwhelmed me. As I started to live in Kibera and become a part of the community, a story that Kennedy will tell you in a moment, I became even more determined to use what I came to accept as my accidental privilege, to make a tremendous difference and to use this privilege on behalf of others around the world.

So together for the last 12 years, Kennedy and I built and scaled an organization that today serves over 300,000 Kenyans in nine urban slums across the country. But this is just the beginning. Through this work and through my partnership with Kennedy, I've learned about the power of partnership and about the role that I could play to use the accident of my birth to learn and empower others around the world and to create long-term, scalable, sustainable, social change. Kennedy, do you want to tell a bit more of the story?

Kennedy Odede:

Thanks Jessica. Wow. I'm very humbled to be here and movements, all those kind of things. I feel like I'm more from the street. What really moved me? I don't know if not for my life experience I could be doing what I'm doing. I grew up in a big slum called Kibera, and sometimes it's all about where you're born that determines your future.

Growing up in Kibera, it was a tough life. I almost gave up. I remember that there was no food, violence, and feeling a second-class citizen, that I'm useless. At the age of 10, I did what other people do. I ran away from the house, and I became a street boy, very angry. I was eating from the garbage, using drugs, and I was lost. What is really interesting is that while I was in Kibera, I never understand the class as such, because the world was that small ghetto. If you have meat, for me, you are rich, and so many people went without food.

On the street, I'm like, wow, I'm seeing beautiful cars, but I'm sleeping outside. I'm using drugs. Then I got angry. The more of that anger, I became more desperate and gave up. As a young man and knowing that nothing will ever happen.

I remember a day that I stole one mango because I was very hungry, and mob justice, they almost killed me. That was the life. This kind of life is that I was ready to go to prison.

Sometimes life really pushes you so hard that you don't care. I loved that even the rich die. If I die, I'm like, you know? So you feel so much pain that you are hopeless.

I taught myself how to read because I saw other children going to school in black uniforms like they do in Africa. I became very angry that I also have to know how to read. I was collecting old newspapers, teaching myself. That's how I learned how to read and write. It was a very, very tough life, but something happened. I met a couple of priests who helped me get out of the street. In our parish, I came across a book of Dr. King, and to be honest that for me was the moment. I'm like, "Wow this story of this man resonate with me."

In America, black people, they are second-class citizen. They cannot do this. In Kibera, I felt the same. I couldn't go to the city. Every time, I couldn't go to those restaurants. If police kill us, nothing. But you can kill a child of a middle class, there's lawyers. You are like useless. What really poverty does to you is making you invisible. When you're poor, you have no dream. When you're poor, you feel that you have no voice, and it was a very, very tough life.

The story of Dr. King really made me so much hopeful like, this guy really fought for the country, for the community. He never gave up. What I did now is I started organizing. I started having a dream. I was around 15 years old so by then I was crazy, so my dream was to be the Dr. King of Kibera. Not of Kenya, but my small community. I got a job in the factory. I was earning one dollar for 10 hours. One day I come back home, my best friend has committed suicide. I'm like, we can't live like this. That man was really looking for me and I couldn't have time to meet him. Now life is tough.

That's the moment I ask myself, what will Dr. King do? I was very crazy in this kind of situation. I bought a soccer ball. I realize that the change for me, change will only come from the community. As my mom say that, "Whoever wears the shoes knows where it pinches." I realized that you know what? We can't wait. This is the moment that I want to turn my anger into something positive and I felt my belly.

I went back to the ghetto. I organized people with the ball and for Dr. King, I really did my research. For Dr. King, it was the church. It started from the church. The movement from the church became a bigger thing. What is our church in Kibera? What is that for us? We love playing soccer or football. We loved it. For me, that became a tool of organizing people in the community. We come together as young people and we talk about issues, women issues, sanitation, our rights.

Then what happened was that the idea of giving hope. That's why [inaudible] is called Shining Hope for Community. The movement was born. I had a very big dream, because what I've seen in the community is that people fly in. They do that on profit. Then, they go. Nobody really cares about the future.

Even the community themselves don't trust. They come in because there's money or there's something might be given. They don't own it. My agenda was that, people are like Kennedy.

Where will you get the money to run a non-profit? I'm like no. These are movement. A movement and a non-profit are different. In a non-profit you write proposal. You speak good English. You know how to pitch. You know how to use the data. You know how... It's a Western style system.

