

# THESE VITAL SPEECHES

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## HONORABLE MENTION

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"Elementary, Dear Data," by Julie Lasson for John C. Williams, President and CEO, Federal Reserve Bank of New York

"A Hydrogen Industry Fit for a King," by Paul Saville for Felipe Arbelaez, Senior Vice President, Hydrogen and CCS, bp

"Justice for Ukraine," by Ziya Smallens for Dick Durbin (D-IL), U.S. Senate Majority Whip and Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee

"Floor Speech: Senate Bill 7," by Scott Lepisto for Jenn Hill, Michigan State Representative

"Staying Ahead of Ready: Building an Aerospace and Defense Industry for the 21st Century," by Ben Morlock for Stephanie C. Hill, President, Rotary and Mission Systems, Lockheed Martin

"Made for This Moment," by Glen Slattery for Michael Johnson, President, Slavic Gospel Association

"This Is the Way," by Judy DeHaven for John C. Williams, President of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York

"Our Work Is Not Yet Done," by Judy DeHaven for John C. Williams, President and CEO, Federal Reserve Bank of New York

"A Better and Balanced Energy System for All," by Paul Saville for Ann Davies, Senior Vice President, Wells, bp

"What the F\* Is Happening to the Office?" by Meredith Glacken for Bob Fox, Founding Principal, Fox Architects, and Publisher, Work Design Magazine

"Curiosity Is the Muscle of Inclusive Leadership," by Teresa Zumwald for Charlotte F. Hughes, CEO and Principal Leader, Inclusive Leaders Group

"Threads of Courage," by Michelle Knight for Wopke Hoekstra, former Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs

"How Evolving Technologies Like Generative AI Are Transforming Energy," by Alexander Pelling-Bruce for Leigh-Ann Russell, Executive Vice President, Innovation & Engineering, bp

"Commemoration 'Februaristaking' (February strike 1941)," by Tobias Kwakkelstein for Marjolein Moorman, Deputy Mayor, Amsterdam

"This Shared Responsibility: Europe and Ukraine," by Ben Ray for Janez Lenarčič, European Commissioner for Crisis Management

"The Universe Inside of Us," by Karen Hattrup for Ellen MacKenzie, Dean, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

"Be Guided by the Truth, or Get Out," by John Patterson for Don Harmon, Illinois Senate President

"Let Us Be There for One Another, Unconditionally," by Annie Pijnenborg for Léon de Lange, Mayor, Landsmeer, the Netherlands

# GRAND AWARD WINNER

*"If You Want Peace, Prepare for War"*

By Eleonora Russell for Admiral Rob Bauer,  
Chair, NATO Military Committee



Delivered as Machiavelli Lecture,  
The Hague, Feb. 22, 2023

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Exactly one year and one day ago, I was standing in my office at NATO Headquarters in Brussels.

I was looking at a map of Ukraine that we had put up a few months before.

And I knew: tonight I will receive a phone call that the invasion has begun.

I sent everyone home early, because it was going to be a short night.

Quarter past four, I got the call.

Half past six, I was at headquarters.

And half past eight, there was a meeting of the North Atlantic Council where the first facts about the invasion were discussed.

Around the table there was a sense of dismay.

Not because we had not seen the invasion coming.

In the months before, intelligence had been shared on an unprecedented scale and NATO's intelligence picture was better than ever.

But dismay because in the course of one night, the course of world history had changed.

It is a tectonic event.

War is back on the European continent.

Just weeks before, we had sat down with Russia in a historic meeting of the NATO-Russia Council.

The Russian delegation was ill prepared and uncoordinated in its expressions.

The Russian statements deviated so far from reality that they were met only with surprise and calm contradiction by NATO Allies.

Russia claimed, among other things, that NATO was responsible for the break-up of Yugoslavia.

After which countries like Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia and North-Macedonia one by one asked for the

microphone to explain the real course of history....

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the run-up to 24 February 2022, diplomacy was conducted at all possible levels.

And while those talks were still being conducted... and all alarming intelligence reports were being denied by the Russian side... the first tanks drove across the borders of Ukraine.

The tracks of the T-72 and T-90 tanks crushed all the mechanisms of conflict resolution and international diplomacy we had built together over the past 70 years.

And soon these tanks, along with merciless shell and missile attacks, would wreak unprecedented havoc on sovereign, democratic Ukraine.

The Russian incursion ushers in a new era of collective defence.

Not just for Ukraine.

Not just for the entire NATO Alliance.

But for all free, democracies in the world.

The vibrations of the Russian tanks are felt - to this day - as far away as Japan and Australia.

For 20 years after the Cold War, NATO Allies tried to establish a balanced form of cooperation with Russia.

It was the first country to be designated a 'Partner for Peace' by NATO in 1994.

But ever since the war in Georgia in 2008, Russia has embarked on an increasingly steep downhill path.

And has now even reached the low level of abducting and mistreating Ukrainian children in a network of so-called 're-education camps'.

NATO Military Authorities have closely followed the Russian pattern of aggression.

In response, we have developed strategies for the collective defence of NATO territory.

To expect the unexpected.

Those strategies were sorely needed.

Because the fundamental difference between crisis management and collective defence is that it is not we, but our adversary who determines the timeline.

We can no longer decide for ourselves where and when we participate in a conflict... or what our 'level of ambition' is....

We have to prepare for the fact that conflict will present itself at some point.

And then we will either be ready....

Or not.

It requires a winner's mentality. Because in a war, there is no second place.

Collective defence requires a shift in mind-set that goes far beyond the armed forces.

Preserving peace... means: preparing for war.

Niccolò Machiavelli even goes so far as to say that you have to arm yourself even more strongly in peacetime than in war.

Both operationally and mentally.

Because that is when you have the time and space to make yourself stronger and to learn from history.

Time and space are two things Ukrainians absolutely do not have.

Since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, they have been in the highest state of readiness.

And, together with their armed forces, the Ukrainian population has developed a resilience that inspires the whole world.

There is hope.

David can indeed win from Goliath.

Resilience in Ukraine is an old man stopping a tank with his bare hands.

Is a woman smashing a drone with a jar of tomatoes.

Is a group of young women using Tinder to locate young male Russian soldiers.

Is a soldier who not only blows up a bridge, but also himself, to prevent Russians from entering his territory.

Are journalists who risk their lives to show the world the brutal reality of war.

And is now even a ballerina from the national opera who signs up to serve in the trenches....

A ballerina in the trenches... consider for a moment how far removed this is from your everyday reality.

For people in the military, war is a reality that we face much more often.

It is sometimes even claimed that we 'love it'.

I know that even after this lecture people will write that I am a war-monger.

Just as I was scolded for murderer in 1981 when I walked across the Dam Square in uniform on my way home.

I can assure you: soldiers do not like war any more than doctors like illness... or firefighters like fire.

Servicemen and women know far too well the devastation of war and violence.

In my 41-year career in the armed forces, I have seen it time and time again.

The grief and despair of losing a colleague.

Someone's father.

Someone's mother.

Someone's partner.

Someone's child.

The grief of a colleague who, due to a mental or physical injury, can no longer be in the military and pursue his/her life's purpose.

The grief and pain of people who have killed an opponent by order of the Dutch government, and have to live with that fact forever.

War equals devastation.

That is why the men and women who serve in the Armed Forces are ready to do everything in their power to limit war and preferably even prevent it.

Men and women in uniform are steeped in the realisation that war is very close.

But the average Dutchman or woman is not.

That is understandable.

Come May 5th, we will have the luxury of celebrating 78 (!) years of freedom.

And then we routinely say to each other "freedom is not to be taken for granted"... which we tend to forget as early as May 6th.

But in countries like Finland and Sweden... people do feel the threat of war.

In a matter of months, these countries have left decades of neutrality behind.

This was not an decision imposed by their governments.

But a bottom up movement, spanning all parts of society.

The Finns and Swedes realised that they could no longer rely on the guarantees of the international rules-based order.

Neutrality was no longer an option.

We too, the Dutch, are part of that international rules-based order.

Our entire prosperity is built on the guarantees of that system.

And on the assumption that if we trade with a country (like Russia) and are mutually economically dependent, we will never go to war with that country.

And the assumption that if we make a country rich (like China), the country will become democratic.

Neither assumption has proven to be true.

And our international rules-based order is under immense pressure.

So we Dutch cannot stand idly by, hoping we will never experience war again.

Machiavelli says in *Dell' arte della guerra* that if you observe the enemy's plans and strategic objectives well, and put a lot of effort into training your armed forces, you are in less danger and have more hope of victory.

In other words, you can only win a war if you prepare properly.

And to that I would add: you can even prevent war if you prepare properly.

This is more difficult for democracies than for autocracies.

To prevent war, you need deterrence.

Deterrence consists of military capabilities plus the political willingness to deploy those capabilities.

In an autocracy, deploying military capabilities requires only the decision of one leader... and an armed force or a group of mercenaries to implement that decision.

In a democracy, the deployment of military capabilities requires broad societal and political support for the fact that it is necessary and legitimate.

And so it should be.

But that means we cannot start thinking about a conflict only when it presents itself, as with crisis management operations and missions.

Collective defence requires us to think about different scenarios together in advance.

It requires us to set direction and stay the course.

The French political philosopher Raymond Aron warned just before the Second World War that democracies believe too much in the power of compromise and have forgotten that there are also countries and leaders who want to achieve their goals through brute force.

I myself still believe in the power of compromise.

But when the opponent aims the cannon of a tank at you, you need more than a cup of coffee, two chairs and good intentions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Collective defence is about thinking ahead.

And that doesn't just apply to deploying military capabilities.

Anyone who thinks we can get through this era with only additional investments in defence... will unfortunately be deceived.

Collective defence is about being aware of all your vulnerabilities.

We have to realise that the enemy will use anything to bring us to our knees.

Energy, food and migration are being weaponised by Russia.

What if our wind farms are bombed?

How have we set up our infrastructure in Europe?

Is it not very naïve to think that China will not use its influence over our infrastructure, through the purchase of ports, railways, highways and communication networks, to support Russia too?

On whom have we made ourselves dependent for our raw materials?

These are all uncomfortable questions that we prefer to avoid.

But true resilience means that national security must be factored into every major decision in our country.

Resilience is something that requires a whole society approach.

This includes the business community.

I have made the case several times in the past year for a fundamentally different approach to our defence industry.

The shortage of production capacity creates major risks to our national security.

Defence budgets within NATO have been increasing for eight years in a row.

But production capacity has not grown proportionally.

As a consequence, prices have gone up (sometimes by 300 per cent) and delivery times have moved considerably to the right.

I understand the desire for a long-term demand signal and the importance of stakeholder value....

But if the commercial interest always wins out over the collective interest... we end up knocking away the very ground on which our economic activities are built.

If production capacity does not increase dramatically in the coming year, we will not only be taking irresponsible risks with our own security, but we will also be unable to ensure that Ukraine wins this war.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have undoubtedly said things in the last few minutes that some of you disagree with.

I am not saying that I have all the answers, but I am convinced that these are issues we should debate and plan for.

What I ask of you is that we dare to debate difficult topics.

Discussions about security are often far too binary: you're either crazy or you're right.

But between crazy and right lies a world of nuance.

Four years ago on this very spot, then-ambassador Pete Hoekstra argued against Nordstream II.

And while we were busy living in our own information silo and truth bubble, we did not take his cautions seriously enough.

When I was Chief of Defence, I once hypothetically talked about reactivating conscription.

Because what do we do if we have too few professional soldiers to win the war?

Do we give up? Or do we create extra tiers of people who can defend our country?

How resilient is the Dutch population when it comes down to it?

How much stock have we built up to absorb shocks?

You don't have to agree with me. But let's exchange arguments. Think in scenarios. Weigh up risks. And then make choices. and stick to those choices.

It is time that we see the world for what it is.

Not for what we would like it to be.

War is back, whether we like it or not.

If you want effective deterrence... then you have to make decisions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If I ask you: what does NATO stand for?

Then you say: Article 5. One for all, all for one.

This is correct.

And I am proud of the fact that every day at NATO headquarters we can reach agreements with 30 countries by consensus on so many issues.

The solidarity in this 'Alliance against Autocracy' is unique in the world.

There are soldiers from Norway willing to die for the Netherlands.

Soldiers from Belgium willing to die for Bulgaria.

Soldiers from Portugal willing to die for Poland.

But remember: before Article 5 comes Article 3.

And in that article, all Allies promised to be able to defend themselves first.

We have lost sight of that article far too much.

We started to think of NATO as an emergency hotline.

We thought we could neglect national security and national resilience, because when it came down to it... there would always be someone else who would come to our rescue.

But NATO is not a hotline, it is what we make of it.

Quite literally, as the slogan goes: we are NATO.

And that means that in this new era of collective defence, every member state MUST first and foremost be able to defend itself.

And any promise to NATO that we break... poses a direct risk not just to our own security, but to the security of all Allies.

For those of you who are thinking: isn't this all getting way too expensive?

Then let me assure you: if we do not get our resilience and our deterrence right...

If we do not pull out all the stops to ensure that Russia loses this war...

Then not only Russia, but also China, and all other autocratic leaders around the world will learn a chilling lesson: that you can break international agreements with brute force.

Then our international legal order will be destroyed.

Then global uncertainty and instability will increase even further.

And the costs to national security will be phenomenally higher.

This new era of collective defence is all about the collective.

To fight for the we, in a world of me.

It is a lesson much older than medieval Machiavelli:

Preserving peace means... preparing for war.

# WINNER: AGRICULTURE

*“26 Years of Innovation: A Look Back From the Future”*

By Gregory Greenwell for  
Abdulrahman Shamsaddin, CEO, SABIC Agri-Nutrients



Delivered as Keynote Address, GPCA Agri-Nutrients Conference,  
Doha, Qatar, Sept. 18, 2023

Distinguished Guests,  
Friends and Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good morning! It’s a pleasure to be here.

Particularly nowadays, when technology and politico-economic circumstances seem to be changing so fast in so many ways, a conference like this one is most welcome. It gives us all a chance to take stock, compare notes, exchange ideas, make contacts.

So I’m thankful to the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association [GPCA] for making this conference possible. And I’m honored to be speaking to you all from the podium this morning.

I intend to talk about the innovation our industry urgently needs, but I would like to approach the topic in an unusual way: by looking at the current reality from the perspective of an imaginary future...a look back from the future, so to speak.

I would like you to imagine with me an idealized, yet realistic, world of 2050. This future world is idealized in the sense that its agriculture industry adequately feeds some 10 billion people, emits very few greenhouse gases, and preserves biodiversity.

But this future world is also realistic in that it still grapples with the environmental ills of the present day: rising average temperatures, changing weather patterns, and degraded soils.

Can you imagine such a world? Be bold. Don’t limit your imagination to the familiar ways of manufacturing and farming, some of which have changed little over the past 60—if not 600—years.

## More Food With Fewer Carbon Emission

This future world would have to produce substantially more food from roughly the same amount of land to feed a larger population with drastically reduced greenhouse-gas emissions.

Now, with that future world in mind, I ask you:

- What kind of technologies would fertilizer manufacturers be using?
- What strategies would agricultural companies and farmers be following?
- And, given these technologies and strategies, what business models would increase the economic attractiveness of farming while keeping its value chain viable?

My little amusement has a purpose. It focuses attention on what the real world of 2023 lacks that a world of 2050 could have.

When I try to envision the ideal technologies of 2050, I put sustainable fertilizers at the top of the list. By “sustainable fertilizers” I mean fertilizers that outperform present-day fertilizers in terms not only of greenhouse gas emissions but also crop yield efficiencies.

And when I envision the ideal farming strategies of 2050, I see farmers no longer making decisions according to custom, rules of thumb, or gut feeling. Instead, their decision-making is always close to optimal, based on near-real-time data and the hidden patterns in those data that only artificial intelligence can discern.

Finally, I can envision the farmers of 2050 being officially credited for the carbon-retaining capacity of their cultivated land. They would sell not only their harvests but also their carbon credits on the market!

If you agree that these figments of my imagination are in fact worthy of existence, then the question for us is: How could our industry make them real?

## Accelerating Innovation

The answer, I’m convinced, is innovation. We must step on the accelerator now to put some momentum behind our industry’s research and development programs. And we must keep the pedal on the floor for the next 26 years.

I believe that there has been a historical lack of investment in innovative technology in our industry. Certainly, our industry’s R&D expenditure has been lower than that of other key industries on which modern society depends.

Not surprisingly, no real breakthrough innovations have been achieved since the 1960s, when the current manufacturing processes for phosphate fertilizers were developed. As a result, for the last 60 years or so, our industry’s technological advancement has been incremental.

I believe that we have to make up for this neglect if we want to realize an idealized world by 2050.

## Education, Entrepreneurship & Cooperation in the Digital Age

Fortunately, we live in the digital age. There are already a wide variety of electronic devices available that can automatically measure, transmit and process the data that influence the dynamics of our industry—from weather forecasts to commodity prices. Some of these devices are so cheap and compact that farmers in a field almost anywhere on earth can use them to

optimize decisions regarding not only the cultivation of crops but also the selling of the harvest. This is precision farming, and it is the future.

This digital technology is already being applied on farms, but so far they represent less than a third of all arable land. We're going to have to do better if we're going to make the ideal 2050 world come true!

Precision farming will have to grow at least 10% per year between now and 2050. So there's a lot of money that could potentially be made in this growing market. I'll come back to this point. First let me say something about how such growth rates can be achieved.

If we're serious about accelerating the growth of precision farming, then a crucial requirement that we should address is the education and training of the next generation of scientists and engineers. After all, it will be up to them to drive R&D forward.

Local talent-development programs must therefore be designed to supply a future-ready workforce with the right skill set to manage low-emission production processes and to market greener products. That's why I'm encouraged to see how GPCA engages university students from the region and provides opportunities for them to gain exposure in the global chemical and agri-nutrient industries.

Commercial innovation also requires a culture of entrepreneurship. For that reason we must additionally create industrial ecosystems in the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC], focusing on those sectors that serve the value chain of our products: not only manufacturing but also agriculture, transport, food, and waste management.

Leaders in the GCC agri-nutrient business have to think up new ways to bring innovation and entrepreneurship together with capital to develop and implement novel technology—whether through venture-capital funds, patent-licensing agreements, or university-research sponsorship.

## **New Business Models Along the Value Chain**

Let me now change tack and speak about the implementation of innovative technology.

Most of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals—including the elimination of hunger, the attainment of carbon neutrality, and the reversal of biodiversity loss—apply most urgently to countries that are still developing the physical and social infrastructure for a growing urbanized population. This has implications for us.

It means that we have to reach out to the main actors and stakeholders in these countries and develop new modes of co-operation. We can no longer develop products and services from afar.

That is why SABIC Agri-Nutrients, for example, recently acquired a 49% stake in the ETG Inputs Holdco. In sub-Saharan Africa, ETG is one of the main blenders and distributors of fertilizers, seeds, and crop-protection agents. SABIC hopes to use ETG's knowledge to inform its development of agricultural products that are better suited for the African farms where they are applied.

We must also align with non-governmental organizations and global industry associations to set ambitious but realistic targets for the world.

Take biodiversity, for example. We need to collectively figure out how to report our progress in reversing the loss of biodiversity in ways that make practical sense not only to us in the industry but also to government regulators and non-governmental environmentalists.

Of course, while all this multidisciplinary, cross-sectoral, international collaboration is taking place, we have to keep our value-chain links economically viable. We cannot help save the world if our agri-nutrient industry dies!

Nor do we want farmers to be worse off. Indeed, let's never forget the central role of farmers as we expand and strengthen our business relationships up- and downstream from them. Ultimately, all our grand plans may come to naught unless farmers are brought

fully on board. And that can be facilitated if we make it clear to them that they stand to gain higher incomes by collaborating innovatively too.

I believe that the more efficient our industry is at creating long-term value for farmers, the likelier it is that future generations will be well fed and healthy; that the post-industrial global warming will be kept below two degrees; and that the planet's biodiversity will be preserved.

## **An Urgent Call to Action**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We can bring an idealized world of 2050 into reality by whole-heartedly embracing innovation and collaboration over the next three decades.

We must all work together with our stakeholders on innovation programs at the local, regional and global levels. Up and down the value chain, we must encourage the exchange of know-how, the securing of financing, and, simply, a willingness to change.

If we do these things, then I think it's entirely possible for us to increase nitrogen use efficiency by 25%, reduce the greenhouse-gas emissions of ammonia manufacture by 75%, and stop biodiversity loss.

Now, you may be tempted to rank collaborative innovation low on your priority list. You probably have 2023 foremost on your mind, and 2050 is the next generation's concern. In any case, this sweeping innovation-driven transformation seems daunting, particularly when applied at a global level.

But the agri-nutrient industry already has taken some steps in the right direction.

Working with Saudi Aramco, for example, SABIC Agri-Nutrients has produced and delivered batches of urea fertilizer with hardly any net carbon emissions.

We have also successfully come up with an advanced fertilizer/nutrient formulation that results in 18% higher yield and between 12% and 40% improvement in various other crop-growth parameters. But what's most

impressive is that this level of performance was achieved with 25% less use.

These success stories may seem like mere baby steps on the 26-year journey to 2050. But they should encourage us to take ever bigger steps at an ever-faster pace so that we accelerate the innovation-driven transformation of our industry.

The agri-nutrient industry might take inspiration from other global industries that have undergone top-to-bottom transformations in a couple decades—telecommunications, for example. Need I remind you that 26 years ago there were no smartphones?

The point is that we cannot passively wait for 2050 to arrive. We

need to act here, and we need to act now.

In doing so, we'll be laying the foundation for a GCC agri-nutrient industry that can make a profitable business out of helping feed the world, tackling climate change, and restoring natural ecosystems—all by 2050.

Thank you for your attention.

## WINNER: ASSOCIATIONS

*"We Make Certain"*

By Jessica Mancari for Susan K. Neely, President and CEO,  
American Council of Life Insurers



Delivered at the ACLI Annual Conference,  
Washington, D.C., Sept. 28, 2023

Good morning! What a pleasure to be together and welcome you to our nation's capital once again.

Before we begin, I want to take a moment to extend our gratitude to someone whose leadership has taken us the extra mile—our Chairman of the Board, Andy Sullivan.

Many may not know, but Andy stepped into the role of Chairman a year earlier than was anticipated. He never skipped a beat. Andy's personal connection to our advocacy mission was on display. He walked the halls of ACLI and inspired our staff with stories of purpose. He walked the halls of Congress and inspired Members of Congress on the powerful work of this industry.

Andy leads with a measured resolve that has advanced industry dialogue and preserved the unity that is vital to our success.

Andy—thank you for your leadership and service to this industry. And thank you for the invaluable counsel you provided to the ACLI team and me. We appreciate you.

You learn very quickly in the world of Associations that you cannot be effective without engaged leadership. We are so fortunate at ACLI to have leaders that engage and do so proactively. Our incoming chair Paul Quaranto is no stranger to proactive leadership,

and we're looking forward to working together with him.

As we come together as an industry this week, we do so with a landscape ahead of us that is not easy to traverse. It's fraught with political headwinds, macroeconomic ebbs and flows, and cultural shifts.

But no one is better prepared for that landscape than us—who better to navigate uncertainty and manage risk?!

Today I want to talk about that landscape, the risks it involves for our industry and ACLI, and how we—as your trade association—continue to build on our already strong advocacy capability for now and in the long term.

### **Risk and Challenges in the Insurance Industry**

For over a century, this industry has been a pioneer of financial innovation. You've shaped the modern retirement system, maneuvered through changing regulations, explored new markets, and launched new innovative products that address the needs of modern family structures.