Forgive me, I'm sorry, but a movement comes like, enough is enough. I can't wait anymore. I don't know the danger. I don't know now how to measure MND, but enough is enough. So we came together. We were crazy. What made me so happy was the idea of hope in the community. People feeling like they own it. I joked by then. I said, "One day we're going to have our office from Kibera to New York." You won't believe this. Right now, I have a development office in New York.

Thank you. Then, in a movement, you have to look for what you are looking for. One thing that really made me so sad, every time I talk about my work, I couldn't understand their system, and I looked primitive. Because the movement was growing. We were really growing. I didn't understand how to. My dream, when I met Jessica.

Jessica is an interesting story. I didn't like Americans coming to my community. I'll be honest. It's true. I was this radical guy, who was like, change comes from the people, not outside. So now, this young lady from America, I don't know her name, 19 or 20, sent me an email. "Kennedy I like what you are doing, blah, blah, blah. I want to come." I remember I had a Yahoo. I used to check my email once in a month. I come from Kibera. I walk for two hours to the city. I didn't have my password. It was somebody else there who knew my email, my password.

So I read it, and I say, "I'm sorry. This is a movement. We don't take white people." Jessica, really I love her for that. She never gave up. She kept on writing back again. I'm checking this email every month, okay, just to let you know. "Dear Kennedy, I'm a different American. I believe in the movement like you, blah, blah, blah, blah." I'm like, what do I do now?

I said this, I said okay. Jessica, as I said, I don't take any other person. Listen, can you send us your CV or your resume. This one who's never been to school is asking for a resume. That's called confidence and dignity. Yeah.

Jessica, being Jessica, doesn't give up, sending me a resume to me. So I talk about movement, you have to have a team. I went through that resume, the CV, and we had to go vote. We were really amazing, how these young people could just come together.

My best friend was the head of the gang in Kibera. They used to tax people. What I did is that, I write on him. I went to him. His name was Government. In Swahili called Serikali, government. "They're killing us. They're going to kill you. They are killing us. Whatever you come out and start fighting on women issues, in the community, fighting the rape cases in the community, you'll be a hero. Or, you're going to face the bullets, because they are killing us." So thank God, Serikali listened, and joined the movement.

So we became so powerful. We went to the police. We are fighting for women's rights. Women were so happy, part of the movement, and I learned that wow, people are not bad, but the life pushes you in a corner. You have to find a way to survive. You have to pit your own system.

Having SHOFCO, George now is the director - his real name is George - of community relations. I love it. Anyways, Jessica comes to Kenya. Will the movement agree? Okay. This lady can come and she's going to come for one thing. She's going to teach us theater, how to write our stories, because for us, we didn't know how to do it.

She comes to Kenya, and by then I was working cleaning toilets in the city, a place called [inaudible]. That day, I wore my nice shoes and I had my brush in my pocket, you know? I meet Jessica at this stage. I really didn't think I was going to fall in love, to be honest with you. I was coming as a movement leader, to meet this American lady.

I come from the bus. She takes me for lunch, very interesting. This lunch, now I don't know what is called salad, you know? I think that's rabbit food, okay. Because I'm a man of pride, I'm like, the same. They bring me this rabbit food. I'm trying to eat it, swallowing down. I'm like, you know madame, I already ate, but I'm really hungry.

We became really good friends. I tell you too much story. Let me go to the movement, okay. Then, now, Jessica and I become very, very close. A little bit, I was falling in love, but I was very careful. You have to be a leader, you know, man of dignity.

Now, I did a lot of readings. I read a lot. She will tell you, when she came to my 10 by 10 room, I used to live in 10 by 10, in a box, and this side was full of books, Harry Potter, all the books, love books of America. I knew that if you tell a woman that I love you, as the way we do it in Africa, you look awkward and weird, yeah, through reading books. In my culture, you see somebody beautiful, you tell them, "I love you. You're beautiful," okay? Because I read about American culture, I was very careful, and I had to be a proud leader. I say, "I like you so much." So we become really close friend, you know.

That is something that I talk about, partnership. I knew that Jessica had what I don't have. I was more visionary, disorganized. I can make people cross the river, but Jessica was well-organized and understood the system. Let's be honest. You talk about building a movement in West Africa, there is a system. I won't lie to you. There is a system the way things happen. If you don't know that system.

In Kibera, we were very good in organizing. Jessica came from America, who is very good in all those proposal writing, those ideas. I told Jessica, my dream, Jessica, for me to be a leader and create this movement, I will need to have education. That's my dream. I will keep on serving and serving until I go to the city and to have an education.

Through [inaudible] I was able to get a scholarship to Wesleyan, with no post papers. That's what really makes me that, if you really believe in what you are doing, the door will be opened. My reason was not to be rich, not to be powerful, not to be a politician, but to be organizer. The people were being left to organize them. If I get education, I can speak in front of the- so that I can be in a place like this. You cannot just be here if you are, you know?

I was like, I want to be a voice. My sister is laughing there. I want to be a voice, but unless you are educated. I got a scholarship to Wesleyan. I knew it. I said to myself, that day I was flying. Now I have it. I am from community, and I'm going to learn the system. What else? I'll be able to pitch. I want to speak the language, and this movement will continue for long.

What I've learned is that, as leaders, you have to understand what you're not good at. Not everybody will be founders. Dr. King Jr, there's a guy I love called Marcus Garvey, there's other leaders, even Rosa Parks, all these women too, it's all they knew what they're good at. We hear all the great leaders, they're Mandela, there was [inaudible] all these people who are good at other things. You don't have to start something. You can be part of a bigger picture.

That's how Jessica and I, and I told Jessica, as a leader you have to understand that you are American, and you're coming into my community. There's a history. There's no trust. You have to win that trust. You cannot just be color blind. I told her that. She'll tell you. You have to know who you are. People are going to treat you differently. You have to know the power, so sad, that is happening in many countries, the power of just being white. Who say that? It's true, no? As you go to communities, know that. That's a symbol. We have to be open about these issues.

I remember when I was a kid. We used to be taken to other non-profits and be shown around, and be like "oh, look at these poor kids." After those people left, nothing happened to us. There's this dilemma that we have to really talk about. What happened is that Jessica was aware of that, that okay I'm a stranger here. I want to learn from this community. I told her, Jessica, as much as you are coming to teach us a lot of things here, you are going to learn a lot. That's what's called true partnership. We have been able to create this movement that now stands over 300,000 in Kibera.

Then later on something else happened that I want to share with you. I didn't want to do service delivery. We have a school for girls. We have a health clinic. We have clean water. Why? I felt that this is a couple years ago now, I felt that's the work of the government. But we did something very powerful. We showed the poor people, we show our community that, "Listen, this is clean water. This is healthcare. This is our school. Do you like it? The government can do that."

We started something called SHOFCO alumni network, organizing dwellers, looking for their rights and leaders, because what I've seen is that in Nairobi for example, 70 percent of the population live in informal settlements. What does that mean? The politician, they only come there during elections. We saw something is that the power is in informal settlements. They just don't know it.

If these people can just come during time for election, what if we can organize communities and to bring them anybody running for MP, to come and sit down and tell the community what their agenda is.

I've been really so much passionate doing that now. We are now in nine slums and the way we do it is that we have our own UN. What do I mean? Each women's group, youth group, garage, carpenters are in groups, and they send their representative to come for the meeting once a month, and talk about the issues in their community.

And there is a price to pay. People thought that as Kennedy, who came from poor family, going to America, when I come back, I shall be a banker, or I shall immediately go to do what? Run for office. I didn't do that. So I became a problem. The political class was not happy. They tried to kill me. My house, they sent two bullets in an envelope. You know with my wife, American, it was a really tough moment for us. They tried to shoot my car on the road.

I knew it, as a moment I'm building schools, doing this thing, but the moment we talk about real change in the community, there'll be a problem. If you don't face real challenges, still there's something not happening. When you tackle systematical issues in a society, that's when you're going to be targeted.

I have really seen that happening in the community. I'm now changing the idea of systematical change and giving power to the people. You know? Working up a movement. A movement is when people share the same collective action. I've seen what's happened in the community. I don't know what could have happened in my life, but I think that having Jessica as a partner really helped.

In movement, you need to look for someone who is not like you. I've learned that a lot. Something else, which I've been-- Coming from a slum, from a ghetto, it is challenging, being here, going to New York, and then going back. I try not to change. I try to remind them, I'm still one of them. I try to remind them, that I'm not better than them. They are the reason I am who I am. We've seen that in movements. There's jealousy. That happens when you try to show people how important you are, and not appreciating other leaders.