Change is constant, and we are not strangers to it. You earn your stripes as an 170 year-old industry by being self-aware, looking ahead and addressing risks in new ways.

Today, you are taking on digital transformation, climate change and disaster relief, investments, and the demographics of the 100-year life. You are grappling with the potential and challenges of AI technology and how it will shape claims, distribution, and underwriting processes to enhance customer experience while managing risk effectively.

You are leading in a rapidly evolving labor market, finding ways to retain and motivate a modern workforce. You are recruiting a workforce with the best mathematical, actuarial, and technical experts who also care about mission and purpose.

You are expanding digital capabilities to meet consumers where they are ... and you're equipping the agent force with tools to reach modern consumers.

And we know, because we work with you day in and day out, that you are addressing these realities, not because they are trendy—but because they are trending. And addressing them is necessary to success.

There is no better industry to dissect trends than one that is long-term focused at its core. And through your smart planning, you are continuing to help customers fortify their lives through life insurance, retirement savings, annuities, long-term care insurance, short-term disability income



insurance, and supplemental benefit insurance—just as you have done for a century and a half or more.

We are not a risk averse industry. We are a risk aware industry. We prepare so people can face the risks of life head on.

## Risks and Challenges in Politics

The same is true for us as your trade association. Like you, ACLI is studying trend lines and assessing political risk.

There are many political forces at play that connect directly to our advocacy. Here are three that have our eye.

First, the typical factors that have driven politics and elections have been upended.

Culture wars continue to dominate the political landscape. It's challenging to engage in productive policy discussions when the focus remains on choosing sides.

Many voters believe that the American Dream is no longer attainable, and that government is not working for them ... or anyone. This sentiment is fueled by a growing economic and opportunity divide.

Education has become a dividing line in political affiliation. Progressives tend to have an edge with college-educated voters. Conservatives have advantage with non-college educated voters, including in-roads with Black and Hispanic non-college voters.

America's suburbs are more diverse, and they are more than ever the new ground zero for presidential elections.

The educational sorting... the geographic shifts...the economic changes have reshaped the political landscape.

The majority of states are no longer politically competitive. That means the battleground states in the middle now hold the key to the 2024 presidential election.

Second, we're facing unprecedented levels of hyper-partisanship. Decades of political science trends have shown that while constituents disapproved of and criticized Congress as a whole, they would support their own Representative—if he or she was "bringing home the bacon." Not today. Trend

lines show that people are more willing to vote for their political party, in spite of the results the candidate from the opposed party might deliver.

As an industry who serves all people, regardless of political ideology, our mission to preserve our bipartisan brand is more essential—and more difficult—than ever before.

Third, our digital world has fueled a shift to nationalized politics. Policymakers from the same political party... regardless of whether they are state or federal...borrow ideas, soundbites, and narratives. State politics are no longer confined within their borders.

What emerges in Virginia can appear in Iowa and Oklahoma. Or what appears in Connecticut can emerge in Illinois or California. Add to that, the average tenure of an insurance commissioner today is only three years. That makes it easier for aggressive Commissioners to take an action that can ripple across state lines quickly.

## Putting Our Powerhouse Trade Association to Work

Just as you are adapting to the new business realities and accounting for trends, we are doing our own evaluation of these political realities.

From the beginning, ACLI has been in the business of building strong relationships. We've been carrying the message of this industry to policymakers. That's not new. That's effective lobbying. And we do a damn good job of it!

Five years ago, I told you we would raise our game. Our goal was to take our trade association from an 8 or a 9 to a 10.5 in terms of our risk awareness, preparation, and powerhouse status so we could brace any storm and navigate the choppy political waters.

Together, with the support of our Board and the involvement of many of you in this room, we have done that.

Our champion building and policymaker education is best-in-class. We are bringing ideas to the table. Policy leaders see us as solutions-oriented. They are calling us to the table.

Our grassroots network continues to outpace and outperform among the top trade associations. We have 150,000 permanent members of our Protecting Every Future community. These people care about financial security enough to send texts and letters to their elected officials. Can I tell you something? 50% of that community has acted more than once on issues we care about.

That level of engagement blows past benchmarks. That means they are committed, engaged and making a difference.

Our collaboration with our industry family is stronger than ever. We lock arms with NAIFA, Finseca, and IRI and go forward with a consistent message: we are FOR family financial security.

Here's an example. A few months ago NAIFA's Diane Boyle organized the first-ever fly-in of all-women NAIFA agents. And 14 of those women raised their hand to share their story on camera at ACLI to tell the good work they do to help people live better lives. And now, as we battle it out on the DOL fiduciary rule, each of those agents is on the front lines sharing what is at stake. That's a powerful message from powerful messengers.

We're bringing data to Capitol Hill and state capitals. We have the numbers behind why good policy matters. Through our research analysis, we give policymakers tools to bolster their problem solving. We did it when we demonstrated how many people would benefit from SECURE and SECURE 2.0 that were signed into law.

We did it to show the shattering effects of the DOL fiduciary regulation. Through consumer research, we showed how consumers respond to life insurance applications, so we can better advocate on issues like algorithmic accountability. Data speaks, and we've got it.

We're bringing the conversation to the Kitchen Table. Our video series continues to rally policymakers and community groups around common challenges they are trying to solve. Did you know an episode we recorded with Senator Casey and the National

Disability Institute brought in over 1 million views? Another episode with MANA, a prominent Latino organization, is nearing 2 million. That's modern advocacy.

We have a strong unified message. We have a rock-solid industry story, built not on assumptions, but on actual data and real-life proof. Just look at the global pandemic. We paid out \$100 billion in life insurance benefits in 2021. We were there for people and our country in the darkest hours.

We've localized our impact by showing how our investments benefit local schools, roads, healthcare facilities, housing, and more.

We are resilient. Look no further than the 15-year low interest rate environment. This industry navigated that with aplomb. For 9 of those years, the Federal Funds rate was almost zero. For a highly regulated industry reliant on corporate bonds and mortgages, this is noteworthy.

We have earned our seat at the table—AND we are using it.

### **The Next Era in Powerhouse**

Our story is needed more now than ever. With financial security as our core business, we fight:

...to safeguard and expand access for all Americans to protect the people they love.

...to address anxieties about financial shocks through all stages of life.

... to meet the moment for community strength every day as a major source of capital with \$7.9T invested in the U.S. economy.

...to stand strong when our nation is challenged.

No matter what is thrown our way, we can move forward with certainty because we know we will rise to any challenge. Our story is powerful and the proof is there.

And just as you are constantly innovating to make sure your products are the most accessible, most efficient, most effective that they can be, we are doing the same.

In order to maintain our 10.5 status in this crowded, noisy, competitive environment, we have to keep getting better.

We are elevating partnerships. We're reaching beyond the borders of our industry family to build coalitions and alliances that extend to community groups. Financial issues touch almost every person and family. We are working with community groups to find where the strength of our missions intersect. These partnerships are the cornerstone of future advocacy. They maximize our influence, and touch lives and communities in meaningful ways.

We are mastering our message. Five years ago, we set out to be known more for what we're for than what we're against. The good news is that, for those who hear our story, the more they understand and believe in what we do for society. Our reputation among policymakers is higher than ever.

The challenge is market penetration. The competition for attention in Washington is fierce. To break the sound barrier, we're embarking on the next phase of research and analysis. We are building understanding about

what messages stick and what economic data is useful to policymakers.

We're staying ahead of the curve by refining the advocacy toolbox. We're preparing not just for today, but through 2025 and beyond. The regulatory and policy landscape is evolving, but we're stocking our toolbox with strategies and resources that will give us the edge. We are resolute in our commitment to these efforts.

### **Closing**

There is uncertainty in the economy—will there be a “soft landing” or not? Will rates increase further? Will unemployment remain low? How will commercial real estate fare in a post-COVID environment?

There is uncertainty in innovation—how will AI fit into everything? Where is the next digital crisis?

There is uncertainty in politics—what will happen in the 2024 elections?

Nobody knows the answers to these questions. In fact, uncertainty is life.

But do you know who is the best equipped to manage uncertainty? The life insurance industry.

From this industry's perspective, we are in the business of managing risk and uncertainty.

From this association's perspective, there is no better story to tell than that of a successful, long-term oriented industry as the answer to uncertainty.

We bring CERTAINTY to life.

We make certain...families thrive, communities thrive, businesses thrive, this country thrives.

Thank you.

# WINNER: BANKING AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

*“Anniversary of a Financial Crash: Not a Celebration, but a Moment to Reflect”*

By Anson Purdy for Rohit Chopra,  
Director, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau



Delivered at the Better Markets Conference,  
Washington, D.C., Sept. 13, 2023

Fifteen years ago, in mid-September, Lehman Brothers collapsed, and the financial system crashed. Troubles in the United States mortgage market infected the entire globe, and American families and businesses lost trillions of dollars and experienced an incalculable level of pain. The story is not just one of an out-of-control financial industry, but it is also a story about a series of the worst failures by regulators in modern history.

This anniversary is not a celebration, but a moment to reflect. In my remarks today, I want to first dive a bit deeper into the collapse of Lehman Brothers. I then want to share a few details on post-crisis reforms, including the establishment of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and how consumer protection is more than its name suggests—it is, in fact, a pillar of ensuring stability in the entire financial system. I will highlight that fact by discussing how the consumer protection reforms now in place may have been able to prevent much of what tipped the globe into the Great Recession. I'll then move into some unfinished business from the post-crisis reforms. I will conclude by discussing an impending threat, including the upcoming Supreme Court case involving the CFPB.

The views I express today reflect the views of the CFPB, and do not necessarily reflect those of any other part of the Federal Reserve System.

The story of Lehman Brothers often sounds complicated, but at its core, it's a story about one of the financial products that literally is closest to home: residential mortgages.

For a long time, Lehman Brothers, like other Wall Street firms, had a profitable business in buying up mortgages

and reselling them on the secondary market. In 1997, the company became one of the first Wall Street firms to move from just buying and selling mortgages to originating them. And they moved into the subprime origination market with their purchase of BNC Mortgage—a nonbank lender—in 2000.

Lehman Brothers blew up in spectacular fashion for many reasons, but I'll highlight a few of them. First, it relied heavily on short-term, often overnight, funding that looked a lot like the deposits that banks fund themselves with. But these deposits did not have insurance, access to the Federal Reserve's Fed-to-bank lending system, nor the safeguards that come with being a chartered bank. Instead, Lehman Brothers operated like this—imagine taking a mortgage out on your house every morning, with the expectation you would pay it off by midnight—every single day. That's what Lehman Brothers was doing to stay afloat.

Second, the firm relied excessively on borrowed money and didn't have enough of its own skin in the game. In November 2007, for every \$1 of its own money available to absorb losses, it had borrowed \$30.

Finally, it originated, packaged, distributed, and held high-risk subprime mortgages that inevitably nose-dived in value.

Within Lehman Brother's origination business, there was little concern given to homeowners' ability to repay, no concern given to the day those homeowners could no longer meet monthly payments, and little concern given to the pensioners and retirees who had been led to believe had their money safely invested in securitized and bundled mortgages.

As one of Lehman Brothers's own lawyers put it, we simply “expected the Fed to save Lehman.” And as Lehman Brothers' CEO, at the time of the collapse, Dick Fuld, said, “Until the day they put me in the ground, I will wonder” why the federal government didn't bail us out. Under such a belief system, there was no need to seriously worry about risk management nor to take the “voluntary regulation” system that existed at the time.

The bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers marked a watershed moment in the 2008 financial crisis, as public confidence evaporated, markets plunged, and other firms fell like dominos.

One key lesson learned from the crisis was how consumer protection is foundational for the stability of the financial system. It is safe to say that it was the failure of consumer protection safeguards that led to the collapse of the U.S. financial system and global economy.

It was that lack of a consumer protection focus that enabled Wall Street's shadow firms, banks, and independent lenders to undermine the mortgage system. Consumer abuses played a starring role, and there was no agency truly accountable for it.

Lenders were able to approve mortgages for families that they either knew could not repay or they could just take mortgage brokers' word that homeowners could repay. Those actions are the base of the 2008 crisis.

From there, financial institutions were able to make, buy, and sell mortgage securities they never examined for quality or ability to repay. Oftentimes they knew they were trading in junk securities, but they knew investors would just blindly listen to credit rating agencies that also were not

concerned about actual calculations of risk.

It can be easy to fall into the trap of thinking the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau only matters for the family that could lose their home or the person getting their car repossessed or the student taking out a loan to finance their education. However, the consumer financial protection laws enforced by the CFPB serve as catalysts for long-term economic growth, and defend against the buildup of systemic risk—just like the buildup of risky subprime loans.

That's why the CFPB is not just looking out for consumers, but it is ensuring that risks to consumers do not spread and infect entire markets or economies.

Back to Lehman Brothers. A Lehman Brothers of today would face the series of safeguards mandated by Congress and implemented by the CFPB. Importantly, its nonbank mortgage subsidiaries would need to operate under the exact same strengthened mortgage rules as chartered banks and credit unions.

One of those reforms was a ban on mortgages where the lender did not assess a borrower's ability to repay. The CFPB implemented a set of standards that mortgage lenders follow to stay in compliance with this prohibition. Given that some lenders used to be able to profit even when setting borrowers up to fail, this would reduce defaults in the system.

A CFPB assessment of the qualified mortgage and ability-to-repay rule found approximately 50 to 60 percent of mortgages originated between 2005 and 2007 that experienced foreclosure in the first two years after origination were mortgage loans with features that the rule would have generally eliminated, restricted, or otherwise excluded from the definition of a "qualified mortgage." In other words, most of the mortgages that comprised the basis of the 2008 crisis would never have been approved.

In addition, banks and nonbanks today that acted like Lehman Brothers would be subject to state action. Many

state regulators and attorneys general had been sounding the alarm for years and years before the 2008 financial crisis, but were consistently rebuffed by the federal Office of the Comptroller of the Currency. Not only did the leadership of the OCC fail to take appropriate action at the federal level to check egregious risk-taking and predatory lending behavior, it went so far as to hit delete on state laws designed to protect families from dangerous mortgages by using its abusive preemption policy.

The Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission revealed how another federal regulator, the Office of Thrift Supervision, engaged in race-to-the-bottom regulation, marketing its lax oversight as a feature to attract more fees. This "clientele" theory of regulation didn't end well. By November 2008, the FDIC would seize three banks supervised by OTS and three other supervised banks would sell themselves to avoid failure.

Post-mortems of the crisis also revealed how the Federal Reserve Board of Governors failed to use its own tools to stem the flow of toxic mortgages. It acted too little and too late.

All this was allowed to happen because consumer protection was not considered a necessary pillar of financial stability. And the results of that choice are stark: more than 2.3 million properties went into foreclosure in each year between 2008 and 2010. The Great Recession ended up costing every single American \$70,000 in lifetime present-value income.

Better Markets' own aggregate analysis found that four years removed from the 2008 crisis, there was an excess of 12.5 million people out of work and there were 46.2 million people in poverty—the highest number from the previous 50 years.

Many of us know that if the CFPB existed two decades ago, the factors that led to the Great Recession would have been mitigated early on.

I have discussed how the CFPB has changed the regulatory system, but I also want to mention a couple of areas where more must be done to make those words in the statute a reality.

First, open banking and personal financial data rights. A key priority for the CFPB is to help accelerate the shift to open banking and payments in our increasingly digital world. Over time, this can help people get paid faster, access more attractive rates on deposits and loans, switch more easily, avoid intrusive surveillance, and minimize the consequences of inaccurate credit reporting. This can also create a more resilient and dynamic financial system. We will be proposing rules next month to implement a dormant authority under Section 1033 of the Consumer Financial Protection Act to advance these goals.

Second, amid yet another series of emergency bank mergers, the biggest financial institutions have only become bigger. JPMorgan Chase's acquisition of First Republic has led to significant frustration within the industry.

An important part of the financial crisis response was the 2010 amendment to the Bank Merger Act that added a new financial stability analysis to the agencies' bank merger review process. After collecting comment and assessing current practices by the agencies and the Department of Justice, it is clear that the merger review process is a double whammy of dysfunction: failing on analytical rigor and failing on process. Expect more on this front so that we can ensure merger review respects the law and is grounded in market reality.

Third, we need to ensure that the so-called "living wills" of large financial firms are not just fairy tales. After the experience with Silicon Valley, Signature, and First Republic—banks that are a fraction of the size of Wall Street giants—many experts continue to question whether the largest financial firms can go through the bankruptcy process without creating chaos in markets or requiring a string of bailouts. The experience with the government-facilitated Credit Suisse-UBS mega-merger unfortunately provides even more evidence of this concern.

Fourth, too-big-to-fail shadow banks did not magically disappear after the

collapse of Lehman Brothers. Yet there is not a single shadow bank today that faces the enhanced financial stability safeguards envisioned by financial reforms, which are supposed to be complementary to the stronger consumer rules put in place. The Financial Stability Oversight Council is taking initial steps to restore its credibility. Congress did not want his body to be a book report club, but instead serve as a strong bulwark against threats to the financial system from firms and activities operating outside of the traditional banking system. The FSOC is currently reviewing comments on a proposal to reinvigorate this systemically important shadow bank designation authority.

Fifth, uninsured short-term funding instruments outside the core banking system—that look and feel like deposits—often fuel shadow banks and make them risky to consumers. The law provides the authority to place stronger protections on risky payment, clearing, and settlement activities. Regulators must carefully review whether this is

an appropriate tool to address the risks posed by new forms of money, like uninsured balances on popular non-bank payment apps, coins minted by Big Tech and other firms, and other pockets of short-term funding.

And there’s a whole lot more.

Right now, families are facing an uncertain future. As many of you are aware, the CFPB is facing a challenge to its constitutionality, and in a few weeks the Supreme Court will hear a case reviewing a decision from Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Vacating or calling into question the CFPB’s past actions and rulemaking could be destabilizing, as the agency has issued more than 200 changes to the rules, many of them required by Congress, implementing laws such as the Truth in Lending Act, the Fair Credit Reporting Act, and the Electronic Fund Transfer Act. These rules affect the way millions of people borrow and send trillions of dollars every year, and uncertainty could have real consequences.

The rules administered by the CFPB, and other financial regulators, are crucial for the stability of the financial markets and of household finances, and questions about those rules and the ability of markets to adapt to future challenges would raise significant concerns for the stability of the nation’s financial system.

If the past fifteen years have taught us anything, it is that the stakes for our financial system, economy, and society are too high for consumer financial protection to recede into the background.

The recent bank failures, likewise, demonstrated that financial executives continue to place bad bets, and the public has to clean up the mess.

Consumer financial markets need enforceable bright lines, and consumers need to know there is someone looking out for them. Despite threats to the CFPB, we are going to continue doing our work, and ensuring markets work for families, consumers, and law-abiding businesses.

Thank you.

## WINNER: EDUCATORS

*“Fun Over Fear With AI in Higher Education”*

By Michael D. Johnson and Joe Adams for Michael D. Johnson, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, UCF

Delivered at the University of Central Florida, Sept. 25, 2023

Thank you, Tom, for those remarkably kind words, and let me add my welcome to UCF and Orlando!

We’re delighted that you are here to think about and collectively examine the questions about artificial intelligence and education.

Everybody here, I’m sure, has played with ChatGPT and, undoubtedly, other AI tools. I know the very first reaction of many people in education was basically: “OMG, another way to cheat! What am I going to do about this?” And that is one of the truths and something that we must navigate thoughtfully.

But I have to say—and this is really honest—that AI and its new tools are

perhaps the most fun thing I have seen happen in higher education. And I hope many of you feel the same way. It’s a remarkable change, and it’s going to be a blast to ride this wave.

Artificial intelligence, of course, is not an infant. But for those of us who aren’t experts, ChatGPT burst on the scene quite suddenly. It was something completely new—an AI-based tool that could be useful to anyone in any field. And, of course, it’s only the first generation of something that will reshape the world in future years.

It’s hard to find something that compares to AI. Maybe when computers came into the workplace and

the economy. But that evolved over 30 years from mainframes to when businesses became dependent on having a computer on every desk. Large-language models using AI seem to us non-specialists—and I am very much one—to have hit us overnight.

I want to give a little context about UCF because I’m the provost—and it’s like my job!

I’ve been here 33 years. I came in 1990 as an assistant professor in physics and, after promotions, later became dean of our College of Sciences and then provost. I’ve watched this place transition from what was a regional school of about 20,000 students to a

major metropolitan research university of 69,000 students.

During this time, I would say we have gone from looking like Ohio to becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution—and soon to be majority-minority. We are very focused on the success of all our students, meeting workforce needs and the contributions we can make to the economy of our region, state and nation.

We really try to be forward-thinking, a University for the Future. We are grateful that U.S. News & World Report routinely ranks us among the top 20 most innovative schools in the country. Anyhow, that's a little about UCF. You are all here to think about AI.

Here are what I consider the academy's biggest questions about AI. It's nothing very profound, but I think you all have the same thoughts. It's also what I'm worried about as provost.

First, how do we help faculty apply AI tools in their teaching? This conference is very focused on that question. But also, how do we help our faculty apply AI in their research? I don't mean computer scientists who are already experts. I'm talking about the historian, the English professor, a sociologist or anybody who says, "I wonder if I could do something really different with the tools available?" As provost, I wonder what we must do to support that faculty member.

In my opinion, by far the most important of AI questions is how to figure out what our students need to learn about these tools to succeed now and in the future. That's a really hard question for us, right?

You go to school. You get your bachelor's degree. You get your master's degree and your Ph.D. You spend years becoming an expert in teaching something you know very well. Then AI went "BOING!" into your life. You don't have time to get a degree in AI before figuring out what you should teach students about using AI-based tools in their lives and future workplaces.

Like many of you, here we at UCF have highly expert AI practitioners. We are hiring more when we can get

them and have very strong educational programs that teach relevant skills in appropriate areas, like computer science. Our talented students are some of our nation's very best in computer programming and cyber defense, an area where we win national championships. These students are well-educated by their faculty.

Meanwhile, industry has been hiring people with these technical skills as fast as possible, and businesses are working aggressively to understand what AI will mean for their sectors. AI tools are going to change the business world. I don't know how.

Microsoft products are going to have something in them. HR systems are going to be a little different. The facilities people will have a better ability to figure out which air conditioning unit will fall apart next. Things like that.

There's going to be big-time winners and losers on who guesses right and who moves the most quickly. But that's not what I'm most interested in. I care about the academic questions and what we should do to help faculty prepare for this extraordinary new landscape.

I was talking to our Senate recently and someone said she gave a take-home essay. She could tell from the results that half of her students had used ChatGPT to help write or to write their essays. She asked me what she should do. And I said, "I don't know, I teach physics! But honestly, if I were in your discipline, I don't think I would ever again assign a take-home essay."

I don't know what is appropriate, and I know that's what you are here to think about, and I think that's interesting and fun. I was really pleased that here at UCF among the first people out of the gate on AI were our Department of Writing and Rhetoric faculty. They immediately thought very hard about how this tool could influence the teaching of writing—not just "OMG, how do we catch the cheaters?"—but how AI becomes another piece of learning and writing.

Frankly, the fact that there may be cheating really is less important than

this is a new tool that's here to stay. We have an obligation to teach our students appropriately, and you know that.

Ten years from now, some law firm can hire this associate or that associate. That one can write a case in two weeks and this one can get a draft in an hour and has the capacity to figure out which citations are lies or can take a draft written by some future generation of ChatGPT and turn it into an expert document. Obviously, one of those is a better employee than the other.