What I've learned is that I try to remind my community that whatever I'm doing is because of them. I was raised by a community. Although I was a street boy, I was raised by a community. I don't want to say much. I think there are some pictures, which I don't really... I think I want to stop there and have more questions. I know I've made you laugh. I've made you think.

Now, I'll make you ask questions. Yeah? I'm from the streets. I will just tell you the way it is, and share my story. Everyone has a story. My story is not special. I know my story resonates with your story. I also know very well that I could have never been in a place like this. I don't know how it happened, but sometimes it is possible. Thank you. That's my community. Okay.

Immaculate Kyamanywa:

Hello. Thank you so much for sharing your story. I'm Immaculate from Tanzania, so I can really relate to Kibera slums. In Kenya, we are neighbors. I know what really happens. I haven't been there yet but I know a lot of stories from Kibera, and I happen to know some people, like some young people who have different initiatives in the same area. I know one of the guys who has a movement called Dance for Change. I do not know if you know him, Solomon. I was interested to know if you work with these other groups of young people in order to bring change in Kibera slums or you probably work alone. At what moment do you guys come together to see what are the issues that you're trying to address and how do you strengthen your movements so that you get better results? Thank you.

Kennedy Odede:

Thank you. Can I answer that? Is that a question?

Olumide Idowu:

My name is Olumide from Nigeria. I want to ask concerning community engagement that you work on, what are the tools you're using engaging with the community because most of the time, I understand you can go to community with white people, they keep asking you, like they've given you some money. You're not giving us like a little. How do you engage? What are the tools you're using communicating with them to have effective?

Kennedy Odede:

I saw my sister there, and then I come to here. Right now, [inaudible] community is trying to bring change in Kenya, by working with other leaders. For example, right now the biggest thing is that the government. The government is everything. Let's not lie. The government has to be given pressure from the people. This is a group of other cities in Kibera. To be honest with you, [inaudible] now is the biggest in Kibera. It's really powerful because it's a grassroots organization started by a street boy, by a Kiberan, a kid who used to walk with no shoes. People have that connection.

Then for us, do the work, I know them, the team you talk about. We try to work with other leaders and I'm also doing something also by Daisy [inaudible] as a beacon of what they can be like, the committee organizers, because [inaudible] has really grown over the years. Other community members are looking like, can we also do the same thing. We work together with them.

Then brother, the idea of how to work with the community. What I love, the community is you have to be open. You have to understand the context. Most of the time, they don't say the truth. Forgive me, I don't want to be against our people. They don't say the truth to why. If I'm really poor, and I'm in a place of scarcity, and I did it, I apologize. You come and ask me, hi I'm from Canada, from America, do you want shoes. I'll be like yes, I want shoes. Do you want food? Yes. Because what has happened is that white has been really connected to charity. That's common. Every time they meet people, they are more like what are we going to get from you. What am I getting? You are here to have a lot of money to spend.

But when people feel it's their movement, and you tell them I'm here with our partner for our movement. The same way you [inaudible] them, is very important. You have to know how they think. When you are poor, like I said before, you want anything. Oh, community want this. That's really sad. How do you want this? I mean, until you go deep and deep.

What I've seen happening in me working with people, is that being honest. First of all, you tell people like listen, I believe you. I want you to be honest with me. Can this work? There is a student. This person is a supporter. He's a partner. He's going to leave, but I am with you here. If you say the truth from the beginning, it's really sometimes help a lot. But e cannot judge them. We have to understand why they think like that.

Now in Kibera, it's people's movement. I remember it's so crazy to share this story. I know about when I came from the states, and now I had some students to work for us in Kibera. It was really sad but also interesting. He was not talking about it. Can you believe they could be the mayor? The mayor hired white people working for us. Oh my god, what? The world had changed. For them, they're like wow. Americans can work for *us*. They never seen nothing like it before.

It's all about mental shift. When I went to Kibera, they wanted me to tell them stories about America. I'm like, you also have poor people there. They're like, what? They have projects. It's not called slums. It's called projects. People also struggle. It's all about color. Also, black people in America were very wealthy. We have to now tell the story, because in their idea in their head, they think of America and that's what they see American working in the community, money, because in them, America is money. Truth be told, not always the same.

So we have to share this real story that we see. America was built. America really went through a lot. People also struggle. People also suffer. They don't share that to our communities. The change really is when people own the idea. The question now is, how do you make the community to own it? We have to ask ourselves, how can I make my community to own it? Yes, from Uganda? I can feel, man.

Peter Agoos:
Kennedy, we have one question here.

Kennedy Odede:
Oh okay, then Uganda. Okay.

Georquel Goodwin:
My name is Georquel Goodwin. I'm a Hampton University student, finance major, political science minor, but we here in the US, we always do service trips over there, so I'm just trying to figure out how do we make more a systematic impact when we make those service trips and when we do those service events?

Kennedy Odede:

Thank you so much. I like that question you ask. We have to be careful. I think today is a day we speak the truth here. Am I right? We don't hide anything. There's something called white savior that's happening, the complex. The point is that, does that mean we don't want people to come to work with us? No. The point is very simple. Don't tell me you are coming to help. You are wrong. You think they can't help themselves? Let's start thinking of, what am I going to learn as American? I come from Virginia. I'm going to Uganda. What am I going to learn from the people? If you have that mentality, it changes a lot. If you have this thing, oh I'm going to help. I'm going to help those people, because the truth be told, they are helping you more.

I want to make you sad. Can I share with you my story, which makes me so sad in Kibera? I was so sad. These people come to my community. They spend two months. Next year they're at Harvard. I was in Kibera. They forget about us. It's gone. It's gone. They have a strategy. Yes, I want to apply to schools in the US. I'm going to go to Uganda. I went to Kibera. After those two months, are beautiful essays written, people at Yale, the university, don't kick me out, I swear. Anyway. What is that? There's something here. You learned so much.

Those who come to our community, most of the time, they end up not complaining. They end up appreciating life, because they learn from people who have nothing. What makes these people move on? Every time I go to Kibera, I learn a lot of the time. Wow, look at this. They don't want too much. They have stress. Everything's happening. Look how their resilience. What is that? That's why when I came to America, this is crazy, the first thing I love was the shower, which I took it for two hours, because I was like, oh my god, this is warm. Wow, and because I didn't have it. What I learned from Kibera was, appreciation. What many people freed from me was something important. I can help my food, can stay there for a while, wow, really. In Kibera, no.

So, my brother, it's all about what also are you going to learn. Let's be open about it. Then nobody's being helped. We're helping each other. Did I answer you? Thank you. I love this energy now. I feel the energy in the room, good. Then somebody there too.

Swarnima Shrestha:

Hi I'm Swarnima from Nepal. Thank you for a very interesting conversation. Just relating to what you just said and what he just asked, I wanted to ask, there's the concept that the developed world has to help the so-called developing or poor countries, and that one side is the donor and another is receiver, or in need of help, but actually like a recent study from Google Finance Liberty Institute, which is based in US, found that a lot of financial transfers, there's a bigger amount of financial transfer happening from the developing part, to the developed part, than the other way around. Actually, the countries that are helping us, the poorer side are probably taking back more.

We tend to feel that we're getting a lot of help, and we're so dependent and as he said, whenever a person from a developed country visits the communities, people have expectations, probably they will give us something. They'll fund our projects and things like that. While I believe that our countries are quite self-sufficient, if we manage our resources properly, how do you think can we break this cycle of dependency and utilize our resources more properly?

Kennedy Odede:
Okay.

Swarnima Shrestha:
Yeah thank you.

Kennedy Odede:
Thank you so much. If you really think of your iPhone. That's Africa. They know how to play with tax, these multinational companies. A lot is taken from Africa, but in raw material. The crucial thing is that we are all working.

The thing about it is that I think our leaders in Africa is the problem. The youth are ready. The youth are ready. The leadership is old, but their days are numbered. Their days are numbered. Some of them are scared. Africa is going in the hands of great leaders, very soon. It's happening slowly by slowly. Who knew Mugabe would go down? Who knew? I'm sorry.

These people have that colonial mentality. They still have the power that they were given. The young generation, the Africans in this room, that sit here, you can tell. Yeah? They are the future leaders. We have to really start empowering our communities and we have to give much on young generations. It's happening now, but it's going to change. Yes, then you. We are forgetting this side, yeah?

Christine Wachira:
Hi. I'm Christine, and I'm also from Kenya.

Kennedy Odede:
Yeah.