We all understand the need to teach technical AI skills to computer science students. But the existence of easy-to-use, non-specialist AI tools like ChatGPT made it immediately obvious that we need to think about educating all our students in a new way—not just technical specialists—to prepare them at a minimum for their future in the workplace.

For some students, perhaps more those in technical fields, this will be about learning to develop AI tools and solve new problems. For many, the question will be how to use the available AI tools. Here I am making the traditional distinction between tool makers and tool users. Maybe that's right today, and maybe I'm out of my mind, and maybe it will be completely different in five years. Really, I don't think we have a clue how this will develop—which is why I think AI is so much fun!

We don't know what the tools are going to be, and we don't know how to use them. We don't know how our graduates will have to use them in their futures. We don't know what AI will look like in three years because this is moving so fast. We may have completely different thoughts on this in six months or a year.

But, in a certain sense, none of that matters.

AI is here, and it's not going away. It's our responsibility to teach our students—the best we can—what they need to know about it in the workplace, to help them understand its benefits and shortcomings, its ethical considerations and concerns, and how to use AI tools thoughtfully and intelligently.

This is critical for their success. Virtually all institutions have teams of people working on this, and we will all try, learn and try again.

I'm really happy that you are here together doing this. I could say this is a case of the blind leading the blind, but that sounds too negative. But this is really exciting and really fun. People have ideas. Let's hear the ideas. Let's see if

they work in my setting or your setting. Let's mess with them and try again next year with something different. I think this is a blast.

In closing, let me thank Kevin Yee, who, as you know, is the director of our Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, and Tom Cavanagh, vice provost for Digital Learning, for their efforts in bringing this conference together in

a real hurry. And all of us especially thank all of you for your engagement.

We're all finding our way in this odd bold new era, and together, we are helping one another refine our thinking on how to produce the best results we can today. In this conference and in this coming year, I wish you great success and a lot of fun along your journey.

Thank you.

## WINNER: ENERGY

*"This Is Our Moonshot. Failure Is Not an Option"*

By John A. Barnes for Sultan Al Jaber,  
President-Designate, COP28



Delivered at CERAWeek,  
Houston, March 6, 2023

Good morning and thank you, Dan (Yergin), for that kind introduction.

It's good to see so many friends, colleagues and familiar faces at this year's CERAWeek.

CERAWeek continues bringing together the industry professionals and thought leaders who shape the global energy landscape. This room represents an industry that has delivered incredible global progress, lifted people out of poverty and strengthened nations and economies.

Before I begin, let me be candid.

As COP President-designate, I had mixed feelings about coming here today.

I consulted with many colleagues and friends—and thought long and hard before deciding that I had to be here. I decided to come, because I believe the challenges we have to address must include all parties, working together on fast tracking solutions. And I didn't want to miss out on the opportunity to meet with those who can make the biggest difference in addressing the challenges we face.

I know that some of you have felt excluded from the climate dialogue in the past—while others may have felt this isn't their problem to fix. I also know that the energy leaders in this room have the knowledge, experience, expertise and the resources needed to address

the dual challenge of driving sustainable progress while holding back emissions.

And, I truly believe in our collective ability to step up and make a difference, because otherwise we will just keep going in circles!

Today I want us all to start a new chapter—and I know that I don't have all the answers.

In fact, none of us do.

But here's what I do know: we need everyone to be engaged, if we are serious about making the transformational progress the world needs.

For our part in the United Arab Emirates, we have chosen to face global challenges head-on, by adopting a positive mindset and working with like-minded partners. And the truth is, we have been on this path for more than two decades. We've always balanced economic growth with environmental responsibility—and put climate action at the heart of our development agenda.

We were the first country in our region to commit to the Paris Agreement—the first to set out a pathway to net zero and have diversified our energy mix into solar, nuclear and hydrogen. And we've introduced demand-side management and energy efficiencies across the board. Put simply, we are not shying away from the energy transition—we are running towards it.

We are embracing it—because we see enormous economic opportunity and we know it will make the world better, healthier, safer and more secure.

Over the last several years, I have been a frequent participant at CERAWeek—and have always valued its contribution to the global energy agenda. At the top of that agenda sits the energy trilemma. How to supply affordable energy to a growing world, while protecting our planet from the global climate crisis.

Let me tell you how I see the problem we are solving for, based on the science and the facts.

The latest IPCC report tells us that temperatures continue rising 0.2 degrees per decade.

We are already seeing the impacts—from rising sea levels to failed harvests to food and water insecurity. Everyone is affected, and we know that the most vulnerable communities across the Global South are the most affected.

These are the facts. They are based on the science.

And here is the math. Last year the global population passed 8 billion. And by 2030, there will be an extra half a billion people living on this planet—demanding more energy every year.

And at the same time, according to the IPCC, the world needs to cut

emissions by seven percent each year to keep 1.5 alive—that's 43% in less than seven years. This year, the world will evaluate exactly where we are when it comes to climate progress through the first global stocktake.

And we know we are way off track. We need a major course correction.

This is a global challenge that calls for global solutions from every stakeholder acting in unity and solidarity. And—as the UAE prepares to host COP 28—we approach this task with humility, a clear sense of responsibility and a great sense of urgency.

We need action, we need to act together—and we need to act now.

Every government, every industry, every business and every individual have a role to play. No one can be on the sidelines.

And this industry—in particular—is integral to developing the solutions. In fact, this industry must take responsibility and lead the way. To echo two famous phrases of this city, first we need to recognize “Houston... we have a problem,” and then we need to agree that “Failure is not an option.”

Alongside all industries, the oil and gas sector needs to up its game—do more and do it faster. It needs to rapidly decarbonize its own operations. And it has a vital role to play in decarbonizing its customers.

The science is clear. We need to get fully behind net zero. Only half of the industry has declared a Scope 1 and 2 net zero goal by 2050. Everyone in the industry needs to be aligned around the same goal. And we should stretch ourselves to go further.

Let's aim to achieve net zero even earlier. Let's also scale up best practices and aim to reach net zero methane emissions by 2030. Let's electrify operations, equip facilities with carbon capture and storage, and use all available technologies to increase efficiency. And let's monitor, measure and validate progress every step of the way.

Distinguished delegates, making a dent in the climate crisis is not just about decarbonizing oil and gas operations.

With the right incentives, the right technologies, the right mindset and the right partnership model, the oil and gas industry has the capacity and the resources to help everyone address Scope 3.

Keep in mind that power generation is the sector where the biggest impact can be made in the shortest amount of time. By 2030, renewable energy capacity needs to triple. This is the decade to diversify portfolios, future proof companies and provide the clean energy the world needs.

That said, we know that for high-emitting sectors, renewable energy is not enough.

Aluminum, Steel and Cement, and many other heavy industries, make up 30 per cent of global emissions. These are the essential industries that make the world work. But we need to make them work better and cleaner.

Now is the time to commercialize carbon capture and take it to scale across all industries. And let's develop, commercialize and expand hydrogen production by 2030.

As a nascent technology, entrepreneurship, partnership and collaboration will be key to building out the entire hydrogen value chain.

And we in the UAE are ready to partner with all those who want to join us to make it happen. And as we do all this, our quickest win will come from energy efficiency. Let's work with customers to improve energy efficiency—while increasing access to zero carbon energies.

And let's stay laser-focused on our objective of rolling back emissions.

Ladies and gentlemen, decarbonizing economies at scale requires an enabling ecosystem. An ecosystem that connects policy, people, technology and capital.

Policymakers must create the incentives that move the market in the right direction. Industry needs clear policies to guide long-term investment decisions.

A good example of that is the recent Inflation Reduction Act here in the United States—which is stimulating low-carbon, high-growth invest-

ment opportunities. Such regulations will accelerate breakthrough technologies to unlock battery storage, bring down the cost of carbon capture, and develop and commercialize the hydrogen value chain.

And people need to be empowered to work together, break out of their silos and unify around a common cause.

Of course, none of this progress will happen without lots of capital. The entire financial community needs to play a bigger role. According to the IEA, in 2022, the world invested \$1.4T in the energy transition. We need over three times that amount. Capital must come from all sources, governments, the private sector, institutional investors, private equity, industry and international financial institutions.

And when it comes to financing the energy transition, we must ensure that no one is left behind.

Only 15 per cent of clean tech investment reaches developing economies in the Global South—where 80 per cent of the population lives.

That's why we need to fundamentally reform IFIs and the multilateral banks to unlock concessional finance, lower risk and attract greater private investment. I hope that we can make real traction on this at the upcoming IMF/World Bank Spring meetings next month.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in my view, transforming the world's energy systems represents the greatest opportunity for human and economic development since the first industrial revolution.

It is this industry's opportunity to reinvent itself and lead again. Let me call on you to decarbonize quicker, future-proof sooner and create the energy system of the future—today.

And let me extend an open invitation to all parties across government, the private sector and civil society. Cooperate, collaborate, share your ideas and talk to us. And let's remember that progress is made through partnership not polarization.

Let's unite a divided world with a



COP of Solidarity, a COP of Action and a COP for All!

All of us need to be pulling in the same direction. Because there is more energy in unity than in division.

I will consult and convene all stakeholders... I am here to listen and engage.

There is a lot of work to do and no time to spare. Let's match our commitment to our capacity. We must have the

will. We certainly have what it takes to make the difference.

This is our moonshot. Failure is not an option. Thank you.

## WINNER: GOVERNMENT

*"In Fearless Pursuit of Zero Transportation Deaths"*

By Kelly Hessler for Jennifer Homendy, Chair,  
National Transportation Safety Board

Delivered at the 102nd Annual Meeting of the  
Transportation Research Board, Washington, D.C., Jan. 11, 2023

June 10, 1999: Bellingham, Washington.

A hazardous liquid pipeline ruptures and releases over 200,000 gallons of gasoline into a creek that flows through Whatcom Falls Park.

About 90 minutes later, the gas ignites and burns 1½ miles along the creek. The massive fireball sends a plume of smoke 30,000 feet in the air, which is visible from Vancouver, Canada.

Three children are killed.

One teenager, who's flyfishing, is overcome by fumes, loses consciousness, and drowns.

Two other children survive the initial blast but suffer second- and third-degree burns over 90% of their bodies and die the next day.

They're just 10 years old.

Fast forward to January 6, 2005: Graniteville, South Carolina.

The crew of a freight train traveling 47 miles per hour encounters a misaligned switch that diverts them from the main line onto an industrial track leading to a textile mill, where their train hits an unoccupied, parked train.

The collision derails both locomotives and 16 of the 43 freight cars on their train, including three tank cars containing chlorine, one of which breaches, releasing chlorine gas.

One tank car might not seem like a lot, but the volume of a cloud of chlorine gas is 450 times greater than the volume of the liquid released.

The locomotive engineer, who's just 28 years old, six employees of the textile mill, a truckdriver at the mill, and one local resident die of chlorine gas inhalation within minutes of exposure. Over 500 people suffering from respiratory difficulties are taken to local hospitals. Over 5,000 others are evacuated.

The locomotive engineer, whose parents I came to know, survives the collision but walks about 100 yards and lays down, hoping to shield himself from the toxic cloud.

Unfortunately, chlorine gas is 2½ times heavier than air, so it settles to the ground, where the locomotive engineer is laying. He dies.

One more.

Labor Day 2019. It's 3 a.m. on-board the Conception, a dive boat anchored about a mile off the coast of Santa Barbara, California.

Thirty-three passengers and one crewmember are below deck in the bunkroom asleep when a fire erupts right above them.

The bunkroom has two exits: the main exit up a set of stairs and a difficult-to-locate emergency escape hatch. Unfortunately, both lead to the same location: directly into the path of the fire.

The Conception burns to the waterline. Just after daybreak, the vessel sinks, taking 34 souls along with it.

It remains the deadliest marine accident in recent U.S. history.

When I was asked to deliver this keynote address, I considered talking

about safety challenges and opportunities in aviation, commercial space, maritime, pipelines, rail and transit, and on our roadways—an area I have a tremendous passion for.

I considered talking about some of our safety recommendations, from mandating SMS—safety management systems—to improving fishing vessel safety, to requiring collision avoidance and V2X in all vehicles, to protecting all road users through a Safe System Approach—all of which are on our Most Wanted List.

I considered talking about our recent research on turbulence, which is aimed at preventing injuries to flight attendants and passengers. Or the safety risks of lithium-ion battery fires in electric vehicles.

I want to take a second and mention that I'm concerned about the increased risk of severe injury and death for all road users from heavier curb weights and increasing size, power, and performance of vehicles on our roads, including electric vehicles.

A GMC Hummer EV weighs over 9,000 pounds, up from about 6,000 pounds. Its gross vehicle weight rating is a staggering 10,550 pounds. The battery pack alone weighs over 2,900 pounds—about the weight of a Honda Civic.

The Ford F-150 Lightning is between 2,000 and 3,000 pounds heavier than the non-electric version. The Mustang Mach-E, Volvo XC40 EV, and RAV4 EV are all roughly 33%

heavier. That has a significant impact on safety for all road users.

Now I want to be clear: I'm inspired by the Administration's commitment to phasing out carbon emissions. We do have a climate crisis that needs to be addressed. The U.S. transportation sector accounts for the largest portion of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, and I firmly believe it is a human right to breathe clean air.

But we have to be careful that we aren't also creating unintended consequences: more death on our roads. Safety, especially when it comes to new transportation policies and new technologies, cannot be overlooked. Ever.

As I look across this room, I see so many friends and colleagues and people I look forward to meeting: state DOTs, federal agencies, associations, and researchers. All of you are safety champions. Thank you for your work!

Speaking of safety champions, I'd like to thank Nat Ford for inviting me and for an extraordinary year leading TRB. I'd also like to welcome incoming Chair Shawn Wilson and add my congratulations to the award winners on stage here with me; we're all safer for your efforts—thank you!

I'd like to thank Victoria, Neil, and the entire TRB team for the incredible work you do.

And, of course, I want to acknowledge my colleagues from the NTSB here in the room or watching virtually. I'm so proud to work with each of you.

What I want to focus on today is why we're here—and it's not the receptions that follow transportation camp!

What I want to focus on today is why we do what we do at the NTSB and why I'm so passionate...we're so passionate...about safety.

Their names are Liam, Wade, and Stephen: the three children killed in the Bellingham pipeline rupture.

Their names are Chris, Steven, Tony, Allen, John, "Rusty," Willie Charles, Joseph, and Willie Lee—the victims of the Graniteville train collision.

And their names are J.P., Patricia, Neal, Marybeth, Charlie, Kendra, Raymond, Justin, Lisa, Kristy, Yuko,

Vaidehi, Adrian, Andrew, Yulia, Dan, Allie, Jang, Sunil, Carrie, Kristian, Kaustubh, Sanjeeri, Steve, Diana, Tia, Berenice, Evan, Angela, Michael, Fernisa, Nicole, Ted, and Wei—all of whom perished on the Conception.

There are so many others whose names don't make headlines—including those hurt by decisions made decades ago—decisions guided by systemic racism, poverty, inequality, and sexism.

That includes sexual harassment, especially in transportation. Seventy-one percent of women in aviation experience sexual harassment at work. That has an impact on performance and safety.

We're fighting for the nine people who died two Januarys ago in Avenal, California, in a horrific crash that could've been prevented with speed limiters and in-vehicle alcohol detection technology—two things the NTSB has been calling for for years. Seven of the victims were children. The oldest was 15 and the youngest was just 6 years old.

We're fighting for the seven people who died—including a 10-year-old—in a 2019 air tour helicopter accident in Kekaha, Hawaii.

Sightseeing flights, helicopter air tours, hot air balloon rides, and similar experiences are not held to the same safety standards as other commercial flights.

I'm pleased that, today, the FAA proposed extending SMS requirements to charter, commuter, air tour operators, and aircraft manufacturers—all of which are longstanding NTSB recommendations. That's a great first step!

We're fighting for the 43,000 people who die annually on our roads and the millions more who are injured. Not just drivers, but all road users. No matter their race, ethnicity, ability, income, or where they live. No matter whether they're walking, biking, rolling, or driving.

That is who the NTSB is fighting for...who we're all fighting for.

And let's not forget what we're fighting for: zero in every mode of transportation.

Plenty of people think zero deaths is an unrealistic goal.

I remember one op-ed called zero a "pipedream" when Secretary Buttigieg embraced the goal last year—the first U.S. Secretary of Transportation to do that. It was brave.

What about you? Who thinks we'll never see a day with zero transportation deaths?

Every time I ask that question, no one wants to put their hand up. I understand.

Then think about a good goal. Should we aim to cut transportation deaths by 25%? How about 50%? By when?

Keep that goal in mind.

Now, let me ask you: what's an acceptable number of transportation deaths for YOUR family?

Zero just became real, didn't it?

There's no acceptable amount of injury or death when it's OUR colleague. OUR best friend. OUR partner. OUR parent. OUR son. OUR daughter.

When we say zero is impossible, there's an unspoken caveat: as long as "my" people are safe.

When anyone plans for more deaths, calling them projections, it says there's an "acceptable" number of lives lost.

It says some death is OK.

It says some people don't count.

That's the message we send to the grieving parents of Liam, Stephen, and Wade.

To Chris's parents.

To the 34 Conception families.

Hear me: it's NOT acceptable. Not a single life lost. Zero has to be just as real for them as it is for us.

We must care about the safety of strangers: people we will never meet.

Because it's the right thing to do.

It's what drives everyone at the NTSB and many of you.

Getting to zero isn't easy. You all know that.

What I'm about to say might surprise you: to take on a challenge as big as zero and succeed, we need more than smarts.

Don't get me wrong; we need your research to inform new policies, new

systems, new regulations, new laws—especially when we have so much advancement in new technology. And we need safety champions to bring it all to life.

We need everyone in this fight.

That's the power of TRB and everyone here: you have incredible power to help get us to zero.

But we also need something else—something less tangible.

We need to be fearless: unafraid to open our hearts to the preventable pain of transportation disasters and to fearlessly pursue solutions.

Fearless in refusing to take “no” for an answer.

Fearless in having the political will to do the hard things, say the hard things.

Fearless in the conference rooms and boardrooms where we work. In our communities and in our personal lives.

Fearless.

That's why I told you stories—true stories—not statistics.

That's why I talked to you today about people I'm fighting for...we're fighting for.

Here's one last story. It's a familiar one.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy challenged the nation to land a man on the moon and return him safely to the earth. His deadline? By the end of the decade—just 8½ years to make the impossible possible.

You all know what happened next.

We did put a man on the moon—two, in fact!—and days later, we safely returned them to earth.

Since then, a dozen Americans have walked on the lunar surface. This number will soon climb when the first woman and the first person of color

join their ranks, courtesy of the Artemis missions!

JFK's moon shot began not with facts, but with a feeling.

A powerful feeling that we could do more than dream of reaching new heights—we could achieve it.

Brilliant minds—like all of you here—fought day in, day out, to make it happen.

People like you fearlessly pursued the greatest feat of human ingenuity ever undertaken at the time.

The feelers.

The fighters.

The fearless.

These are the people who do the impossible. Who always have throughout human history, and who always will.

These are the people we need right now, in this moment.

Because zero is our moon shot.

That's what we're fighting for.

In the year ahead, I challenge you: be a feeler.

Feel for Liam, Stephen, and Wade—three kids who just wanted to go fishing or play at the park.

Feel for Chris and the eight other people who died in a toxic cloud caused by a rail disaster.

Feel for the 34 people who set sail on a scuba trip...34 people who never made it back home.

Let it fuel you as you fight for safety.

Fight for their bereaved families.

Fight for all the grieving families who've lost someone they love to a transportation disaster.

Fight so your family is never one of them.

Most of all, be fearless.

Fearlessly pursue zero as your only goal, in every mode of transportation.

Zero at sea and on our waterways.

Zero on passenger rail and freight rail.

Zero on our transit systems.

Zero on our streets and sidewalks.

Zero in our bike lanes and bus lanes.

Zero along every inch of pipeline running under your feet and mine.

Zero in our skies and in our airspace.

Zero under the stars of outer space.

The feelers. The fighters. The fearless.

That's you.

You are the leaders we need right now—this very instant.

Leaders who feel it in their bones: safety is my calling, not just a career.

I come from the labor movement, and we have a saying: mourn the dead and fight like hell for the living. We need leaders who fight like hell, not for the safety of “their” people, but of ALL people.

Leaders who recruit their heart and soul to this fight, in addition to their intellect.

Leaders who are fearlessly vulnerable.

Leaders who never forget what we're fighting for...who we're fighting for.

If you do all that...you will achieve the “rejuvenation” this meeting calls for. You will get us to zero.

When it gets hard—and it will—look to the people next to you for strength.

And you can always, always look to the NTSB. I promise you this: we will never, ever give up.

Until there's no longer a need for our safety recommendations.

Until there's no longer a need for the NTSB.

Until we have a safe transportation system for all.

Until there's zero.

Thank you.

# WINNER: INSURANCE

*“Bridging Gaps and Building Bridges: Shaping the Future of Financial Protection on a Global Scale”*

By Jessica Mancari for Susan K. Neely,  
President, Global Federation of Insurance  
Associations



Delivered at the Moroccan Federation of Insurance and  
Reinsurance Companies, 9th Casablanca Insurance  
Rendez-Vous, Casablanca, Morocco, March 8, 2023

Après avoir travaillé ensemble virtuellement à distance pendant 2 ans, c’est un grand plaisir d’être tous ensemble au rendez-vous du Casa Blanca de l’Assurance.

C’est ma première visite ici. Je peux maintenant confirmer que tous les outils de marketing sont opérationnels. Le Maroc est en effet un pont commercial et un leader en Afrique du Nord.

Je voudrais remercier mon collègue, Bachir Baddou. J’ai fait sa connaissance pendant que nous étions entrain de travailler à Federation Globale des Associations d’Assurance or GFIA.

C’est un excellent représentant du Maroc et de la zone d’Afrique.

Bachir m’a poussé à essayer de dire quelques mots avec mon vocabulaire appris au collègue.

C’est un bon défi challenge parce que le français est une très belle langue et je voudrais montrer du respect à mes hôtes. Ainsi, j’essaie de pratiquer la langue.

Malheureusement, je ne parle pas aussi bien le français que Bachir parle l’anglais.

Je continue dans ma propre langue. Peut-être qu’à la prochaine visite—si je pratique beaucoup—je pourrai continuer mon discours en français.

[Translation: After having worked together virtually/remotely for 2 years, it is a great pleasure to be all together at the Casablanca de l’Assurance meeting.

This is my first visit here. I can now confirm that all the marketing is accurate. Morocco is indeed a commercial bridge and a leader in North Africa.

I would like to thank my colleague, Bachir Baddou. I met him while we were working at the Global Federation of Insurance Associations or GFIA.

He is an excellent representative of Morocco and the African region.

Bachir pushed me to try to say a few words with my [French] vocabulary learned in college.

It’s a good challenge because French is a very beautiful language and I would like to show respect to my hosts. So, I tried to practice the language.

Unfortunately, I don’t speak French as well as Bachir speaks English!

So I will continue in my own language. Maybe on the next visit—if I practice a lot—I will be able to continue my speech in French.]

I want to thank the Moroccan Federation of Insurance and Reinsurance Companies for holding this conference and in welcoming all of us for these important dialogues.

The U.S. is grateful for its friendship with Morocco, which dates back hundreds of years to the signing of our first friendship treaty when the United States was just budding as a nation.

I also want to thank Mohamed Hassan Bensalah for his leadership in organizing this gathering of nations to share ideas on how we can help all our citizens live safe and secure lives. I had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Bensalah and Hicham Belrah in the United States in January as Morocco is becoming a preeminent participant in global forums including in the U.S.