Christine Wachira:
Thank you for sharing this story. The question is, have you been able to collaborate with Nairobis? This is one part of Nairobi, but Nairobi is also a hub for so many international organizations. We have General Electric, we have Citi Bank, among many. It's also a hub for many startups, and it's also a technological city. It's also leading in Africa. Have you been able to connect with any of those other corporations to support this initiative, because I believe they do owe the city, they should actually assist in this.

Kennedy Odede:
Okay.

Christine Wachira:
Sorry, and I have a second question. You talked about the political class is old and they're aging and they're leaving, but that means that there will be a vacuum soon enough and if you and certain other young people are not motivated enough to run for office. It does not have to be the

presidential office. It can be even at your local-- like in Kibera, and you would gather the votes, and I'm sure people would support you. This is the change we are actually asking for, because then if we leave a vacuum, we will get other people who are not as motivated for change as possible. Would you consider running for office at some point?

Kennedy Odede:

Oh my god. Thanks so much. Question is that in Kenya now, there's something happening in Africa that I want to touch base on. There's a lot here, investment, do you know who owns one of those companies. I talk about Africa rising. Something really sad sometimes. Stop and think. The next question is, rising with who? Africa rising, and I love it, but I look at Kenya, you know, the poverty levels. There's a lot of challenges we are facing as a continent. Most of them, our brothers and sisters, they are going out of the continent. They are not even in the continent. I believe that my role is to inspire more leaders to come, who are going to run for offices in Kibera, wherever.

How do I work with the companies? Safaricom for example, what I learn is I don't want to come out as a charity. That's very interesting. Safaricom, they are a big company. They have M-Pesa, the money transfer. Bob, the CEO is now a friend. When I met him, I went to him and I said, "People in Kibera don't like Safaricom because of political thing. We have the people. We can do business together. What can you do, so that my community outreach can organize and support your work?" What I'm going to do now is, I'm looking at how you get platforms in these informal settlements more than charity, so that the companies, businesses can also see what they can get from that.

For example, I was working with Unilever who I know they say they care about the poor. I don't know the story there. But I know they have products for the people living under five dollars, three dollars. Again I said, can we talk? Can we work together? There's nothing for free. That's my thinking. There's nothing for free. It's business. We work with GE. They've brought some machines to the community, the clinic. Safaricom, Unilever, so I try to partner with them and to look at their business angle, and what the community is going to get. I think I answered that.

In terms of politics, you see people in Kenya, young [inaudible], people are really getting into office. I feel like we are ready. The thing is that almost 50 percent of the people in Africa are young people, so I think very soon they're going to take in positions, but we are ready.
Yes.

Joshua Eyaru:

Yes. Thank you Kennedy. My name is Joshua from Uganda. In 2017, I visited Kibera. I didn't come to help. That's the truth. We just came to learn from communities in Kibera to connect with everyone there, and then organizations. What shocked me is that within one day of the visit we had in Kibera, we met a lot of organizations like so many, that were all working in this community of Kibera. My question is like, what has been the impact of these organizations that have been in Kibera? Are we seeing Kibera slum transforming into a better lie in the near future,

because if there are so many organizations, we believe they are there for a common good, like yours. Do we see some change that's taking place in the lives of people in Kibera?

Kennedy Odede:

What happened is that in Kibera, being our home, being the poorest place in Kenya, really, it's tough. There are many NGOs that come in. We have a name for them. We call them briefcase NGOs. Really, you cannot see what they are really doing. That's when my passion really is at what we can do with the government and transform Kibera. What I'm doing now is organizing community and beyond, beyond, beyond [inaudible] delivery.

Our delivery was the way to show people like you can have clean water. I'm not a government. Look, we're having clean water. You can have healthcare. But the government can do that in a large scale. No? So there are many NGOs in Kibera, but we cannot see their impact. Yeah, so I agree with you on that.

Yes.

Daniela Fuentes Moncada:

Thank you. Thank you for sharing that story. My name is Daniela from Ecuador, and two really quick questions. First, what's the importance of art if any in the things you are doing in the community? For us, using art as a weapon actually has been really transformative. Then, if you could please elaborate in the difference you see between charity and empowerment?