There are a few people I want to thank very briefly. I’d like to compliment the Moroccan government and the Minister of Economy and Finance Nadia Fettah for her leadership on financial inclusion.

I look forward to seeing Othman Khalil EL Alamy again in Rabat tomorrow for conversations on regulatory leadership in growing and

developing markets in addition to just supervising them.

I believe continued dialogue between nations is essential as we work together to close risk protection coverage gaps and make sure all our families and communities have the protection they need.

Three years ago, our world became interconnected in a way we did not expect. Our global fight against COVID-19 reminded us that all nations and people have a shared interest in creating certainty for the future.

We were united in our common determination to stop COVID-19. And in each other’s challenges and triumphs, we saw reflections of our own challenges and triumphs.

Financial risk protection gaps are stark, climate risk is real, and cyber risk has increased. I would offer to each of us today that our charge as leaders is to acknowledge and address these challenges with as much fervor, determination, and collaboration as we did the global pandemic.

We’re gathered here to talk about mobility, technology, progress, and change. In addition to having the honor of currently serving as GFIA [Global Federation of Insurance Associations] president—which together represents 67 countries—my day job is to represent the American Council of Life Insurers. And while we don’t represent auto insurance, I’m glad to be followed by my colleagues Florence and Pilar who will speak about auto in detail and far more knowledgeably than me.

However, I believe mobility is not just about how we get from point A to point B, but whether people have access to the financial tools and information they need to achieve social mobility.

I cannot think of a better place to talk about how financial inclusion and global financial protection contribute to upward mobility and a strong middle class than here in Morocco.

Within my first weeks of taking the presidency, we met with global regulator leaders who are the officers of the International Association of Insurance Supervisors. Our purpose was to advance our industry perspective on issues of global concern. We showcased industry leadership on increasing financial inclusion and closing protection gaps.

I want to focus on that topic here today, and specifically on three areas where we can lead to tackle any number of issues—whether it is technological progress, the evolution of mobility, or financial inclusion.

First, our responsibility as global leaders to bring awareness to these issues.

Second, is using our collective industry advocacy to be a force multiplier as we educate about the importance of insurance to policy makers and regulators.

And finally how we seek common purpose to solve current and emerging risks around the globe.

## Responsibility

First, we have a responsibility as an industry to understand and communicate the risks that will have the most impact on real people's lives. In times of uncertainty, people and institutions are facing increasing risks to their health, wealth, and income—risks that are not adequately protected.

This work is more relevant than ever. In the 21st Century, the role of corporations is changing. For insurers, paying claims is not enough.

Now corporations and business sectors are expected to demonstrate how they are helping to solve societal challenges. Today, consumer trust is built around this commitment and engagement.

Luckily for the insurance industry, we are problem-solvers, and we hold solutions to some of the big challenges

facing countries around the globe, like closing the trillion-dollar protection gap.

The issue of protection gaps has the ear of the B20, G20, and the IAIS. The leadership opportunity for businesses is to advance solutions at a time when needs are most acute. We're right there in the action, providing our leadership on financial inclusion policy.

Today, I'm very pleased to announce that next week GFIA will release the first ever Global Risk Protection Gap Study. We commissioned this study to better understand the gaps in financial protection and how policy-makers and insurers can work together to fill them.

The Global Risk Protection Study has identified four areas of protection that have the most impact on people's lives: natural catastrophes .....cyber.... pensions...health.

The study goes into detail in each of these areas. It highlights the factors contributing to the gaps.

It identifies potential levers for reducing these risks. It provides case studies to facilitate discussions among stakeholders. And it makes policy recommendations by experts in GFIA working groups.

I will give you a preview.

For instance, the report will show that aging societies are putting unprecedented pressure on global pension systems. There is an estimated protection gap of \$1 trillion a year.

That is a big problem—and we need to be the advocacy groups making sure this is front of mind for regulators and policymakers.

But GFIA didn't want to stop there at simply identifying the problem. We wanted to dive deeper to offer potential policy levers private and public stakeholders can use.

For pension protection and retirement, it can be offering innovative and flexible products to meet consumers' needs or implementing automatic enrollment in retirement savings plans.

Another topic we looked at was natural catastrophes. There have been many tragic disasters in the past few months. New Zealand had an earthquake and

hurricane, and of course we saw devastating loss in Turkey and Syria.

Because of climate change and global development, natural catastrophe events and related losses will only increase, significantly affecting the health and financial viability of individuals and organizations.

Individuals and organizations often struggle to get adequate natural catastrophe protection because of challenges related to affordability, availability, or ability to recognize the risk. These factors, plus insufficient levels of awareness and engagement in prevention measures, contribute to an annual protection gap of \$135 billion per year.

Again, we didn't want to stop there at identifying the problem. We sought to demonstrate steps that private and public stakeholders can take. These steps could be including new distribution models for natural catastrophe insurance coverage that increase the accessibility of coverage. Or facilitating access to global reinsurance markets to reduce the geographic concentration of risks.

These guidelines offer a roadmap that—at the very least—provides a starting point for meaningful dialogue, and ultimately, we hope, will serve to advance real policy solutions that increase access to insurance products and services. We hope that the study will help inform G20 leaders about how to fill those protection gaps.

The Global Protection Gap Study is an excellent body of work, and we are very happy for you to see it when it is released. Each of us in this room will be able to use the findings and we'll also be able to share them with global regulators. Our French and Spanish colleagues have been especially involved in leading this work along with your Federation.

## Advocacy

What the Global Risk Protection Gap Study also demonstrates is that insurance associations can be force multipliers in addressing global challenges.

We have solutions to propose.

This brings me to my next focus—and that is being effective advocates for regulation and policies that expand access.

Over the past couple of years, GFIA has set out to be known more for what we are FOR than what we are AGAINST. That means telling the story of the work this industry does every day in the global financial ecosystem and demonstrating the good work we do in closing critical gaps.

We have a powerful story to tell.

Let me give you an example.

Today, all around the world, countries are recognizing International Women's Day. That significance is not lost on me as I provide these remarks to you. Here's why.

Financial inclusion is an issue that impacts women in unique ways. The United Nations has warned of losing "a generation or more of gains" in gender equality and women's rights, due to socio-economic impact of the pandemic.

In my country, during the pandemic alone, 3 out of 4 women said the crisis had a negative impact on how long they could live off their retirement savings.

This is on top of many other challenges women face when it comes to financial protection.

The question before us, is how do we as a collective business community, come together to advocate for policies that will have a particular impact on this community of women?

We can prioritize policies that encourage greater access to financial protection products that help women.

You all do this very well in Africa.

I am in Morocco to not only speak, but to learn about your progressive leadership across Africa.

I was excited to hear that you also hosted a joint event yesterday with the General Arab Insurance Federation and a colleague from Egypt Alla EL Zoheirly, President of the Egyptian Federation. We were together last June in Prague at a GFIA event.

I also have the pleasure of being a member of the MicroInsurance Network and look forward to speaking

with Stephanie Soedjede, who is the Africa Regional Manager for MIN, which is establishing a partnership with GFIA, this June.

FMSAR is a regional leader in long-term planning and implementation of financial inclusion. They serve as a model in the African region.

What I am learning from my meetings with your government is an appreciation for Morocco globally as we speak with G20 and IAIS.

His Majesty King Mohammad VI is a leading advocate for financial inclusion.

The Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Administrative Reform and Bank Al-Marghrib led development of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) to coordinate the efforts of all stakeholders in the financial ecosystem.

A roadmap for inclusive insurance is now being rolled out under the NFIS and will include an insurance barometer that will measure insurance penetration across the country and across different products.

The International Association of Insurance Supervisors prioritized financial inclusion of women and minorities in their strategic plan.

The IAIS issued a statement formally recognizing the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion considerations in insurance supervision, and has set 2024 as their target to develop regulatory guidance.

In 2021, for the first time, the B20 under the Italian leadership added the concept of "uninsured" along with "unbanked" to its policy recommendations.

The B20 has created special initiatives on ESG, Women and Financial Inclusion, where one of the main objectives is to foster gender equality in the workplace and in society. My colleague Florence Lustman has been one of the leaders of this work.

In the United States, our Executive Branch, including the Departments of Treasury...Commerce...Labor...and State....and the U.S. Trade Representative... that all bilateral and multilateral negotiations will now consider sustainability, labor, and equality.

This does not just happen. This is a result of unified efforts to prioritize financial inclusion. Our collective advocacy can be powerful.

### **Common Purpose**

But the other focus that is powerful is our coordination and work to reach comparable outcomes to meet the unique needs of our demographics and stage of development. Each of our countries is facing its own unique set of challenges and how we address them will be different depending on our unique circumstances.

We can come together as a business community to address shared challenges. Our world is becoming more complicated, and we need the collective muscle of the global industry. I will not address global politics, but it is discouraging that the G20 finance ministers in their meeting last week could not agree on a joint statement ... on anything.

Yet we all know that risk protection gaps are real and the only solution is one that involves government and industry working together. GFIA is a way we determine how to advance together in a way that is meaningful.

Our ability to do business has never been more important. Our priority is to make sure the insurance industry can continue to offer the products and services to people who need it most, and making sure we have the regulatory and prudential environment to do so.

Financial inclusion is a societal challenge that knows no borders. Together we can go further. That is the power of association.

### **Closing**

Let me close by saying this. Each of us from our own vantage points see the challenges that our countries and our people face. Each of us knows the gaps that the pandemic has exposed. The insurance industry is designed to be there for people when they need it most. We provide access to financial protection. And we can be an impor-

tant partner to the government sector in solving big challenges.

But I am mindful that we as leaders in insurance have an opportunity to

be the bridge ....to close those gaps... to find innovative solutions to ensure greater access....to provide certainty in an uncertain world.

I commend you for the discussions you are having at this conference, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak. Thank you everyone.

## WINNER: NONPROFIT

*“Beyond the Binary Choice: Let’s Start Talking About Adoption”*

By Teresa Zumwald for Terri Marcroft, Executive Director and Founder, Unplanned Good Inc.

Delivered at the Idaho Chooses Life Christmas Dinner and Auction, Eagle Christian Church, Eagle, Idaho, Dec. 1, 2023

**T**onight, I’d like to tell you about Emma: a high school senior right here in Idaho.

Emma has always been in the choir. A volunteer!  
A good student involved in clubs. And—in many sports.  
She’s popular! Attractive! Smart!  
So last year Jacob—the captain of the football team and the coolest guy in class—started paying attention to her. They were ALWAYS together!  
And before long?  
Emma just KNEW she was in love!  
But then—in the winter of her junior year—Emma got pregnant!  
She felt desperate!  
Panicked!  
Terrified!  
Paralyzed with fear!  
When she told Jacob she was pregnant—he ghosted her!  
And moved away!  
So Emma was alone.  
And had no idea what to do next.

###

Today in the U.S., nearly half of all pregnancies are unplanned.

What’s more?

Ninety-nine percent of women facing an unplanned pregnancy will choose EITHER abortion OR single parenting.

That’s because abortion is promoted as a safe, quick, convenient SOLUTION to a PROBLEM:

(Get it done! And then move on with your life. There are no downsides.)

At the same time:

Single parenting is promoted as a glamorous, independent, triumphant ADVENTURE!

Liberating and inspiring for strong women!

(After all: The celebrities in Hollywood are doing it! Apparently with great success! You can see it yourself on Instagram!)

But is that THE TRUTH?

Is the binary choice—EITHER abortion OR single parenting—all there is?

Think again about Emma, who was pregnant and alone.

We know that one in four teens just like Emma will get pregnant by age 20.

We also know that some will choose to leave the state and get an abortion.

If YOU had the chance last year to talk to Emma about her situation—what would you have said to her?

Especially when she told you she was not ready ... was not equipped ... and did not want to become a parent right now?

You MIGHT have suggested adoption.

But truth is:

Most people DON’T because it’s not on their radar.

They just don’t know much about it!

How it works.

Or how to get started.

Or: What they DO KNOW is either outdated or incorrect.

For example:

They might think the birth mother has to cover the medical expenses.

Or, they might confuse foster care with adoption—even though the purpose of foster care is to reunite children with their biological parents.

Plus, talking about adoption makes some people feel uncomfortable.

Because of how adoption was practiced in years past, there’s a stigma!

So many secrets!

The pregnant woman was invisible! Ignored.

And often shamed.

###

For all these reasons, only 1 percent of women facing an unplanned pregnancy today choose to place their baby for adoption.

1 PERCENT!

Just look at the data:

Today, there are 2.8 million unplanned pregnancies in the U.S.

About half will abort.

And half will parent.

The binary choice fed to women—you EITHER abort OR you become a single parent—is winning!

Because in 2020, only 16,658 people made adoption plans for their babies!

Meanwhile—almost 2 million couples are waiting to adopt.

###

All this is TRAGIC!

And it begs this question:

How much do you REALLY know about adoption—as it is done TODAY?

# # #

Years ago, when most of us were growing up, adoptions were done differently.

Before the 1990s, most adoptions were closed.

Closed adoptions maintain the privacy of both the birth parents and the adoptive parents.

But often, here's what happened:

If a young, unmarried woman got pregnant, the pregnancy was kept secret.

The woman and her parents were afraid of rejection, shame and disapproval.

(What would the neighbors say?)

Adoption was often forced upon the young woman, usually by her parents.

The woman had no say in any of it.

Sometimes, the pregnant woman was sent far away, to live with a relative, until the baby was born.

Then, once the baby was placed with the adoptive parents, the young woman was told to never speak of it again.

Keep it a secret!

Just forget it!

And move on.

So there was no grieving.

No talking it out.

No help.

No healing!

Even though the young woman went through the sorrow, loss and trauma of parting with her child.

Plus, there was no contact.

No communication.

No information about her child.

The birth mother never knew how her baby was doing in the new family that SHE made possible.

# # #

It was a cruel practice.

The story just ended!

Without any closure.

# # #

Thankfully, times have changed.

Today, the decision to place for adoption is not forced upon a young woman.

Instead, she chooses it herself, sometimes with the birth father by her side.

Today, the birth mother chooses everything!

She can choose the adoptive parents: parents of a certain age or race ... a two-career couple ... or a couple with a stay-at-home parent.

She can choose the values and faith in which her baby will be raised.

If the birth mother has a vision for the future she wants for her child, she can choose the adoptive parents who will make that vision a reality!

The birth mother can even choose to keep in touch with her child and the adoptive parents over the years.

# # #

Today, most adoptions have some degree of openness, which is why they are called "open adoptions."

But most people don't really know what that means.

Once they find out?

They are pleasantly surprised how it works!

In an open adoption, the birth mother and the adoptive parents decide together what their ongoing relationship might look like.

Will they stay in touch through letters and photos? Phone calls and text messages?

Will there be regular visits?

With open adoptions, there are **NO SECRETS!**

Just **SO MANY POSSIBILITIES** for loving relationships!

And peace of mind for all involved.

For example:

The birth mother and father can follow their child's progress as the child grows.

The child never wonders where they came from. And is reassured knowing the adoption decision was made from a place of pure and selfless love.

Plus, the adoptive parents can easily get important information from the birth parents—like the family's medical and genetic history—so they can best care for their child.

# # #

For the birth mother, choosing adoption is **EMPOWERING** at a time when she feels **POWERLESS!**

Desperate!

Panicked!

Terrified!

Paralyzed with fear!

Birth moms today are **EMPOWERED** because of all the choices they get to make:

It's **EMPOWERING** to have your voice be the most important voice in the room.

It's **EMPOWERING** to take responsibility and make a plan to provide for your child.

It's **EMPOWERING** to see that your decision creates a family.

It's **EMPOWERING** to know your decision allows your child to thrive.

That makes the birth mother **THE HERO** of every adoption story today!

Not the "invisible woman" of the past, who was often judged, shamed and "hidden away."

Think about this for a minute!

Heroes demonstrate courage ... selflessness ... and moral fortitude in the face of adversity.

Heroes are driven by a bigger purpose—a higher calling.

Heroes go above and beyond the expectations of society to make a positive impact—an extraordinary impact!—on the lives of others.

Which is why **HERO** is a fitting title for every birth mother, who puts the needs of the child far above her own.

A birth mother is determined ... brave ... compassionate ... humble ... resourceful ... resilient!

A birth mother loves her baby **SO MUCH** that she chooses to make an adoption plan—knowing the adoptive parents will provide for her child better than she can at this time in her life.

# # #

Birth mothers are heroes because adoption is **HARD**.

If you talk to any birth mother, she will tell you that adoption was **THE**



HARDEST DECISION of her life!

But one she knew with all her heart was right.

It's HARD knowing you will bring a baby into the world—and then hand the child over to another family.

It's HARD physically—inconvenient to carry a baby for nine months!—and painful to go through hours of labor and delivery.

It's HARD emotionally. The pain is intense. The grief is deep. You cry and sob for the child you willingly lose to adoption. You feel empty inside.

It's HARD to heal. There's a roller-coaster of emotions. Intense highs and lows: uncertainty ... anticipation ... sorrow ... relief ... accomplishment ... comfort.

Because adoption is SO HARD, birth mothers should be respected and celebrated!

And be loved and supported always.

# # #

Although birth mothers will tell you that adoption is HARD, they will also tell you that adoption is AMAZING.

As time goes on, birth mothers will tell you that placing their child for adoption was THE BEST DECISION they've ever made!

And the proudest and greatest accomplishment of their lives.

Birth mothers who choose adoption feel rewarded seeing their baby raised in a happy, stable family.

And grateful for the chance to remain a part of their child's life.

The relationships they make are lasting!

And the satisfaction is real.

# # #

I know all this because my family experienced the beauty of open adoption.

After a successful career in marketing in my 20s and 30s, I was ready to settle down.

Get married!

And start a family.

I started dating pretty seriously.

And then met and married my husband, Dave.

For years we struggled to start a family.

And then we met "D": the woman who chose my husband and me to parent her baby 24 years ago.

D got pregnant during her senior year of high school.

And decided to make an adoption plan, with support and encouragement from her mother.

After looking at stacks of profiles from hopeful, adoptive couples, D chose us for three reasons:

We both had careers—but no kids yet.

We had a strong Christian faith.

And we could provide her child with LOTS of cousins. (For that, we were well-qualified: By then, my six siblings already had 14 kids—a built-in TRIBE of cousins!)

Since then, our experience has been a beautiful one, starting with D's first ultrasound appointment: the day we met our daughter, Sydney, in 2D black and white!

D allowed us to participate in her pregnancy.

Join her for doctor's appointments and Lamaze classes.

Even be there for Sydney's birth, on August 18, 1999.

Whatever D asked for, our answer to her was always YES.

"Keep in touch," D said.

"Send photos every two months—at least!"

"And make sure Sydney gets to know her cousins."

# # #

I am forever grateful to Sydney's birth mom, D, because SHE made ME a mom!

And being Sydney's mom has been the greatest honor of my life.

This morning my daughter—Sydney Harris—took a day off work, left her home in San Diego and flew to Boise because she wanted to support this event.

I'd love for you to meet her!

Sydney—would you please stand?

Thank you so much for being here, sweetie!

# # #

Sydney has been a blessing in our lives!

But not all families are as lucky and blessed as ours.

For every child who is placed for adoption, 36 couples are waiting!

And the average waiting list is getting longer.

Today, only 1 percent of women facing an unplanned pregnancy choose adoption.

But we can change this reality!

We can empower more women to choose adoption—be THE HERO in a child's adoption story—by changing our laws to make it easier for more women to say YES to adoption, and by taking the time to learn and understand how adoption works today so we can advocate for adoption as a loving, positive response to unplanned pregnancy.

# # #

First, let's talk about changing the laws.

Because change is underway right here in Idaho.

In 2015, I testified for the first time before the Idaho Senate State Affairs Committee.

And had the privilege of meeting senators Grant Ipsen and Bart Davis, Idaho's leading voices on adoption at the time.

Back then, Roe v. Wade was the law of the land, and abortion was legal in every state.

It was a different time!

Idaho was fiercely rejecting abortion—but not so strongly embracing adoption.

So my reason for testifying was simple:

To talk about the goodness of adoption.

Suggest it!

And get people to start thinking more about it.

Eight years later, after Roe v. Wade was overturned, Idaho got busy!

Said NO to abortion.

And YES to doing something POSITIVE for women facing unplanned pregnancies.

###

Tonight, I'm thrilled to tell you about the Birth Mother Care Act: a new bill going to the state legislature in January.

This bill provides much-needed awareness about adoption.

Removes obstacles that make adoption harder.

And advocates for birth moms: the heroes who choose to make an adoption plan.

###

I am so grateful to Lieutenant Governor Scott Bedke, sir, for your friendship and wise counsel early on.

I also want to say a special thanks to David Ripley, for your steadfast dedication to life ...

To Senator Julie Van Orden, for reminding each of us that we are only 1 degree of separation away from an adoption story in our life ...

To Senate Chuck Winder, president pro tempore of the Idaho Senate, for your empathy and heart for adoption ...

To Superintendent of Education Debbie Critchfield, for your firm conviction that we must talk to teens about adoption while they are still in school ...

To Mary Lou Molitor, Scott Bedke's right hand ...

And to many other new friends in the state capitol, for your tender hearts and unfailing leadership on this issue.

All of you, and many others here in Idaho, agree that we should honor birth mothers for choosing adoption ... choosing life ... choosing parents—by making it easier for them to place a baby for adoption.

Smoothing their path however we can.

And pushing for more support, like one-on-one counseling, both before and after placement.

###

If this legislation passes, we would be on our way to taking better care of the women who choose this difficult journey.

Just think about the possibilities!

Idaho's Birth Mother Care Act could become the model for every state in the USA!

And THAT would be such a point of pride for Idaho!

But here's what's ALSO TRUE:

It's not the legislative changes that will get more people to look beyond the current binary choice and see adoption as an option.

Instead?

It's US!

If all of us better understand adoption today, we will be better equipped to encourage women to consider it as a loving, positive response to unplanned pregnancy.

It's important!

Because unplanned pregnancy DOES touch your life!

It's your niece.

Your granddaughter.

Your student.

Or the girl next door.

Each of you CAN make a difference!

In your communities and in your own families!

If you decide to not only be PRO-LIFE ... but also PRO-ADOPTION.

That means knowing how to advocate for adoption as the healthiest choice in the long term for women facing an unplanned pregnancy: women not yet ready to parent.

###

So here's a question:

Do you know the truth about the effects of the current binary choice—abortion and single parenting—in the long term?

Let's talk about them!

What can happen to women in the long term who choose abortion?

What are the impacts?

First: A woman's mental health is affected.

Women who choose abortion are at greater risk for depression, anxiety, substance abuse and suicide.

A few years ago, I was at a retreat for women who had experienced pregnancy loss.

I saw women in their 70s and 80s sobbing as they shared their stories about abortion.

They were STILL grieving their decision so many decades later.

###

Second: A woman who chooses abortion has a higher risk for very preterm births in any future pregnancy.

Very pre-term births are babies born weighing 3 pounds or less.

These babies need neonatal or intensive care to survive.

But many do not.

Each year, 1 million preterm babies of post-abortive women die.

If preterm babies do survive, they often have complications—like cerebral palsy, and impaired vision and hearing.

###

Third: A woman who chooses abortion has a higher risk for breast cancer later in life.

Because of changes that happen in the breast during pregnancy, ending a pregnancy early—before 32 weeks—puts women at risk.

###

When you consider all these effects?

The mental and physical toll on women in the long term who choose abortion is worrisome.

Dangerous.

And potentially life threatening.

###

And what about women who choose single parenting?

They, too, face challenges in the long term.

That's because the majority of single moms today are not wealthy

Hollywood stars with lucrative careers flaunting single motherhood on Instagram!

Instead, the majority of single moms today parent without an education and without a career.

That is why single moms often struggle.

Just look at the data:

Nearly one-third of single moms today live in poverty, are food insecure and spend more than half their income on housing.

Forty percent of single moms have jobs with low wages and no paid leave.

And 27 percent of single moms struggle to afford shelter.

Some become homeless!

Children of single moms often struggle as well.

Eighty-five percent of children with a behavioral disorder, and 90 percent of youth who run away, come from homes without a second parent.

###

Women facing unplanned pregnancy need to know the long-term effects of the current binary choice: abortion and single parenting.

But all too often, they do not.

But if YOU know the facts, and if YOU know how to advocate for adoption as the healthiest choice in the long term for women facing unplanned pregnancy, you can change the conversation in your communities and in your own families!

If you take the right approach.

###

A few minutes ago, I told you about Emma, the high schooler who faced an unplanned pregnancy last year.

But what if Emma were YOUR niece?

Or the daughter of YOUR best friend?

Or YOUR own daughter or granddaughter?

Many times, our first response is emotional and unchecked.

We look back.

Make assumptions.

Judge.

Even shame.

But shame on us if shaming a young, pregnant woman is our first response, since shame is not productive.

So what's a better approach for counseling a young woman we love who is facing an unplanned pregnancy?

First—take a breath!

Acknowledge that she feels desperate! Panicked! Terrified! Paralyzed with fear!

Let go of the past.

Instead, start with today.

Embrace her without judgment.

Without shame!

And instead, show compassion and love.

Be supportive so she is open to listening.

Then you can begin to talk about where to go from here.

###

Second—ask her to consider her health.

Share the facts you know:

What to expect long term from the binary choice: the physical and mental toll abortion takes, and the challenges of single parenting for many women.

At the same time, tell her what to expect long term from adoption—what is hard, and what is amazing—and that adoption is the healthiest choice long term for women facing unplanned pregnancy.

Third—focus on the future.

Let's be clear: There IS no easy solution for an unplanned pregnancy!

But it's good for a young woman to know that in the long term, adoption is better for her health.

Better for her child.

And better for the couple she will choose, who will feel honored and forever blessed to become parents and receive the miraculous gift of family.

###

Make no mistake:

Young women facing an unplanned pregnancy aren't considering adoption because people like us—the parents and grandparents, the aunts and uncles, the mentors, teachers and pastors in their lives—don't know enough about it.

And aren't suggesting it.

If adults like us don't suggest adoption, young women will not consider it!

That is why all of us must unite around a new cause!

To not only be PRO-LIFE—but also PRO-ADOPTION.

###

Beginning tonight: Let's get educated about adoption!

The more we learn and talk about adoption, the more we can erase that awful stigma of those secret, forced adoptions from years past.

Plus, we can improve or save the long-term health of so many women. See more babies born. And new families created.

Beginning tonight: Let's reject the binary choice!

And normalize the idea that adoption today is a loving, positive response to unplanned pregnancy.

###

And so tonight, I will leave you with three questions:

When a woman you love suddenly faces an unplanned pregnancy and seeks your advice, will you be ready to advise her?

If she is listening to current culture, and considering only the binary choice, will you remain silent?

Or will you stand up for adoption as the healthiest choice long term for women facing an unplanned pregnancy?

The information you share, and the suggestions you make, can not only save lives.

But also create new families.

Thank you.

# WINNER: SERVICE INDUSTRY

*“Innovation Is a Culture Driven by What Is Important to Customers”*

By Ed Markey for Stu Grant, General Manager,  
Global Racing, The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.



Delivered at the Historic Hotels Conference,  
Litchfield Park, Arizona, Oct. 12, 2023

Good morning, everyone. I'd like to thank Larry Horwitz for that kind introduction...and for inviting me to speak today.

We didn't prepare that video specifically for this conference, but it illustrates a theme that's common to both Goodyear racing and the Historic Hotels of America. Our roots are more than a century deep, and our growth today both honors the heritage of our founders while building on that heritage for a new generation.

As you know, Goodyear is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year. In that sense, it seems fitting that a company with such a legacy be part of a conference of other businesses with historical significance.

Like some of your hotels, our business started in a small town we still call home. From a refurbished strawboard factory with about a dozen associates, Goodyear has grown to a global headquarters, Innovation Center, testing facility and chemical research center in Akron, Ohio.

And before I forget, we still make every racing tire for NASCAR's top three series in the same place we've always made them—in our manufacturing plant in Akron, Ohio.

Not long after Goodyear was founded, the company began to expand, both across the U.S. and around the world. Goodyear's connection to this part of Arizona began before towns named Goodyear and Litchfield Park were founded.

In 1916, the effects of World War I were being felt around the globe... whether your homeland was involved in the war or not. The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company was still in its formative years and, like many new businesses then and now, found itself facing unexpected challenges.

A component of our early products was a specific kind of cotton used in the ply material of our tire construction. The primary source of this long-fiber cotton was Egypt, and the supply was monopolized by England, which needed it for its war effort. In the U.S., long-staple cotton was grown in the Carolinas, but its crops were being devastated by the boll weevil. That meant Goodyear had to find a groundbreaking solution—literally.

Paul W. Litchfield, who was Goodyear's factory manager at the time, was confident that the environment in the Salt River Valley region of Arizona closely matched the cotton growing conditions of north Africa. He purchased 6,000 acres of land in the area for the purpose of growing long-staple cotton, creating Goodyear's own supply of this important component of tire manufacturing. Eventually, three ranches were created making up Goodyear Farms and establishing the Southwest Cotton Company.

Contrary to what some may believe, I was NOT working for Goodyear then, but I imagine the scenario was similar to what you may have seen in the movie “Oppenheimer.” As was the case in Los Alamos, an entire community was created here in the desert. Homes, schools, churches, medical facilities—and this hotel—were built to support the new industry and for the care and comfort of the people who brought it to life.

In the decades that followed, the company's presence here expanded to include the communities that became Litchfield Park and Goodyear, Arizona. The cotton ranches eventually became testing sites for farm tires and equipment, and later an important outpost of Goodyear's aviation

business, producing airplane parts and servicing military aircraft during World War II. We built some of the iconic Goodyear blimps right here, in part of what became a defense production facility.

It is not uncommon for Paul Litchfield and The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company to get credit for founding this vibrant community. But remember, that wasn't the goal. The original mandate was finding an innovative solution to supplying a critical product for tire manufacturing.

Even in Goodyear's earliest days, innovation was part of the company's DNA. It has led the tire industry on everything from the development of pneumatic truck tires—which at one time were considered revolutionary—to tires made of 100 percent sustainable materials, something we're on track to produce by 2030.

Over 125 years, we've responded to challenges, demands and opportunities to create products as varied as satellite antennas, computer systems and medical devices. Our tires have been everywhere from the North Pole to the moon. We supply and service trucking fleets, emergency service vehicles and commercial airlines as well as passenger cars and light trucks. Goodyear tires are original equipment on many of America's most popular vehicles.

And, of course, in my corner of the business, Goodyear racing tires have been on roads, tracks and the winner's circle around the world for more than 100 years.

[pause]

Now, at this point, I'm sure you're wondering what in the world this has to do with historic hotels and the hospitality industry. The answer is ... everything.

- How have you been able to deliver quality, reliability, value and a great experience for multiple generations?

- How have your brands become synonymous with attention to detail and best-in-class service?

- How have you remained vital and relevant, even in the face of increased competition, some of which you could never have imagined just 15 years ago?

- How have you earned the trust of your guests and lived up to the expectations of your brand, which were based on the vision of your founders?

I believe you've done it the same way Goodyear has...and for the rest of my remarks today, I'd like to share some of what we've learned and provide a few ideas of how our approach can be applied to your businesses.

And I'll do that by focusing on three key elements: innovation, collaboration and identification.

[pause]

Let's start with innovation.

The root of the word "innovation" is the Latin "novare," which means "to make new."

Over the past 20 years or so—maybe even longer—innovation has seemed to become table-stakes for any company. It connotes unconventional thinking, new products or solutions and other creative offerings.

Innovation is how you help your business evolve to answer the changing needs of your customers. Any business that wants to position itself as vibrant and contemporary embraces innovation.

The word also suggests moving forward. As we say in racing, if you're not moving forward, you're moving backwards.

But innovation isn't SIMPLY a new product or service. At Goodyear, we're continually introducing new tires for passenger vehicles, commercial trucks and other applications. We're offering new platforms to make choosing and buying the right tires easier than ever. New technology allows trucking fleets to track and maintain their tires.

But I would suggest that these products and services are the

RESULTS of innovation, rather than innovations themselves.

At Goodyear, innovation is a mindset, a way of thinking about what we do and why we do it. We believe we are more than simply a tire company—we're a technology-driven company that enables mobility. While that may not have been the way our founders would have described Goodyear, it IS the way they thought about their business.

From the beginning, we've constantly been assessing how people and products move from one place to another, determining our role in that process, and thinking about ways to do that better.

And "better" is not limited to making a tire that simply lasts longer or is easier to install. We're driven by how people experience the Goodyear brand at every touchpoint.

In 2015, Goodyear became the first tire brand to offer direct-to-consumer sales on-line. But being able to buy tires through our website wasn't the innovation. That was simply the end-result of thinking about how consumers shop, embracing that change, and providing a solution that we had not previously considered.

Back in 1916, Goodyear's goal wasn't to own cotton ranches or build communities in Arizona. But the company—still less than 20 years old—was willing to try something completely new to maintain its product quality, deliver on customer expectations and create a solution out of not much more...than sand.

Our 125-year history is filled with other examples of breakthroughs in services and in products, but also in processes, material science, business models, fleet management, sales and marketing, procurement and distribution. Those reflect what is a CULTURE of innovation at Goodyear, a culture that supports and strengthens our core enterprise—making and selling tires.

Now think about your place in the hotel industry. Like Goodyear, you can innovate on a broad spectrum without turning your back on your history or

on your original purpose. Your core business may be providing accommodations for guests, or venues for events. But, using this resort as an example, your culture is clearly based on hospitality. That's what leads to innovations that keep your properties fresh, relevant and engaging.

Abraham Lincoln is credited with saying, "You have to do your own growing, no matter how tall your grandfather was."

Through innovation, you do your own growing, constantly redefining the quality, convenience and value that sets you apart.

[pause]

Now, let's consider collaboration.

Like "innovation," this is a word that seems to have lost a bit of its depth. What too often seems to pass for collaboration is reviewing someone's email, editing a powerpoint or sitting in a meeting or Zoom call while the same two people do all the talking.

Authentic collaboration begins with three words: I don't know.

That's the prompt that leads to searching for expertise, perspective and knowledge.

More than 100 years ago, one of the people searching for tire expertise was none other than Henry Ford.

He wanted to get into racing and contacted Goodyear to supply tires that could meet the durability, handling and performance demands of motor sports. It was the beginning of Goodyear's legacy in auto racing and our first collaboration with Ford, which continues to this day. Goodyear is the primary original equipment tire supplier for many Ford vehicles, including the F-150, America's best-selling vehicle since 1981.

In just the past few years, the auto industry has undergone a dramatic change with the fast-growing adoption of electric vehicles. Our chief technology officer says that vehicles of the future will more closely resemble today's smartphones than yesterday's cars.

That shift has enabled entrepreneurs outside the traditional auto industry to influence vehicle design, construction

and operation. Software developers are becoming the new auto mechanics.

From the Goodyear perspective, our competition used to be well-known. In the early years, all the major tire makers were literally down the street from each other in Akron. Even 100 years later, we still knew them well, whether they were in France, Germany or Asia.

But today, our competitors may be a couple of MIT grads with homemade software and a proprietary algorithm, working in garage in Seattle.

[pause]

So, how do we respond to that? We could say, “What do they know about tires? We’re the ones who have been doing it for more than a century. We’re the experts.”

Instead, Goodyear’s response is “What do they know that we don’t?” “How are they looking at our business?” “What gives them the confidence that they can disrupt a global industry?”

As we recognized the move to electric vehicles, many of us at Goodyear thought about what the ramifications might be and thought: I don’t know.

Getting our best engineers and scientists in a room wasn’t going to be enough. We needed to collaborate with those who thought differently, who had different experiences, who were not bound by conventional thinking and standard operations.

In 2021, we established a satellite office in Silicon Valley and enlisted the help of creative thinkers with skills and perspectives we didn’t yet have.

Thankfully, we began investing in relationships like these without having been forced into it by a threat on our business or a disruption to the industry. But collaboration has been essential to everything we do at Goodyear.

Whether it’s working closely with automakers, raw material suppliers, distributors, local governments, even NASCAR teams—getting their perspectives on challenges and opportunities has kept us moving forward.

One of the highlighted items on Goodyear’s Strategy Roadmap is “Promote Collaboration.” The emphasis is

on the word “promote.” We want to actively seek new ideas, different points of view and creative input, both internally and externally.

Scott Galloway, the popular marketing professor at the NYU Stern School of Business—as well as entrepreneur, marketer and podcaster—is fond of saying “Greatness is achieved in the agency of others.”

In our experience, true collaboration doesn’t happen without effort. But once the effort is made and collaboration becomes part of the fabric of your company, people feel valued, respected and willing to contribute in all the ways that lead to greatness.

[pause]

And, finally, the third element that’s applicable to both Goodyear and your historic properties is identification. Or, to use a more common term, branding.

Let’s start with a reality check. Regardless of how long you’ve been in business, you don’t own your brand.

You can be stewards of your brand. You can protect the reputation of your brand. But the reality is that your brand is ultimately owned and defined by others—your guests, your suppliers, your vendors, your agents, your business partners, even your employees. How you are identified by these groups of people determines what your brand means in your marketplace.

At Goodyear, people don’t know our brand only by how our tires perform on their car or truck. People come to know our brand...

- by the care and attention they get in our retail stores
- by the ease of navigation on our website
- by how quickly we respond when a fleet’s truck is disabled on the roadside
- by the way we welcome new hires
- by helping solve a supply issue
- by our response when a NASCAR team has questions about optimizing performance
- and by many other connections with the Goodyear brand.

Now I’d like you to pause and think about some of those words.

- Care

- Attention
- Response
- Help
- Welcome

These words describe how people feel about your brand. People come to know your business through their hearts, through experiences that confirm their belief that they made the right choice.

All of those words together lead to what may be the most important word of all—trust.

As you heard in the video we showed earlier, the foundation of Goodyear’s relationship with NASCAR—with the drivers, the crew chiefs, the mechanics, the racetracks... even the fans—is built on trust.

Drivers have to trust that our tires are going to perform when they head into a corner at 200 miles per hour. That’s obvious...and, of course, important.

But teams also have to trust that our engineers have studied the tire components, the track surfaces, the effects of downforce and torque, even the effect of changing weather conditions...long before their drivers get behind the wheel.

All those experiences shape how Goodyear is identified in the hearts and minds of those who buy our products, use our services and partner with our business.

So how do people identify with your brand? Not just your guests, but your staff, your landscapers, your suppliers?

How do fire marshals, food suppliers and linen services feel about your brand?

What’s the gut reaction to your name among bankers, travel agents and security firms?

Their responses are the foundation of trust on which your brand is built. And your brand identity is formed every day through every experience, connection and interaction.

[pause]

I’d like to share an example of how the three elements of innovation, collaboration and identification—came together at Goodyear.

About 15 years ago, Goodyear's brand was not in a positive place in the heart and mind of a NASCAR driver named Tony Stewart. Tony had not been performing up to expectations and believed some of his equipment—namely his tires—was letting him down.

At least, that's what we gathered when he was quoted after a race saying "Goodyear can't build a tire worth a damn..." or something more colorful than that.

While the media and outside world were making a big deal out of his comments and wondered what we were going to do, we responded in a way that was consistent with our culture—meaning, with innovation and collaboration.

Remember the Latin root of innovation—to make new? Well, we tried something new. Instead of getting mad at Tony, or complaining to his team, we did something we'd never done before. We invited Tony, his crew chief and other members of his team to come to Akron. We took him into the factory, right on the floor, literally standing in front of the machines and the people that make our racing tires...by hand...every day.

Tony saw every step of the tire building process. He talked to the tire builders who literally put their names on every tire they make. He met with our engineers and scientists. His entire team saw the care and passion that

goes into manufacturing a product with Goodyear on the sidewall.

And, maybe most importantly, it was clear to Tony that everyone in our company understood the responsibility to competition, to reliability and to safety that is on our shoulders every race weekend.

From there, we turned to collaboration. What could we do together to make our product better? The answer started with communication. We set up a weekly post-race call with Tony and his race team to ensure clear and honest dialogue from both parties. In fact, we agreed to the call only with assurance that Tony himself would be in the room every week.

We asked, "What are you experiencing that we may not know about? What kind of feedback can you provide to help us live up to what you expect from Goodyear? What information from us would be valuable to you and your team?"

Right from the beginning, the calls were so valuable to both parties that we soon offered the same opportunity to each of the NASCAR cup-series teams. Our Tuesday recap calls are now a standard part of our collaboration with NASCAR.

That experience renewed the trust in the Goodyear brand for Tony Stewart. He identified our brand not just as a tire company, but as a team of people who care about our products, our service and what others believe we stand for.

Once Tony got to KNOW about Goodyear, it changed how he FELT about Goodyear.

[pause]

And that brings me to a concluding similarity between Goodyear and your historic hotels.

What does Tony Stewart—or anyone who buys or uses Goodyear—have in common with your guests, suppliers, employees and partners?

They're not just your customers, they're your advocates.

As much as you care about your name, your business and your reputation, they are your brand evangelists. They are your storytellers.

When Tony Stewart returned to his team's race shop, he was as powerful an advocate for Goodyear racing as we ever could have hoped for.

[pause]

When this conference concludes and you return home to your businesses, ask yourself, "How are we innovating? How are we collaborating? How are partners, guests and employees identifying our brand?" When this is inherent in who you are, your foundation of trust will not only endure for 125 years, but will thrive in the century ahead.

[pause]

Again, I'd like to thank Larry for extending this gracious invitation to be with you today. I hope everyone has a great conference and enjoys their time here this week.

Thank you.

# WINNER: CONTROVERSIAL OR HIGHLY POLITICIZED TOPICS

*“Broken Hearts, Anxious Minds and Faith in One Another”*

By Graham Shelby for Craig Greenberg,  
Mayor, Louisville, Kentucky



Delivered at the Cathedral of the Assumption,  
Louisville, Kentucky, April 28, 2023

Thank you.

I'd like to thank the Center for Interfaith Relations, Christy Brown, Owsley Brown III, the Archbishop and all of our community partners who've made this important gathering possible.

I wish I could say that we're gathering here after a tragedy.

But the likely reality is that there will be many more tragedies.

And it's okay to talk about that, all of it. Including the sometimes-strange combination of emotions that we're experiencing right now.

We're grieving and trying to understand and reconcile the tragic loss of life from gun violence—gun violence that's occurred recently, that's occurred in the past, and is likely to continue happening.

And we're also grappling with all of this just as we're entering our annual season of celebration as we prepare to host the world right here in Louisville for the Kentucky Derby.

It's okay to experience moments of joy in this time, or any time, just like it's okay to sit for a moment with the heartbreak and the horror of what we've been through.

These are all part of being human. Part of what life on this earth offers, and always has.

And since we're in a house of worship, a grand beautiful house of worship, I want to thank all the people locally and around the world, people of all faiths and backgrounds, who have reached out to Rachel and to me and said they're thinking about Louisville. They're praying for Louisville.

Those thoughts and prayers are important.

Those thoughts and prayers are greatly appreciated in the face of the tragedy that we've experienced.

And when it comes to this epidemic

of gun violence, thoughts and prayers are an important first step in the process of addressing this challenge and the root causes that have created it and fueled it.

But of course, thoughts and prayers must not be the only step.

They must lead to action. Meaningful action.

And interaction.

They must lead to conversation and connection.

And then to meaningful change—locally, at our state level and our national level.

That's the path we have to follow to ultimately find a way through the grief, confusion, and frustration of this moment.

That's how we get from here, from now, to a place and time where preventable tragedies of recurring gun violence are something we remember instead of something we dread.

There is no one cure for the epidemic of gun violence that we're seeing, because there is no one cause.

But there is one thing I feel like is a factor in so much of the violence we've seen.

And that is that too many people have lost faith.

And I mean faith in the many different senses of the word.

I'm not just talking about faith in a higher power.

Too many people have lost their faith in other people.

Or their faith in the future.

Or in society.

Or in themselves.

Or all of the above. And too often, that leads to hopelessness, desperation, and tragedy.

So can we do about that?

That's why gatherings like this are important.

We must work together to restore people's faith and to provide hope and opportunity for everyone.

Everyone here today can help.

What I ask you to do is to go from here, out in the community, in your daily life or when you're at a Derby event—and talk to people, people you don't know.

I encourage everyone to meet someone new at every event you go to—someone who doesn't look like you, who might be from a different part of our city, or a different part of Kentucky or the world.

Talk to people. And listen to them, too. Face to face. Person to person. With respect.

You won't connect with everyone, and that's okay. But sometimes those connections will happen, and when they do, they make us stronger, more resilient. And when they don't, I'm sure you'll learn something.

With each connection we make, we take another step to show our neighbors that we care, that we are in this together. And with each connection, we will make our city safer, stronger and healthier.

Right now, as a city, we are welcoming the world. And we know how to do that.

In Louisville, we know hospitality, we know how to make people feel welcome and appreciated.

Let's keep doing that—and showing that to our neighbors, the ones we know and the ones we'll get to know.

Let's demonstrate the faith we have in our city, and the faith we have in one another.

Let's show each other and the world that we can create a future together that is healthier, more hopeful and more peaceful than our past.

Thank you.



# WINNER: DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

*“Equity Works”*

By Jackson Wessells for Donald R. Cravins Jr.,  
Under Secretary of Commerce for Minority Business Development

Delivered at the 40th Annual MED Week  
Conference, Baltimore, Oct. 24, 2023

My parents, Don and Patricia, have owned and operated a small business in southwest Louisiana for nearly 50 years. “Don Cravins Insurance. Extraordinary Insurance for Ordinary People.”

As a kid, my siblings and I got a front row seat to the American entrepreneurial experience. It helped me understand that the journey for entrepreneurs of color, and for many underserved entrepreneurs, is uniquely tough.

Sitting around the dinner table, poring over balance sheets, figuring out how we’re going to make next month’s payroll. Walking out of big bank after big bank wondering why our loan application was denied. Losing customers to the businesses across the railroad tracks, because for some reason, the customer just didn’t feel “safe” on our side of town.

My parents worked hard every day, still do, to run and grow their business. And even through the tough times, they made it work.

But it does beg the question, ladies and gentlemen: can’t we do better?

The drive and resiliency of my parents, the drive and resiliency of millions of underserved entrepreneurs and people of color; it’s admirable; it’s inspiring. But what if we as a Nation could match their drive to succeed with the resources they need to succeed? And in particular, the resources they need that are unique to them; that are unique to their circumstances?

What I’m saying is: what if we were able to create an economy built on equity?

As the Nation’s first Under Secretary of Minority Business Development, one of the questions I get the most is, “Don, what does equity look

like to you?” And I define equity with an example from my life.

I still proudly serve in the military—I am a Lieutenant Colonel in the District of Columbia National Guard.