Kennedy Odede:

Oh thank you. I think the best places on art that we find the artist is places that are invisible. For them, it's organic. The issue is the opportunity. Every day my life in Kibera, I met these artists having these great paintings. We have musicians. The challenge is that they can't go to the next step. I've seen art being used as a way of organizing. One of my friend called [inaudible]. He's amazing at doing that. I connect art to the communities that are invisible. They have sure a lot of talent.

In SHOFCO we have youth groups. We have some of the best artists. We work with them. The way I started my organizing work, apart from soccer, I used to do something called "ambush theater". I would come to people who are just relaxing, and we are going to scare them. Then we start performing on issues affecting the community. That's why I'm really a fan of art and artists. Yeah, I agree and say it's really, really important in my community. What they are lacking is there's so many of them, but they are lacking a system on how they can be empowered. Yes.

Dr. Collins Santhanasamy:

Hi Kennedy. I'm from Malaysia, and I did my medical school in Bangladesh. I'm working with a youth based organization that's very similar, because when I saw your photographs, we are also working in a slum, and we have a school, and we are trying to provide drinking water and also health projects in these areas. I just wanted to ask in terms of capacity building, from your experience, what capacity building programs have seen the best success or was the best kind of program for your particular community if any?

Kennedy Odede:

Thank you so much. Yeah. What I've seen as I do modeling, you can see there, but the thing I'd really say that when your work, when the community is able to own, we'll never be the success. How do you make your community own an idea? To make it that they own it?

For example, we have education for women. I'll be honest with you, Kibera when I said that school, people were mad at me, men. You can't have a school for women. You have to be smart. What I did is said, okay. We're going to have a school for women, but it's going to provide services for men. Is that okay with you? They're like done. You find a soft spot. You've got to empower women but don't let men aside. For our school to be built honestly, although they call me the mayor, it was tough. Men have to get something.

I said, okay, you're going to have shower that I got in America in the school compound. You're going to have clean water, and you're going to have a school, Kibera school for girls, which is one of the best schools now. Our students really did well on the exams in the newspaper. I think the message is that how do you get to the heart of the communities, by making them own it. Yeah. Yes.

Victor Anyebe:

Good morning. My name is Victor.

Kennedy Odede:

Where is Victor? Oh yes, okay.

Victor Anyebe:

My name is Victor. I'm from Nigeria. I worked in healthcare programs for quite a while. I like your model. I can see you're addressing education, health, water, and that's a lot of areas to work in. You've worked for close to 12 years. With all of the work done in Africa, you have reports coming out from Africa but mostly by foreigners. If you're searching for information about African work and stuff like this, it's reported by foreigners. Have you made efforts to do research and tell your story in terms of data and the progressive, marginal improvements you've been able to achieve over time, in publications around the world, so that you become a case story for other countries that are trying to address these same issues?

Kennedy Odede:

Thank you so much for that. Yeah, so in terms of the data, what you are doing in SHOFECO. Everybody has a card with their information, where they come from, from the clinic, or any services, so we are able to trace them and know how many employees we have. How many times did they use the library? We can do it. But I think now, we're in the next stage of how to publish it. We're not on that yet. It took over 10 years to be able to work on it. I'm looking for universities. I'm looking for people like you, who can really help me now, how do we use this African model to the world? I have that. We are working on that.

There's one last lady and then we go. Yeah.

Grace Ihejiamaizu:
Last question.

Kennedy Odede:
Yes.

Grace Ihejiamaizu:
Thank you Kennedy. I enjoyed your presentation. My name is Grace. I'm from Nigeria. We run a similar model to yours. We work with out-of-school youth, and we provide education services. I'm just curious. How do you leverage technology to do the work that you do? Do you introduce it to kids at that level and to what extent? What tools do you use and what can we learn from that?

Kennedy Odede:
Thank you so much. We teach our students recording. That's very important. I talk about the cards that everybody in the community who is using our services have this card that we can scan, to understand the impact of work, people that we are serving. I really believe in technology as a way to fight poverty. We try to use them. Thank you so much for that.

As I'm done now, I want to say one thing, then thank you so much. As we leave the room, think of your privilege. If you are in this room today, you have privilege. Just think of my story, of this young boy, with a soccer ball to transform the society. Ask yourself again, no proposal, nothing.

Look at your life. How much power you have and what are you doing on it, without complaining about money. Are you starting it and what is your dream? I hope my story is not special, but my story is to share with you how we all have a story that resonate to each other. Thank you so much.