When I joined, I signed up to be a JAG: an Army Lawyer. Now, our training is nowhere near as hard as most, but for a thirty-seven-year-old dude who showed up to basic training with high blood pressure, running 4 miles every morning wasn’t easy. I even had to get a waiver from my doctor.

Now, some of the younger lawyers were stronger than me, some were faster, some were better educated. But I proved to my colleagues that I was going to put the work in; that I would work hard to become an effective soldier. In return for my effort, the Army put their faith in me by giving me two things: a uniform and a pair of boots.

But I didn’t get just any uniform, I got a uniform that fit me. And I didn’t get just any pair of boots. They made sure mine were 11 ½. They made sure I had boots that fit me.

Now, it is important to understand, in the military, no one will run for you. No one will shoot for you. No one will crawl through the mud for you. You have to do that yourself.

But, if you have the will, the military will meet you where you are and give you the resources you need to be successful. The military will invest in you. That, ladies and gentlemen, is equity.

And although the U.S. military has absolutely had its issues with diversity, equity, and inclusion, we see the needle moving in the right direction because right now our United States Military is led by an African American Secretary of Defense and an African American Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

So, to me, equity is simple. It is about giving every person a real shot at success. It is about meeting people where they are and creating a system that acknowledges the fact that we all face different circumstances, we all face different challenges; that some have more barriers in their path than others.

For every American to succeed; for every American to have a real shot, we must break down the barriers.

Now, what are those barriers? What does in-equity look like?

Inequity looks like the fact that a Black entrepreneur starts their business with, on average, \$35,000 in capital compared to over \$100,000 for white entrepreneurs.

It looks like the fact that Black and Hispanic households hold less than 6 percent of overall wealth in this country despite being nearly 30 percent of the population.

The reality is this: America’s promise of equal opportunity is not one we have ever fully lived up to.

For centuries, many Americans have faced barriers to success; barriers to education, to housing, to economic opportunity, and more. The consequences of these generational inequities are still being felt today.

Just like a boat does not stop on the spot when you turn off the engine, the effects of slavery ripple into the present.

The effects of Jim Crow, of redlining, of the displacement of Native Americans, the internment of Asian Americans, wage discrimination against Hispanic Americans, and many others; those inequities are still felt today. We must acknowledge this. It’s not about blaming. It’s about understanding.

Now, I use the word “acknowledge” intentionally.

Because, right now, there are many people refusing to even acknowledge the inequities that continue to plague our society. And not only are many refusing to acknowledge this reality, but they are actively fighting to bury it.

Right now, there is an assault on equity in this country. And the assault is happening on three fronts:

First, there is an assault on constitutional and legislative protections. Second, there is an assault on diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and corporate initiatives. And third, there is an assault on public opinion in regard to equity.

Over the last century, in many instances our courts and our legislative bodies have been places to advance equity; to advance healing in this country. The ending of slavery, the desegregation of our schools, the guarantee of our voting rights.

But recently, some are advocating to reverse or stall our Nation's efforts to heal and to advance our society.

Attacks on Federal programs like Affirmative Action are steps in the wrong direction.

These attacks turn a blind eye to the reality that some students, some business owners, and some Americans have more obstacles in their paths than others.

Affirmative Action, the SBA's 8(a) program, and the MBDA are solutions that have helped Americans and strengthened our Nation.

Over the last few decades and particularly after the murder of George Floyd, corporate America made significant commitments to become more diverse, more equitable, more inclusive. That's a good thing.

But recently, there is an unfair assault on those programs.

I am talking about threats and lawsuits against corporations and venture firms that are simply trying to promote a fairer, more accessible,

more welcoming workplace. I'm talking about companies formed by Black women to help Black women-owned businesses access capital.

It's part of an effort to undo the progress we've been making to bring equity to this space.

Lastly, there is an assault on public opinion. Equity is being framed in bad faith; twisted and tossed into the public square as a pawn to pit Americans against one another.

What is being sold to the people is that for one group of Americans to "catch up," another group of Americans must be "slowed down."

Some in the media, even some of our Nation's leaders, are mislabeling equity as a boogeyman to induce fear and anger.

But the truth is, ladies and gentlemen, not only is equity the right thing to do, but equity works.

And it works not only for minority and underserved businesses, but it works for America; it works for all of us. The data shows it. The truth is clear.

The rise of affirmative action policies in higher education have bolstered diversity on college campuses.

In 1965, Black students accounted for roughly 5 percent of all undergraduates. And between 1965 and 2001, the percentage of Black undergraduates doubled. The number of Latino undergraduates also rose during that time.

When it comes to 8(a), MBDA did our own study. We found that minority-owned businesses in the SBA's 8(a) program are 11 percent more likely to win a contract than a minority firm not in the program, helping those 8(a) firms generate more money and more jobs for their businesses and communities. And we know the program is not perfect. But it works.

Studies show that long-term supplier diversity programs can generate great-

er return on investment, bring down operating costs, strengthen supply chains, and open businesses to markets that were otherwise inaccessible.

When our government and our businesses invest and build and create with intention, they make more money. They create more jobs. They help more people. And they have a greater impact on the growth of our Nation.

Ladies and gentlemen, if you don't take anything else from what I've said today, I do want you to remember one thing: Equity? It works. The 8(a) program? It works. DEI initiatives? They work. Supplier diversity? It works. MBDA? It works.

And it works because equity is not a zero-sum-game. It is not about diminishing opportunities for the haves to give to the have-nots.

On the contrary, equity is about expansion. It is about creating a bigger pie with more slices. Equity is about achieving our full potential as a Nation.

If the United States was to close the parity gap between minority and non-minority firms, we would add an estimated \$6.3 trillion and 20 million jobs to our economy. That benefits everybody.

And that is what we are missing out on so long as we fail to extinguish this assault on equity.

But the good news is, I am confident we can. I am confident we are on the right side of history.

Although there are some who attack equity. Although there are some who even use it to stoke our greatest fears, I know there are many more of us who understand its power and who understand its purpose for the greater good; who understand that equity is the key to bridging the gap between what America is and what America can and should be.

That is why it is incumbent upon all of us to do everything in our power to fight for and defend equity. Thank you.

# WINNER: ECONOMICS

*“Measuring the Natural Rate of Interest: Past, Present, and Future”*

By Judy DeHaven for John C. Williams,  
President, Federal Reserve Bank of New York

Delivered at the Thomas Laubach Research Conference, Board of  
Governors of the Federal Reserve System, Washington, D.C., May 19, 2023

Thank you, Trevor. And good morning, everyone. It is a special privilege to participate in this conference honoring my dear friend, colleague, and co-author, Thomas Laubach.

Many of you knew Thomas personally, and all of you knew him through his work. He was a brilliant economist, trusted colleague, and an inspiring leader. We miss Thomas’ dedication, good cheer, and sense of humor, and his impact on everyone he touched endures.

Our collaboration started in the fall of 2000 with a shared interest in figuring out how to measure the elusive natural rate of interest, otherwise known as *r*-star. At the time, neither of us had any idea that our research on this topic would continue for 20 years.

Kathryn Holston and I are carrying on this work. It’s one of the many ways we can honor Thomas and his memory. Because of the unprecedented, pandemic-related shocks to the economy, we paused our regular publication of *r*-star estimates in late 2020. This conference is the perfect venue to announce that we are resuming them. But first, I want to take some time to share *r*-star’s origin story, which is how I came to know Thomas.

Before I go any further, I need to give the standard Fed disclaimer that the views I express today are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) or others in the Federal Reserve System.

## Questioning the Assumption

The idea of a natural rate of interest has been around ever since the Swedish economist Knut Wicksell wrote about it in 1898. Early on, it was recognized that it’s not something that can be directly observed or measured. As the economist John H. Williams wrote in 1931:

“The natural rate is an abstraction; like faith, it is seen by its works. One can only say that if the bank policy succeeds in stabilizing prices, the bank rate must have been brought in line with the natural rate, but if it does not, it must not have been.”<sup>1</sup>

The topic gained renewed relevance in 1993, following John Taylor’s famous description of a monetary policy rule that incorporated an assumption of a natural rate of 2 percent.<sup>2</sup> For policymakers, the natural questions—pardon the pun—were: Is 2 percent the right number? Does it change over time? And how would we know? Those were the very questions that then-Federal Reserve Governor Larry Meyer posed to Board staff back in 2000. And that’s what brought Thomas and me together.

## A Meeting of Minds

In July of that year, I returned to the Board from a stint at the Council of Economic Advisors, shortly after Thomas joined the Board staff from the Kansas City Fed. We hit it off immediately. It just so happened that both of us had been thinking about the natural rate of interest. And since Gov-

ernor Meyer had raised the subject, we moved quickly to develop an approach to answer his questions.

Although we didn’t know it then, we were following exactly the problem the other John Williams laid out in 1931.<sup>3</sup> Simply put, Thomas had a hammer. And we found a new nail. The hammer was the Kalman filter, which is about inferring the behavior of an object from its effects on other objects. And the nail was *r*-star.

## A Fast Start

On December 14, 2000, after a few short months of working together, we wrote our ideas and results in a memo to the Board of Governors.<sup>4</sup> The memo started with the bold declaration:

“This memo is a first report on a broader project to study alternative definitions and estimates of the equilibrium real rate (*R*\*) and to evaluate their usefulness in the conduct of monetary policy.”

And the Laubach-Williams (LW) model was born. Starting in May 2001, *r*-star estimates made their way into the staff Bluebook prepared for the FOMC.<sup>5</sup>

Looking back, I am struck by how quickly these ideas came together. I must also acknowledge the unwavering support we received from senior leadership to bring this new research to policymakers.

Within a year of writing the memo, we put out the academic version of this work.<sup>6,7</sup> The original paper included a

<sup>1</sup> John H. Williams, “The Monetary Doctrines of J. M. Keynes,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 45, no. 4 (August 1931): 547–587.

<sup>2</sup> John B. Taylor, “Discretion versus Policy Rules in Practice,” *Carnegie-Rochester Conference Series on Public Policy*, Vol. 39 (December 1993), pp. 195–214.

<sup>3</sup> Athanasios Orphanides discovered that quote

after we were already working on *r*-star.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Laubach and John C. Williams, *Estimates of a Time-varying Equilibrium Real Federal Funds Rate*. Memo to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, December 14, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> The first instance was the May 2001 Bluebook.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Laubach and John C. Williams, *Measur-*

*ing the Natural Rate of Interest*. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, Finance and Economics Discussion Paper Number 2001-56. November 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Laubach and John C. Williams, “Measuring the Natural Rate of Interest,” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 85, no. 4 (November 2003): 1063-70.

section on time-varying  $r$ -star's implications for monetary policy. But the editor cut it, leaving it "for future research."

### What's Past Is Prologue

Fast forward a decade, and an entirely new question about  $r$ -star arose: Why had estimates of  $r$ -star fallen so low? It's a topic Thomas and I explored in our "Redux" paper.<sup>8</sup> And in 2017, Kathryn, Thomas, and I expanded the set of economies for which we estimated  $r$ -star.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, before the pandemic, historically low estimates of  $r$ -star characterized advanced economies across the globe. This is illustrated by the Holston-Laubach-Williams (HLW) estimates of  $r$ -star for the United States and the Euro Area using data through 2019, shown in Figure 1. Both were around  $\frac{1}{2}$  percent before the onset of the pandemic, far lower than estimates from preceding decades.

### Back to the Future

One of the features of the LW and HLW models is that both are designed to be flexible and to "let the data speak" in measuring changes in the natural rate of interest. Even this flexibility, however, has its limits. And the economic turmoil brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic went far beyond what the models were originally designed for.

In particular, the pandemic violated two key assumptions about the nature of macroeconomic disturbances underlying the models.<sup>10</sup> First, the Kalman filter statistical method that serves as the models' workhorse assumes random disturbances to the economy follow a normal, or bell-shaped, distribution. Relative to historical experience, COVID-19 represented an extremely rare tail event in terms of its effect

on the economy. Second, the models assume that these disturbances are serially uncorrelated, which is at odds with the sequence of shutdowns and reopenings associated with COVID-19.

The highly unusual nature of the effects of COVID-19 is illustrated by the model auxiliary residuals for the output gap, shown for the United States and the Euro Area, in Figure 2. These residuals are related to the difference between the data and the model's prediction for the data. The dashed lines in the figure indicate two standard deviations. For the United States, these residuals are as large as 15 standard deviations, and for the Euro Area, they exceed 20 standard deviations in some periods. In a purely statistical sense, the probability of such an event occurring even once, much less twice, is infinitesimally small.

After the onset of the pandemic, we suspended publication of  $r$ -star estimates due to this extreme economic volatility and the elevated uncertainty about how the pandemic would evolve.

### The Relaunch

I am pleased to report that starting today, we are relaunching regular publication of the LW and HLW estimates of  $r$ -star. The estimates, along with model documentation, are available on the New York Fed website and will be updated each quarter.<sup>11</sup>

To address the two violations of the original model assumptions caused by the pandemic, we made two modifications to the estimation of both models. I should note that this is described in detail in the paper, "Measuring the Natural Rate of Interest After COVID-19," that was posted this morning on the New York Fed's  $r$ -star web page.

First, we incorporated an additional persistent supply shock related to the effects of the pandemic that directly

reduce the economy's potential. We measure this shock using the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Stringency Index for each economy.<sup>12</sup> This index aggregates measures of government containment and shutdown policies. Because the index is no longer being produced, we assume that in each case, it declines smoothly to zero over 2023-24.

Second, we use a statistical procedure that accounts for outliers in the model's estimation. Specifically, from the second quarter of 2020 to the fourth quarter of 2022, we estimate a time-varying process for the variance of the shocks hitting the economy. This procedure places a lower weight on periods when there are very large outliers.

Our results show that outliers are particularly large in 2020, as seen in Figure 2. By comparison, the estimated magnitude of outliers is relatively modest in 2021 and 2022. Starting in 2023, we assume that the distribution of shocks is no longer affected by the pandemic.

### Letting the Data Speak

Estimation of the modified model reveals three key findings. First, the modified estimation procedure yields results that are overall quite similar to those from the original model during the pre-pandemic period. Second, the current estimates of  $r$ -star are similar to those estimated directly before the pandemic. Third, the estimates of the natural level of output at the end of 2022 are much lower than predicted before the pandemic.

The current HLW estimates of  $r$ -star in the United States are shown in Figure 3. For comparison, the figure also shows estimates using a version of the model that is not adjusted to take into account COVID or outliers and holds the parameter values fixed at

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Laubach and John C. Williams, "Measuring the Natural Rate of Interest Redux," *Business Economics* 51, no. 2 (April 2016): pp. 57-67.

<sup>9</sup> Kathryn Holston, Thomas Laubach, and John C. Williams, "Measuring the Natural Rate of Interest: International Trends and Determinants," *Journal of*

*International Economics* 108 (May 2017): S59-S75.

<sup>10</sup> These issues are discussed in detail in "Adapting the Laubach and Williams and Holston, Laubach, and Williams Models to the COVID-19 Pandemic," and "Measuring the Natural Rate of Interest After COVID-19," by Kathryn Holston, Thomas Laubach, and John C. Williams.

<sup>11</sup> Federal Reserve Bank of New York, *Measuring the Natural Rate of Interest*.

<sup>12</sup> Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford.

estimates using data through the end of 2019.

The two sets of estimates are very similar through 2019. They differ sharply during the acute period of the pandemic, however, when the estimates from the unmodified model exhibit large swings due to the presence of sizeable outliers. Interestingly, the two estimates are very close to each other at the end of the sample. That is, the modifications to the model do not interfere with “letting the data speak.”

### A Modest Imprint

Based on the new r-star estimates for Canada, the Euro Area, and the United States, we see no signs of a significant reversal of the decline in r-star estimates evident in prior decades.<sup>13</sup> In fact, in all three economies, the r-star estimates in 2022 are within two-tenths of a percentage point of the corresponding estimate in 2019.

The largest differences between model estimates pre- and post-pandemic relate to the level of each economy’s potential output. Figure 4 compares the model’s measure of the natural level of output based on estimates using data through the fourth quarter of 2019 (the blue line) to current estimates. At the end of 2022, the COVID-adjusted level of potential output (the black line) is 4.2 percent below the pre-pandemic projection

for the fourth quarter of 2022, with nearly half of that shortfall explained by the COVID shock measure and the remainder a permanent change in the natural level of output (the gold line).

In summary, according to the model estimates, the main longer-term consequence from the pandemic period is a reduction in potential output, but the imprint on r-star appears to be relatively modest. Importantly, there is no evidence that the era of very low natural rates of interest has ended.

### The Future of R-star?

These estimates indicate that r-star today is about where it was before the pandemic. But where is it headed in the future? Of course, this is impossible to know with any certainty.

One way to gauge how forecasters perceive the future of r-star is to use forecast data to estimate it. Figure 5 shows the HLW-based estimates of r-star in the U.S. through the end of 2024. It uses published data in the first quarter of 2023. The May 2023 Blue Chip forecasts for inflation, GDP, and interest rates are used as proxies for data from the second quarter of 2023 through the fourth quarter of 2024.

The resulting estimate of r-star is about ½ percent in the first quarter of 2023, and subsequently falls to slightly below zero. Evidently, the value of r-star implied by private forecasts is, if

anything, even lower than today’s estimate. Time will tell whether this turns out to be the case.

### No One Right Answer

Let me conclude by sharing something I learned from Thomas and hold dear. It’s actually hidden in the last line of the abstract from our first published paper. It says: “Estimates of the natural rate of interest, however, are very imprecise and subject to real-time measurement error.”<sup>14</sup>

To some, that may sound like a negative statement. But it’s also what makes empirical research so exciting and challenging. There is no one right answer and no single way to view the world. Empirical research is a process of continuous learning and adaptation—fueled by perseverance. People come up with different approaches, and we learn from all of them.

So, while we started with the problem of how to estimate r-star, it didn’t end with that first Board memo. Rather, it opened the door to new questions, which led to further challenges and even more research. This is the legacy of Thomas Laubach, and it’s what brings us all together today.

Link to figures: <https://www.newyorkfed.org/medialibrary/media/newsevents/speeches/2023/wil230519/all-charts>

<sup>13</sup> Note that we no longer produce HLW estimates for the United Kingdom because the model does not provide a good fit for the data. The estimates for the UK

were highly imprecise even before the pandemic and the subsequent data has exacerbated this problem.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Laubach and John C. Williams. “Measur-

ing the Natural Rate of Interest,” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 85, no.4 (November 2003): 1063-70.

# WINNER: EDUCATION

*“What Reading Teaches”*

Written and delivered by Jeffrey Nussbaum,  
Partner, Bully Pulpit Interactive



Delivered at the National Celebration of Reading, John F. Kennedy  
Center for the Performing Arts, New York City, Aug. 23, 2023

This is such an honor, because unlike the other luminaries who are part of this celebration, I never considered myself an author.

I considered myself a speechwriter—because, more or less, that’s what I did for 25 years. And there’s a joke in speechwriting circles about a speechwriter who dies and is offered the choice between heaven and hell.

Being a good researcher, as all speechwriters must be, he first says:

A choice between heaven and hell? Let me see hell.

Millions of speechwriters, millions of keyboards on deadline.

That seems hellish—let me see heaven.

Millions of speechwriters, pounding away on millions of keyboards, on deadline.

The writer says—but this is the same as hell.

St. Peter says, “Oh no, up here we use their material.”

Tonight you get to hear my material, and I owe that to the team here at the Barbara Bush Foundation.

I also owe it to Dr. Jill Biden and President Biden—thank you for being here, Dr. Biden.

There will be a time and a place in the coming months to talk about all they’ve given America. Tonight I want to thank you for the chance your family has given me; the chance to serve—with you and in support of you.

Okay, back to St. Peter. Anyone who writes speeches for a living has speeches that went undelivered for one reason or another. And the big ones, the moments where history intervened, are the ones I write about in my book.

So I’ve spent a career writing speeches and then wrote a book about undelivered speeches—I sometimes feel

like I snuck into writing through the side door.

Except that there’s only one door into the world of writing—it’s the same door that leads you into just about every other world—and it’s the door the Barbara Bush Foundation is working to open more widely... to more people...

—and that’s reading.

I actually remember an argument my parents had when I was young. I was plowing my way through Hardy Boys book after Hardy Boys book—and my father—who was a physician and scientist—tried to get me to switch over to Hitchcock’s Three Investigators series—which, for whatever reason, I didn’t like as much.

And I remember him telling me: it’s better written.

And my mom—a teacher—snapping at him, “It doesn’t matter what you read... **JUST READ.**”

And by the way, the only thing approaching a political statement that I’ll make tonight is this: Just read.

We live in a fraught moment.

And part of what makes it so scary is that every force in our lives—from the news and entertainment we consume, to the stores at which we shop, to the zip code in which we live—drives us further apart.

So it is vanishingly rare to find the time or the opportunity to immerse ourselves in the experience of another.

Reading allows us to make that journey.

And then to make an even rarer one.

A journey in which we widen a worldview that has been narrowed by life.

A journey in which we open our eyes and our minds.

That’s a great gift reading offers.

(pause)

And there’s another gift reading offers, one I realized in writing my book.

If you read history... you understand you have agency.

People sometimes ask me what the “Theme” of my book is.

And I had never really thought about it having a theme.

I thought about it in terms of excavating and sharing lesser known—and sometimes unknown—chapters of history, and the speeches that might have accompanied them.

If we had launched 800 air strikes as planned on Cuba during the Cuban missile crisis against what we later learned were already armed nuclear missiles—if Emperor Hirohito had resigned the throne and thrown himself at the mercy of the war crimes tribunal at the end of World War two—if Kevin White, the progressive mayor of Boston in the mid 1970s—had become a Northern George Wallace and refused to de-segregate Boston schools—

If Al Shanker, the powerful leader of the American Federation of Teachers, doesn’t use pension funds to buy the bonds that will bail out New York, and the city goes bankrupt in the mid 70s...

If John Lewis had said what he REALLY wanted to say at the 1963 March on Washington and all people heard at the march was the nightmare and not the dream.

If King Edward had gone directly to the British people, asking to marry Wallace Simpson and held on to the throne leaving Britain with a Nazi sympathizing king at the dawn of World War II.

If Nixon refuses to resign and fights impeachment to the end... if anarchist Emma Goldman uses her trial for inciting a riot... to incite a riot...

And if John F. Kennedy—the person for whom this center is named—lives to give his final speech and America hears his warning, and I quote:

“Today voices are heard... preaching doctrines wholly unrelated to reality... Ignorance and misinformation can handicap the progress of a city or a company, but they can, if allowed to prevail ... handicap this country’s security.”

So what’s the theme?

I found it in my chapter on President Eisenhower’s undelivered remarks apologizing had D-Day failed.

He wrote his words in such haste that he misdaded the document. But he then went back and edited one line. Initially, he had written “the troops have been withdrawn.” He crossed that out and replaced it with, “I have withdrawn the troops. The decision was mine alone.”

For those who remember your middle school grammar, he went from passive voice to active voice.

And it reminded me of something I found that President Grant had once said, “I am a verb.”

I am a verb.

Leaders are action takers.

So many of you here occupy positions of leadership and influence.

Often outcomes rest on a razor’s edge.

And you have the power to nudge them—and even those smallest of nudges can make the difference for a company, a community, a country, or the world.

That’s what reading teaches you.

Thank you for this honor.

## WINNER: ENVIRONMENT/ENERGY/SUSTAINABILITY

*“Witchcraft and the Weather: A History for Stormy Times”*

By Cynthia Barnett with Aaron Hoover for Cynthia Barnett, Journalist and Author, *Rain: A Natural and Cultural History*

Delivered at the BlueTech Forum Water Technology Innovation Conference, Edinburgh, Scotland, May 15, 2023

Good evening! I’ll begin with a story about a king ... a child bride ... and an atrocity. The story will end here, at Edinburgh Castle, with a bloodthirsty crowd in freezing winds. But it begins far across the North Sea, in 1589. The Danish fleet is bringing 14-year-old Princess Anna of Denmark to her new husband, King James of Scotland.

It was an era of climate havoc: The very worst years of what’s known as the Little Ice Age. The most extreme rains in 1,000 years, copious floods and abnormal frosts ruined crops for year after year, causing famines, disease and forced migrations. As starvation set in, empty bellies filled with paranoia. Many people began to blame witches for conjuring the tempests.

The Danish ships were closing in on the Scottish coast when they hit a series of violent storms. Twice, the fleet carrying the princess bride came within sight of these Scottish cliffs—and twice, the storms blew them far off course—ultimately pushing them all the way to Norway.

The fleet’s captain, Peter Munch, declared the conditions suspiciously fierce—and here I quote the Royal

Archives of Denmark—“beyond the common perversity of winds and weather.”

Munch blamed witches.

After a third failed attempt, the fleet limped to a Norwegian sound. From here at Edinburgh Castle, King James decided to lead the rescue mission himself. But as he set across the North Sea, his ships, too, were tossed by freakish storms.

He finally made it to Norway. But he and Anna had to wait out more “unnatural weather” for six months before they could brave their return.

King James had been a skeptic of the witch craze. But by the time he and Anna finally reached Edinburgh in May 1590, he had changed his mind. He blamed witches. It was witches who brewed the worst weather in living memory to target him personally.

In the University of Glasgow’s Special Collections, a 1591 tract called “Newes from Scotland” tells the larger story. King James had a maidservant arrested and tortured until she named 70 names, including that of Agnes Sampson, a well-known healer and midwife.

When Agnes herself was tortured, she confessed. She told King James that Satan himself had declared him the greatest enemy he hath in the world, and ordered witches to drown him.

No words could have rung truer to the self-important king.

In the winter of 1589 in freezing winds, a crowd trekked up the road to these castle gates. They watched as Agnes Sampson was strangled and then burned at the stake. They lingered late into the night.

{PAUSE}

Agnes’ murder was not unique. It was not unusual. She was among thousands of victims across Central Europe, most of them women, executed as witches for conjuring storms during the weather extremes of the Little Ice Age. The German historian Wolfgang Behringer has shown how peaks in witch persecutions line up precisely with peaks of climate deterioration in the worst decades.

What can we make of this dark history for our own stormy times?

I’d like to suggest three ideas.

First, extremes lead to extremes. In the history of humanity and climate,

extreme weather leads to extreme behavior. It's never a simple cause-and-effect. But it's there, often distorting cultural and political forces that are already in play.

More than 400 years and an ocean away, my home state of Florida finds itself in the crosshairs of strengthening storms and hurricanes. As a native who's lived through many of these epic storms, I've always loved how neighbors and strangers help each other recover. They band together to saw up trees and clean up streets. They cook dinners on propane-powered grills under starlight.

But I wonder if this impulse to help will survive the increasing paranoia of American society. After last fall's Hurricane Ian, a popular Florida sheriff named Grady Judd urged Floridians to be ready with their guns. If a looter breaks in, the sheriff said on TV, QUOTE "you take your gun and you shoot him. You shoot him so that he looks like grated cheese."

As more and more people experience the frightening weather of climate change, the weather-related witch persecutions are a warning.

They're a warning that the depredations of an unstable climate can undermine an already fracturing society.

{PAUSE AND SMILE}

Sorry for this being kind of dark. I promise there's sunlight ahead!

My second takeaway from the story of the weather-related witch persecutions of the Little Ice Age is to beware of false solutions. The history of water and climate often comes down to hype, hubris and the fallacy of human control.

Medieval Europeans did not engage in witch hunts because they were any crueler than any other society of their time. They believed that executing these women—and about 80 percent of those legally executed as witches were women—would stop destructive weather at its source. They thought that burning witches would return sun to sky, crops to fields, and food to their children's bellies.

This illusion of weather control has been with us since the dawn of

recorded history—when people created gods to bring rains to parched crops. The earliest-known human god was a Mesopotamian deity of storms and rain. Known as Iškur by the Sumerians, or Adad by the Akkadians, he was a lightning-bolt-wielding rain god riding on the back of a galloping bull through a wild tempest in the sky.

In Greek mythology, the God Jupiter took on the personas of Jupiter Fulminator to punish with fearsome lightning and Jupiter Pluvius when giving a fertilizing rain.

The monotheism of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism all grew from the harsh, arid sands of the Middle East—where farmers prayed fervently for life-giving rains.

I suspect that in the history of every culture and geography represented in this hall, there is a story of climate hubris, hype and delusion of control with disastrous results. In the United States, during a period of unusual rains on the Western Plains in the 1870s, many young Americans were misled by what was essentially a railroad PR campaign called "Rain Follows the Plow." Many families got caught up in the hype, that the more people moved to the plains, the more it would rain.

When typical dry conditions returned by the 1880s, thousands of settlers faced terrible hardships, including mass hunger. The dry winds blew in dust, tumbleweeds and some of the most audacious conmen in American history, the traveling rainmakers.

Like the purported witches of the Little Ice Age, the rainmakers dealt in spells and hocus pocus. But in their case, they took advantage of small farmers who gave them their last dimes in the belief that they would bring back the rain.

The U.S. Congress even funded rainmakers at the behest of more influential farmers and ranchers, over the objection of federal meteorologists who knew it was hokum and said so. It would not be the last time politicians listened to the influential ill-informed, rather than their own scientists.

The futility and frustration of being at the mercy of the climate is universal in human experience, but it is always worse for those with the least. You don't see this story in Hollywood Westerns, but many settlers on the Plains in that era died of starvation, just like those Europeans of the Little Ice Age. Half the population of Kansas and Nebraska gave up homesteads and moved back east.

So, to recap: My first suggestion is that extreme weather leads to extreme human behavior. My second is to beware of false solutions.

NOW here comes some sun to peek through the clouds. My third lesson is about the power of science and innovation. The history of weather and climate also suggests that crises ultimately spur ingenuity. In the end, we put our heads together and get to work.

In Mesopotamia, people facing a global megadrought came together in the great Fertile Crescent and figured out how to irrigate and collectively grow food. The Sumerians may have had their rain god, Iškur, but according to a Sumerian "Farmer's Almanac" from 4,000 years ago, they also rotated crops and let them fallow to fertilize the soil.

Later, rising from the darkness of the witchcraft era, the Scientific Revolution supercharged the human propensity for innovation and adaptation.

In the early 1800s, when gas lamps began to light up the night here in Scotland and the rest of Europe, production of coal gas left a great menace—tar sludge that grew in enormous piles here in the Firth of Forth and in other industrial centers. A young chemist in Glasgow was determined to find practical uses for the waste. He figured out how to turn convert the tar into pitch. And he pressed the most dangerous byproduct, highly flammable naphtha, between sheets of fabric with heavy rollers.

His name was Charles Macintosh, and he had turned pollution into the world's first raincoat—the progenitor of all waterproof clothing and fabric we enjoy today.



Later that century in England, the pioneering meteorologist Robert Fitz-Roy, a Navy vice-admiral determined to help make shipping safer, developed the science he dubbed forecasting: He figured out that the better he could track what the weather had done in the past, the better he could warn what it would do next.

He fought to bring daily storm warnings to England, saving countless lives at sea. But the ship-salvaging industry lobbied Parliament against forecasting, halting its use for years. They attacked FitzRoy's credibility with such intensity that he committed suicide, never seeing how his science of forecasting would change shipping, commerce and culture.

Armed with our own climate forecasts, we can learn so much. But sometimes we forget how much there is to learn from looking back: Are we destined to relieve witchlike paranoia? Will politicians listen to the influential ill-informed rather than their own scientists? Will we finally learn to work with our water and climate, rather than thinking we can control it?

{PAUSE}

Before my final comments, I'd like to pause to thank Paul O'Callaghan and everyone with the BlueTech staff for this wonderful conference, and for bringing me to Scotland.

As promised, I'll end where I began, here at Edinburgh Castle.

On a May evening in 2023, another crowd trudged up the hill to the castle gates, very different from those who gathered in 1589. They came from around the world in mere hours on flying machines. They carried tiny devices that were portals to all human knowledge. They knew neither hunger nor frostbite.

Much like in the Little Ice Age, their climate was unstable, their weather contorting daily with new extremes. They worried that superstition and chaos could once again overwhelm their world. But they had the wisdom of history—and the power of science and technology to carry the day. Time was short. They got to work.

Thank you.

## WINNER: HEALTHCARE

*"A Battle for the Soul of Our Nation"*

By Nikitta Foston for Dr. Jack Resneck Jr.,  
Immediate Past President, American Medical Association

Delivered at the AMA's 2023 Annual Meeting  
of House of Delegates, Chicago, June 6, 2023

**D**r. Speaker, Dr. Vice Speaker, Members of the Board, delegates, colleagues and guests...

It's my honor to be with you this evening.

I won't spend all of my final address to this House dwelling on the very real, very dangerous external attacks now engulfing our profession.

You got to hear from "angry Jack" in November, when I channeled my deep frustration with anti-science aggression, disinformation, payment cuts, and the many practice burdens driving burnout, not to mention the growing number of states and courts forcing themselves into the most intimate and difficult conversations patients and physicians share.

All of us here today are leaders in medicine, representing physicians back home. And so, we carry the burden of these hardships for them, which makes us all acutely aware of how daunting these challenges feel to our colleagues on the frontlines.

I'm sure some of the headlines about burnout stop you in your tracks—they certainly keep me up at night.

One in five physicians plans to leave their practice within two years, while one in three is reducing hours.

Only 57 percent of doctors today would choose medicine again if they were just starting their careers.

Consider that for a moment...

This means that about two in five physicians go beyond mere daydreams of another career to wishing they had never chosen this path in the first place.

That is a stunning indictment of the dysfunctional health care environment that is pushing record numbers of physicians to the brink.

In my inaugural address last year, and again at the Interim Meeting, I told the story of a Cleveland woman and casual runner who mistakenly ran the Cleveland marathon instead of the 10k she had signed up for.

Georgene Johnson's determination to finish the race, despite her lack of preparation, makes it an endearing story, and a perfect metaphor for all of us who pursued this profession to heal others ... only to find ourselves confronting a reality that is unlike anything we imagined.

While Georgene's story never failed to get a laugh, I've thought a lot about where the metaphor may have missed the mark.

Lucky for Georgene, marathons have a defined end. You break the tape at the finish line, and you're done. There is no more running to do.

But in these difficult times for medicine in America, our work in organized medicine has no finish line. New challenges keep appearing, and many existing ones seem to endure.

We are knocked down ... we dust ourselves off and get back up.

We accumulate victories—some small, some large ...but we keep running.

Don't bother looking for the rest areas between our races—I can assure you... you won't find them.

But as physicians and healers, we are already very accustomed to persevering. And we're darn good at it.

We stick with patients suffering from chronic illnesses like diabetes or depression through setbacks and successes.

We keep trying to convince that longtime smoker to quit, schedule yet another appointment to talk with a hesitant family about vaccinating their child, and show up for yet another trauma shift to face an endless stream of gun violence victims.

We never turn our backs on our patients because that's **NOT WHO WE ARE.**

And we carry that same stubborn resolve and tenacity into our advocacy work.

That means fighting for long overdue fixes to a broken Medicare payment system, and obnoxious prior auth abuses, even when policymakers have neglected the problems for decades.

That means defending against broad scope expansions that put patients at risk, even when it requires gearing up again and again, in state after state.

That means confronting medical disinformation in the news and on social media, even when its growth feels overwhelming.

And yes, it means battling in state legislatures and courthouses for the very soul of our nation and our profession—to protect patients from those outside influences wanting to dictate the terms of their care ...

...telling them what medical treatments their physicians can provide ...  
...what FDA-approved medicines we can prescribe....  
...even what words we can use ...

This is what happens when politicians force their way into our exam rooms.

This isn't about science.

Interfering with the sacred patient-doctor relationship is about **CONTROL.**

I know it can feel like victory is out of reach—that we're running out of breath and running out of time....

But we all share a commitment to stay in this race ...

We play the long game, and we're in it to win.

So perhaps instead of the marathon analogy, it's better to think about our collective efforts like the Olympic torch relay.

Don't worry, I'm not heading for the obvious metaphor of a relay race, with one leader handing over the torch to the next.

I'm talking about the deeper symbolism of the unity among torch carriers, thousands at each Olympics protecting something far bigger than any one individual, or any one leg of the course.

In our own professional tradition, the work to preserve our core values, and the health of our patients, is itself ...the enduring common cause that binds us.

The torch relay and the lighting of the Olympic flame are indelible parts of the games.

And in that sacred tradition, as in ours, there are no shortcuts.

There are no substitutes for the actual flame, which is carried forward to the games by any means necessary—by running, jogging, or swimming; by horse, boat, train, or plane ... and once underwater past the Great Barrier Reef.

The torch has even gone to space.

The passing of the torch, and the tradition it embodies, have survived every conceivable challenge.

It has been rerouted by war. Its symbolism has been coopted for propaganda. It's been briefly extinguished by wind, by rain, and even by protestors.

But one way or another, the tradition **LIVES ON.**

I like this metaphor for our work together in organized medicine because it's not solely about passing a baton; it's about giving of yourself to a larger mission.

It's about persevering with unyielding resolve. The challenges that threaten the torch may change, but the larger mission does not.

The AMA doesn't win every battle. But we are more resolute in our work

because of the challenges and existential threats to our profession and our patients.

Even when there are temporary setbacks, our common cause is to speak out for, and to advance our flame, our ethical values, and our common purpose—that is what keeps us going.

All of us here tonight ... we recognize the extraordinary privilege to be part of something worth preserving and worth renewing for the next generation

That's the power in what we do.

I want to share some thoughts about where we are on this leg of the race, and some positive signs of hope.

No, I can't sugarcoat the very real threats.

I'm still appalled by the Medicare cuts. What on earth was Congress thinking?

Practices are on the brink.

Our workforce is at risk.

Access to care stands in the balance.

We absolutely must tie future Medicare payments to inflation, and we're readying a major national campaign to finally achieve Congressional action.

And shame on political leaders, fueling fear and sowing division by making enemies of public health officials, of transgender adolescents, of physicians doing anti-racism work, and of women making personal decisions about their pregnancies.

I'm also deeply disappointed by our nation's lack of progress to address the public health crisis of gun violence. Preventable and needless homicides and suicides continue, and the political inaction is atrocious.

But over the past year, I've had the privilege of appearing in public on your behalf more times than I can count. And that has afforded me many opportunities to absorb just where our profession, and the public, stand in this divisive time.

And I want to tell you something I've learned...

There are more people who agree with us than those who do not.

Are there different ideologies around solving the challenges we face?

Yes.

Are there different strategies for achieving our goals?

Of course.

Do people get their news from entirely different channels with little overlap?

Sadly, yes.

But...the truth is, most physicians and our patients are proud to see the AMA fighting for its policies and values.

I know what you are thinking...

“Jack, have you been on Twitter lately?”

Oh yes...I have.

But I've also witnessed some of the most inspiring work in the country by colleagues and allies, and received words of encouragement that have brought me to tears on difficult days.

You wouldn't know it from social media...

But after some unfortunate detours, most patients are turning back to their trusted physicians for our insights and expertise about science and medicine.

You wouldn't know it from the rhetoric ...

But once we demonstrate health equity in action, I've seen widespread support for the work.

I loved traveling to Mississippi and witnessing their progress from startling COVID inequities to achieving one of the nation's top vaccination rates among Black residents.

You wouldn't know it from the appalling lack of legislative action ...

But solid majorities of Americans believe in commonsense gun reforms in line with our AMA recommendations.

You wouldn't know it from 20 state legislatures racing to criminalize abortion and rob women of access to reproductive health care...

But most people in this country support our policies and the fundamental rights of patients to make their own decisions about their health.

You wouldn't know it from health insurers still bullying us with prior auth delays and denying care ...

But policymakers from both parties are onto these schemes, the momentum has shifted, and they're not going to allow this NONSENSE anymore.

You may not realize it, based on the climate of anti-science aggression...

But medical school applications are at an all-time high, led by large increases among historically minoritized students.

Future physicians are not dissuaded by the challenges. They are eager to join our fight.

In our country, and in our profession, we don't agree on everything, but we agree on enough things to pursue the shared things that we care about. Together.

And let us not forget that those pursuits have generated some big and small wins tied to the AMA Recovery Plan for America's Physicians.

I know what you're thinking. Recovery Plan? What's that? I've never heard of it before.

I know, I know... Your hundredth exposure to the video loop on our buses at Interim may have been overkill.

But for the public and physicians back home, they need to know about our relentless work fighting to restore the sustainability of our profession. In that race, the Recovery Plan is our roadmap and our message.

As I said in November, we need to fix what's broken, and it's NOT the doctor.

Duct-taping the widening cracks of a dilapidated Medicare payment system isn't sustainable. The patches aren't holding.

Linking physician payment to inflation is an absolute top priority, an existential must to keep practices afloat, and pillar #1 of the plan.

An important step on that path was the recent introduction of a bipartisan bill to finally align the Medicare fee schedule with MEI.

On other pillars, our Congressional advocacy played a key role in legislation to extend Medicare telehealth coverage.

In partnership with states and specialties, our advocacy has helped protect patients from outrageous and broad scope expansions more than 50 times so far this year.

State after state is making progress to constrain prior authorization, and

CMS issued rules to do the same in Medicare Advantage plans.

And we have been instrumental in helping create confidential wellness programs for physicians and removing outdated questions about past impairment from licensing and credentialing forms.

And the AMA is achieving success on the breadth of policies from this House beyond our Recovery Plan as well.

The FDA is making Naloxone available over the counter ... and may be on the verge of doing the same for an over-the-counter oral contraceptive.

The FDA has also finally removed many outdated restrictions on blood donations from men who have sex with men.

Medicaid work requirements that conflict with AMA policy were kept out of the debt ceiling bill.

We've helped shift the national conversation about protecting patient data and making sure digital health and AI tools are proven BEFORE being deployed.

We've broadened and intensified our work to embed equity and racial justice, and to push upstream to affect structural and social drivers of health inequities.

And our litigation center has been very, very busy.

We've joined others in suing Cigna for shortchanging doctors and patients.

We forced the federal government to take steps towards banning menthol cigarettes.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court agreed with us that patients and judges can't force physicians to administer substandard care.

Courts have invalidated parts of No Surprises Act rules that plainly ignored Congressional intent and put a thumb on the scale to favor insurance companies... thank you Texas Medical Association and AMA!

The 5th Circuit Court is staying— for now—an egregious ruling that would have stripped patients of the right to access preventive care service with no out-of-pocket costs, a key piece of the Affordable Care Act.

The U.S. Supreme Court is delaying attempts by a single district judge with no scientific or medical training to take mifepristone off the market nationally and upend our entire FDA drug regulatory process.

We're briefing in more courts than I can count to turn back criminalization of medical care.

And we're not done yet.  
Not even close.

In my inaugural address, I admitted to being a pragmatic optimist who believes in relentlessly showing up, and using levers of power to help create a more just and equitable system.

I remain undeterred—even though the challenges we face today are daunting.

The burnout and the moral injury are real ... I've felt it myself.

I hear the concern in the voices of medical students, residents, and

even young physicians when they ask me ...

"Am I going to be okay?"

"Have I made the right career choice?"

The first message I share: Yes, I'm confident that you have made the right choice.

You are joining an extraordinary profession, and we are lucky to have you.

Don't ever lose your passion for humanity and healing.

And the second message I give them ... there is no time to waste, so let's get to work.

"You want a more equitable future for patients?"

Demand it.

"You want a future where our health care system and new technologies support physicians rather than burdening us?"

Create it.

"You want patients making their own decisions about their health?"

Fight for it.

You are entering the profession for all the right reasons and to fix all the right problems ... and there will be more.

We have enormous privilege to do this work.

We share a love for what we do—to help...to cure...to listen...to solve...to heal...to lead.

And we have a responsibility to our patients AND to the health of this nation.

WE are the keepers of an important tradition ... a flame that must NOT be extinguished.

Our profession is counting on us to get this right.

Our patients are depending on us to continue...this...fight.

We will not let them down.

Thank you.

## WINNER: PUBLIC POLICY

*"Cigarettes Belong in Museums"*

By Jody Sunna for Jacek Olczak, CEO,  
Philip Morris International



Delivered at the UnHerd Club,  
London, May 23, 2023

We've all heard the quote, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

And still, despite often restrictive regulations, high product prices, marketing bans, and packaging designed to discourage buying, today, public health data shows that a billion people worldwide smoke.

Not to mention public health campaigns—and even companies like mine—urging people not to smoke.

The persistence of high smoking rates globally is evidence that the current approach to ending cigarette use is not working quickly enough.

And yet the most common response to the problem is more of the same.

It's time to try something else. To try a more inclusive and innovative

approach; one that has been proven in several countries around the world and that has the potential to significantly accelerate an end to cigarettes.

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For adults who would otherwise continue to smoke, switching to a smoke-free product is a pragmatic option can have a positive impact on both individual and public health.

Let there be no mistake: People who have never used tobacco or nicotine, especially minors, should not use these products. And there's no doubt that quitting altogether, or better still, never starting, is the best choice.

But, let's focus for now on adult smokers who have not quit. Today, thanks to smoke-free products, these

one billion people have better options than continuing to smoke. And because of these options, we can begin to imagine an accelerated decline in smoking and associated diseases ... and not by a little, by a lot.

Here's the curious thing: I'm moving Philip Morris International out of cigarettes, but the faster I go, the more people shout at me.

Our mission is clear: to reduce smoking by replacing cigarettes with less harmful alternatives.

Cigarettes belong in museums, not supermarkets.

Since 2016, my company has fully committed to moving away from cigarettes, the most harmful form of nicotine consumption. We have invested more than 10.5 billion U.S. dollars in developing and commercializing smoke-free

products—which today account for nearly 35 percent of our total net revenues.

Frustratingly, our ability to make further progress is being blocked by those who are blindly guided by a desire to see an end to the industry rather than an end to cigarettes.

This, together with an overreliance on the so-called precautionary principle—which some interpret as “better not to do anything until we know everything”—results in government inaction and more of the same.

Today’s environment and rhetoric make it easier for governments and regulators to do nothing on smoke-free alternatives. It’s perceived as safer for political careers to abstain from the debate completely rather than be seen as siding with us.

But, in the end, this is just prolonging the life of cigarettes and risks shortening the lives of those who use them.

For smokers today, inaction is not a neutral position. It is a choice with real-world outcomes.

We are entering what Churchill called “a period of consequences.”

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It is no longer a case of if these smoke-free alternatives are better than cigarette smoking; it is a case of by how much.

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Using the World Health Organization’s data and modeling methods, we’ve estimated the potential positive public health impact of the world’s smokers switching from cigarettes to less harmful, smoke-free products.

This hypothetical model shows that if these products are assumed to be 80 percent less risky than cigarettes, then there’s a potential for an 11-fold reduction in smoking-attributable deaths compared with traditional tobacco control measures alone.

Let me repeat that hypothesis: Based on the W-H-O’s own data, we see the real potential for an 11-fold reduction in smoking-attributable deaths if adult smokers were encouraged to switch to smoke-

free products. And this positive impact could be even greater when combined with traditional measures to discourage initiation and encourage cessation.

Whilst there are limitations to this kind of hypothetical analysis, this estimate begins to show the real impact of inaction. The human impact.

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But this is not just a hypothetical situation.

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Look at public health data in Sweden, a country that today boasts one of the developed world’s lowest smoking rates, at around 5 percent.

There, snus—a noncombustible form of moist tobacco that is placed between the lip and gums—is the most commonly used alternative to cigarettes.

According to this data, mortality rates due to tobacco use in Sweden are much, much lower than in EU countries where snus are banned.

The Swedish Snus Commission, estimates that 355,000 smoking-attributable deaths among men could have been avoided each year if the other EU countries had matched Sweden’s tobacco-related mortality rate.

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We can also look at Japan, which has seen rapidly declining smoking rates since the introduction of heated tobacco products in 2014. Just like in Sweden, these noncombustible products are beginning to replace cigarettes.

Five years after the products were introduced, the Japanese National Health and Nutrition Survey showed an unprecedented decline in the number of adults who smoke cigarettes. More recent studies show that the pace of decline has continued, and today only about 12 percent of Japanese adults smoke. And while more research is needed, we are beginning to see the emergence of encouraging data hinting that there may be a positive impact on

public health already.

Contrast this with Japan’s neighbor Singapore, where smoke-free products are banned. In that country, cigarette sales volume has actually increased, and smoking rates are not going down.

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Despite all this evidence, the policy of inaction continues in many places—preventing less harmful products from replacing the cigarette.

When governments—and organizations that lobby them—prevent men and women who continue to smoke from accessing less harmful alternatives, and when they perpetuate misinformation about these products, it has a direct correlation to the persistence of smoking.

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My question is: Will governments that ban these products or treat them like cigarettes take responsibility for the consequences?

Will society stand up and call out the organizations that are blocking progress?

Or will this insanity persist—leaving us with more of the same and millions of people needlessly continuing to smoke?

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It is time for more countries to follow the lead of Sweden, Japan, and other countries such as the U.K.

It’s time for anti-tobacco organizations to stop fighting against us and start fighting for adults who smoke.

It’s time to work towards a common goal of delivering effective policies which make cigarettes a historical artifact, a museum piece collecting dust behind glass cases.

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We need to remember that there is a real, human impact of inaction. Because not taking an evidenced based decision on smoke-free products today is a decision with consequences.

# WINNER: RHETORIC AND COMMUNICATION

*“The Language of Leadership”*

Written and delivered by Jeffrey Nussbaum,  
Partner, Bully Pulpit Interactive

Delivered at The Wharton School of Business Advanced Management  
Program, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Oct. 31, 2023

I literally wrote in my book about undelivered speeches that the most gripping presentations do NOT start with the acknowledgments.

It’s on page 43.

Speakers have an incredibly limited amount of time to capture an audience’s attention.

Of course, I will now violate my own rule and acknowledge the legendary Mike Useem, who has pulled me out from behind the curtain, or from the cave, or wherever you imagine people who write speeches reside.

And, in fact, a lot of my life today is not speeches—it’s working with leaders on larger messaging and communications challenges—and I’m happy to answer any questions you have about that.

But for today, I wanted to talk a little bit about the language of leadership, with some examples from my book, *Undelivered: The Never-Hard Speeches that Would Have Rewritten History*.

And speaking of *Undelivered*; there’s a joke in speechwriting circles about a speechwriter who dies and is offered the choice between heaven and hell.

Being a good researcher, as all speechwriters must be, he first says, “A choice between heaven and hell—Let me see hell.”

Millions of speechwriters, millions of keyboards on deadline. His reaction? “That seems hellish—let me see heaven.”

Millions of speechwriters, pounding away on millions of keyboards, on deadline.

The writer says, “but this is the same as hell.”

St. Peter says, “Oh no, up here we use their stuff.”

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Anyone who writes speeches for a living has speeches that went undelivered for one reason or another. President Biden was supposed to give a speech on electric buses that got scrapped when the George Floyd verdict came down.

I have to say, I wrote a damn good speech about buses, too.

But I was happy to see it fall by the wayside in the name of justice.

And I didn’t write this book to salvage electric bus speeches from history’s scrap heap.

The obsession began on Election Night in 2000. I was in my first job, working as a junior speechwriter for Al Gore. We had three drafts prepared that night. A victory speech. A concession. And a modification based on the expectation that Gore might win the Electoral College but lose the popular vote.

Of course, the opposite happened. But that took some time—and the judicial system—to sort out.

On Election Night itself, Gore gave no speech.

Standing with those three undelivered drafts—which I later lost!—I started thinking: what are the other moments, and not just in politics, where divergent outcomes are so possible that those outcomes need to be planned for?

So I went searching and found them—yes in politics, but also in war and peace, times of social upheaval, and even in pop culture.

And as I accumulated, I also reconstructed—re-creating dramatic moments of choosing and consequence and circumstance where one outcome was so possible, there was a draft prepared for that outcome.

If we had launched 800 airstrikes as planned on Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis, against what we later

learned were already armed nuclear missiles.

If Emperor Hirohito had resigned the Japanese throne and thrown himself at the mercy of the war crimes tribunal at the end of World War II.

If Kevin White, who was a progressive mayor of Boston in the mid-70s, had become a northern George Wallace and refused to de-segregate Boston schools.

Also in the mid-70s—what a terrible time—if Al Shanker, the powerful head of the teacher’s union, doesn’t bail out New York and the city goes bankrupt.

If John Lewis had said what he REALLY wanted to say at the March on Washington, and all people heard at the march was the nightmare and not the dream.

If King Edward had gone directly to the British people, asking to marry Wallis Simpson and held on to the throne, leaving Britain with a Nazi-sympathizing king at the dawn of World War II.

If the anarchist Emma Goldman uses her trial for inciting a riot... to incite a riot.

If Richard Nixon refuses to resign and fights impeachment to the end.

And if Hillary Clinton wins.

All of these things—and a lot more—could have happened.

Not only could they have happened, there were speeches prepared that would have set them in motion.

I’m not a historian or a journalist, but this project allowed me to be both, and it was really fun excavating history.

In each chapter, I recreate the events—sometimes less known, sometimes forgotten—and share the speech. And then I offer a little bit about what it says about the process and practice of speechwriting.

And these experiences, combined with a fair amount of time spent in executive offices—and oval offices—have allowed me to develop some thoughts on the language of leadership and the roles leaders play as events unfold.

With my time with you today, I'm going to talk about three things:

- 1) Audience.
  - 2) Optionality.
  - 3) Responsibility.
- Let's start with audience.

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So much of communication is about finding your audience, meeting them where they are, and bringing them along to you:

I start the book with John Lewis.

He's 23 years old. He'd just become chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee—SNCC—a few months earlier.

He had participated in the Freedom Rides in 1961—and though he wasn't on it at the time, his bus was firebombed. He had seen the worst of the violence and injustice: he doesn't want a march in Washington, he wants a march ON Washington.

As Lewis said, "I've always believed in putting some sting into it. I wanted this march to have some sting, and if the only place for that sting would be in my speech, then I needed to make sure my words were especially strong."

And indeed he did, observing that an avowed racist like James Eastland of Mississippi was a Democrat just like Kennedy, and a progressive Republican like Jacob Javits sat in the Republican caucus with Barry Goldwater, a fierce opponent of civil rights. "Where," Lewis asked in his draft remarks, "is our party?" And how could we support Kennedy's immorally weak civil rights bill?

Ultimately, Lewis wanted to remind people that the fight for civil rights wasn't just freedom rides, or sit-ins, or marches; it was a revolution, one that was sweeping across America. Lewis wove the concept of revolution throughout the draft, summarizing it

with the line, "We will march through the South, through the heart of Dixie, the way Sherman did. We shall pursue our own 'scorched earth' policy and burn Jim Crow to the ground." And then Lewis added, almost as an afterthought, "—nonviolently."

As one final coup de grace, Lewis added to the draft a stern rebuke to those who counseled patience: "To those who have said, 'Be patient and wait,' we must say that 'patience' is a dirty and nasty word."

Lewis felt good about his draft. Not everyone did. One advance copy made its way into the hands of the Archbishop of Washington, Patrick O'Boyle. O'Boyle had been an early and strong proponent of the march, but when he saw a copy of Lewis's speech, he felt he simply couldn't deliver an invocation blessing what Lewis was about to say. If O'Boyle dropped out of the march, it would put President Kennedy and his brother, the attorney general, in a bind. As Drew Hansen wrote in his masterful history of Dr. King's speech, *The Dream: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*, "If the Catholic Church's most prominent representative withdrew from the march at the last minute, it would mar the image of the event as a peaceful, multiracial, and multireligious demonstration for civil rights."

Words have power, and it's worth remembering that these words were to be delivered to a city on edge.

Leaves for every police unit in the District had been cancelled. Every officer was on duty, with backup units from the surrounding suburbs on standby. Two thousand members of the National Guard had been deployed, a force that included Washington Redskins quarterback Norm Snead and four of his teammates. Seeing Snead surrounded by guardsmen, one writer quipped, "That's the most protection Norm has had this year." Four thousand Army troops stood ready in the DC suburbs and 15,000 paratroopers had been put on standby in North Carolina. Thirty Army helicopters patrolled the skies,

swooping low over the city. The city ordered 350 firefighters to switch roles and take on police duty on the day of the march. Hospitals stocked plasma and cancelled elective surgeries. And that night at midnight, for the first time since prohibition, a ban on liquor sales went into effect for all of DC's 1,900 licensed liquor outlets.

That's how tense the city was. And that's why Lewis's words had to be so carefully calibrated.

The march organizers descended on Lewis, first the night before the march and then as it was underway—beseeching him to dial back his words.

Walter Reuther, the head of the United Auto Workers, was upset that Lewis intended to say, "In good conscience, we cannot support wholeheartedly the administration's civil rights bill, for it is too little and too late," followed by an extended enumeration of its shortcomings.

Roy Wilkins, who led the NAACP, got in Lewis's face, accusing him of "double-crossing" the supporters of the bill, shaking a finger at him, asking why the SNCC people always had to be different. Lewis shook his finger right back, saying that Wilkins hadn't been on the front lines and hadn't seen what Lewis had seen.

Bayard Rustin separated everyone and designated a smaller group that included Martin Luther King, Jr. and A. Phillip Randolph to hash things out with Lewis. In the meantime, Archbishop O'Boyle had received enough assurances that the speech would be changed that he went out to deliver the invocation. But backstage, the drama continued.

King, who had been a mentor and idol to Lewis, and affectionately referred to him as "the boy from Troy," observed to Lewis that the Sherman line, "doesn't sound like you."

Lewis agreed, but pointed out that it sounded like us, the young people of the SNCC.

The only person with a chance of persuading Lewis to change the text of his prepared remarks was the pioneer of the enterprise, A. Philip Randolph."

And when Randolph returned, that's what happened. Despite the massive turnout and success of the march to that point, he looked beaten down and tired. He addressed the SNCC trio: "I have waited twenty-two years for this. I've waited all my life for this opportunity. Please don't ruin it."

Lewis describes what happened next:

"Then he turned to me. 'John,' he said. He looked as if he might cry. 'We've come this far together. Let us stay together.' This was as close to a plea as a man as dignified as he could come. How could I say no? It would be like saying no to Mother Teresa. I said I would fix it."

And he did. He gave himself optionality, as I'll discuss in a moment.

I tell this whole story under the heading of audience for the following reason: sometimes what you want to say or do isn't what your audience is ready to hear or join.

This can be tough for leaders. When you believe something so strongly, you almost want to shake your audience by the shoulders and say, "wake up!"

In fact, the last line of John Lewis's undelivered draft is, literally, "Wake up, America!"

But the audience for the march wasn't ready to be shaken as hard as Lewis wanted, and in fact his initial draft could have alienated them.

Analysis done at the time by the Pew Research Center found that most Americans were wary of the March on Washington. By that August, 69% had heard about the march, and 63% of them had an unfavorable opinion of it. Even with more than half of Americans outside the south favoring equal rights legislation, a large majority thought mass demonstrations would be detrimental to the cause.

To bring an audience with you, you have to meet them where they are.

This why it was so powerful when Bill Clinton gave a deeply personal answer in the second 1992 presidential debate to the question of how the national debt has affected you personally. People refer to it as the "I feel your

pain" moment, even though Clinton never uttered those words.

Or consider George W. Bush on the smoldering rubble of the twin towers after 9/11. Shouting into a bullhorn: "I can hear you! The rest of the world hears you, and the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon." He met us where we were, in grief, anger, and disbelief.

So let's return to Lewis—who wasn't happy with the edits he felt forced to make.

Even with those modifications, it was still the angriest speech—but it didn't smother his audience with the nightmare.

Instead, it gave them just enough of it that they were ready to accept the dream.

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This brings us to optionality.

Because what Lewis did with his edits was leave himself room.

Instead of describing the civil rights bill as "too little and too late," it becomes "We can't support the civil rights bill... in its current form. Unless title 3 is put in this bill..."

Instead of the blanket threat that, "the day will come when we will not confine our marching to Washington, we will march through the South, through the heart of Dixie..." Lewis said, "If we do not get meaningful legislation out of this Congress, the time will come..."—offering a prediction of what could happen without progress.

In this way, Lewis was able to deliver clarity while still providing optionality.

This feels very relevant at the moment, because we often see leaders painting themselves into corners by making Sherman Statements.

That term comes from Civil War hero William Tecumseh Sherman, who had no interest in running for president.

He wrote two telegrams:

"I will not accept if nominated, and will not serve if elected."

That was less colorful than his initial response:

"I would account myself a fool, a madman, an ass to embark anew at 65 years of age."

So when Jay Monahan, the chairman of the PGA, made a Sherman statement that "We would never align" with the Saudis, it left him little room to do the work he's done in the days since.

Or when George H.W. Bush famously declared, "Read my lips: no new taxes," he got caught in a trap of his own making, and opened himself up for the famous David Letterman rejoinder, "Read my lips: I was lying."

Consider even when LeBron James "took his talents" to the Miami heat in 2010. He didn't promise one championship, he promised 7. Only a statement like that made winning 2 championships a disappointment.

Or Lyndon Johnson's 1964 statement about not sending any more Americans to Vietnam, the violation of which led directly to his decision to not seek reelection.

In my chapter on New York's near bankruptcy in 1975—I showed you the famous "Ford to City: Drop Dead" headline.

That headline was a result of President Ford's statement that "I will veto any bill that has as its purpose bailing out New York City."

You could argue that one line cost Ford the presidency. That's because he later reversed himself, and approved federal support for New York. And in the 1976 election, Jimmy Carter received the third highest vote share a Democratic candidate had ever gotten in NYC, narrowly winning the state, and New York's 41 electoral votes gave him the presidency. Pretty big impact.

But sometimes it's not just the choice of language to give you options, it's about using language to see your options.

That's exactly what happened during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. As President Kennedy's advisors weighed their options, they divided into two groups: one in favor of airstrikes on Cuba, and one in favor of a blockade. Each group was to present their recommendations



to the President. And Robert Kennedy added one more item to the assignment: Each group's recommendation had to begin "with an outline of the President's speech to the nation."

The speech in favor of an airstrike, on its sixth page, contains what may have been the most consequential parenthetical in history: "(Follows a description of first reports of action.)"

In his book "Living Faith," President Carter recalls a sermon that says after we die, the marker on our grave has two dates: the day we're born and the day we die, and a little dash in between, representing our whole life on Earth. To God, the tiny dash is everything.

To the fate of mankind, this parenthetical could have contained everything.

Often when events are moving quickly, speechwriters will write their equivalent of the journalist's TK, meaning additional material is "to come" later. Usually, these are meant to be filled with statistics that are being finalized, or policy proposals that are undergoing a review, or the names of supporters who are still being recruited.

This parenthetical, however, would be filled with much more than the budgetary impact of a policy proposal. This parenthetical would be filled with a description of the battle, the scale of the destruction, the response from the USSR, the number of dead, and sympathy for those lost.

In part because of the harrowing uncertainties, Kennedy chose to pursue the blockade approach.

Language can not only preserve optionality—it can actually help leaders better understand the options.

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And that brings me to responsibility.

When I was writing, people asked if there was a "theme" or a throughline to the book.

Discrete and interesting chapters in history—I hope so.

But is there a thread that binds them?

When I was writing, I wasn't sure, but then I found it in the chapter I wrote about President Eisenhower, who had actually prepared a speech in case the D-Day landings had failed.

It's very short. It's handwritten. And in his haste, Eisenhower has misdated it.

But we see in his handwriting two edits. The first is that he crosses out the words, "The troops have been withdrawn," and replaces them with, "I have withdrawn the troops."

He has, of course, switched from passive to active voice.

And then, in the final line, "If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone," he goes back and underlines the words, "mine alone."

And that switch reminded me of something President Grant said, that I found while researching that chapter: "I am a verb."

Leaders are action takers.

There's some recent science that says leaders should never apologize; never take responsibility. Evidence

shows that it emboldens your detractors and demoralizes your supporters.

But it is the moral thing to do.

And I found examples of that courageous morality throughout my research. In 1897, Governor Altgeld of Illinois, who was drummed out of office for correcting the miscarriage of justice that had led to the false imprisonment of the Haymarket rioters: "In my judgment, no epitaph can be written upon the tomb of a public man that will so surely win the contempt of the ages than to say that he held office all of his life and never did anything for humanity."

Or Kevin White, the Mayor of Boston, who decided to enforce a deeply unpopular judge's order to desegregate Boston's schools: "There is no odor, save death, worse than that of a public official too frightened and fearful to say, above a whisper, what he honestly believes."

So what's the theme?

Before we turn to our conversation, let me close with this:

So many of you here occupy positions of leadership and influence.

Often outcomes rest on a razor's edge.

And you have the power to nudge them—and even those smallest of nudges can make the difference for a company, a community, a country, or the world.

With that, I'm looking forward to our conversation.

# WINNER: TECHNOLOGY

*“Women of Silicon Roundabout—Opening Address”*

By Ben Timpson for Faz Aftab, Director of Media & Entertainment Partnerships, Google



Delivered at the Women of Silicon Roundabout Conference, ExCel Centre, London, Nov. 11, 2023

Good morning everyone! It’s incredibly exciting to speak to you: the people of silicon roundabout!

Exciting—because this event is always such a powerful opportunity.

To inspire each other, to build relationships and to share our vision for the future.

But I have to tell you, this year feels different.

Even more special.

In fact I think this moment could be one we look back on as the turning point for women in tech.

Even a turning point for women—full stop.

To explain why, I want to tell you about some amazing women from the past.

Women who seized their moment.  
Joan Clarke.

Working as a codebreaker during the second world war in Bletchley Park.

Before the war she had achieved a double first in Math from Cambridge.

She wasn’t even allowed to be credited with a full degree, as Cambridge only awarded them to men.

Despite her incredible talent, leaving university, Joan would have anticipated a quiet life.

Possibly teaching somewhere.

Maybe marriage.

But with the outbreak of war, at Bletchley, she was unleashed.

Armed with cutting edge early computers she played a pivotal role breaking the Enigma code, an act that without doubt shortened the war, saved thousands of lives—and changed the world as we know it.

Katherine Johnson.

A gifted American mathematician and a woman of colour.

She performed math calculations for a government aeronautics programme in the 50’s, part of an all-female staff their male colleagues called ‘computers with skirts’.

But then along came NASA—and the race to the moon.

And suddenly Katherine’s talents could not be ignored.

She went from the backroom to frontline, instrumental in the moon landings, the successful recovery of the doomed Apollo 13 mission—and the space shuttle programme.

Edith Clarke.

Born in the 1880’s, Edith achieved a Masters in Electrical Engineering.

But she couldn’t get an engineering job.

She found herself—like Katherine Johnson—limited to jobs beneath her talent and her education.

Then the government demanded every American home be connected to the grid.

A massive infrastructure project followed.

Suddenly, Edith’s talents could not be ignored.

Employed as the first female electrical engineer in the country, her research on power lines became crucial to lighting up the US, and she went on to design iconic engineering projects like the Hoover Dam.

So between Bletchley park, Joan, Katherine and Edith.

I became fascinated by the idea that there are moments in history where the pace of change can level the playing field for women.

Moments where the painfully slow trickle of progress becomes a torrent.

Moments where there just isn’t time to indulge male dominated hierarchies. Or gender bias. Or glass ceilings.

They fade into the background and women step forward.

And step up.

Now I know this is true—because I’ve lived it.

The rise of streaming video created new opportunities in a rapidly growing market.

Ten years ago that streaming market was worth \$6bn in revenue.

Today it’s \$140bn.

That’s some pace of change, and that crazy decade of progress gave me my opportunity.

Of course it wasn’t easy.

Juggling motherhood and work in a fast evolving sector was very, very tough.

But just like those other women, despite every challenge thrown at me, the STEM skills I had built during my early career could not be ignored.

So what, people of silicon roundabout?

Well—I said this year was special.

That I think this moment could be the turning point for women in technology.

And the reason is this:

Every historical example I have talked about where rapid change creates opportunity for women.

War, engineering breakthroughs—even my own story.

They are nothing compared with what’s about to happen.

The AI revolution.

Right now in—in this room—we stand at the starting line of the most profound period of change ever seen.

Our CEO describes it as more profound for humans than electricity—or even fire.

Education.

The environment.

Healthcare.

Transport.

Manufacturing.  
Energy.

In every industry, in every facet of life, AI is going to allow us to achieve the same kind of progress in hours and days that would have taken decades without it.

Just one example from my world:  
Google DeepMind Alpha Fold.

It's set to launch a new era of digital biology, accelerating new drug discovery at a pace that a decade ago would have been unthinkable.

The impossible is going to become possible in ways we can't yet imagine.

We need to see this AI revolution for what it is.

Our moment.

Our moment because just as this revolution will move fast—it will demand talent—fast.

And in the race to secure it, anyone who overlooks skill experience and expertise on the basis of gender or any other prejudice—is going to come second.

The scale of AI's impact on our lives will mean the perspective of all genders and all backgrounds will become vital.

AI will impact and influence the whole of society, and to do so responsibly we will need input from every part of it.

And there's more.

Those moments from the past I talked about?

When that trickle of change became a torrent?

Well of course, the lives of some women were transformed—but it went back to a trickle.

Male hierarchies were rebuilt.  
Gender bias quietly shuffled back into the office.

Glass ceilings were reinstalled.

But I think AI could be a real shift.

Because as women we won't just participate in this revolution—we have the opportunity to be the architects.

In on the ground floor.

The ones driving progress, leading responsible AI development, and preparing for the challenges the future will bring.

And it is my hope that the sheer availability and power of AI will open opportunities for anyone who wants to step up and make a difference.

So I want to finish by picking out a couple of things I think will be crucial for our future as women in AI.

Things that I'm delighted to say this event puts in the spotlight!

Unity.

And courage.

Firstly: unity.

Supporting each other.

Empowering each other.

Inspiring each other.

We need a powerful, compassionate and agile network of people to speak up for diversity in AI.

And I don't just mean women.

We all need to stand together.

All sorts of people from all walks of life have something to bring to this challenge.

No matter who you are, you should feel supported—and know that the only entry requirements for this revolution are skill and talent.

And secondly: courage.

The courage to seize the opportunity in front of us—and own it.

Because although I believe women have a pivotal role in the creation of these groundbreaking technologies, we still need the determination to seize this opportunity.

I'm reminded again of Katherine Johnson at NASA, who made damn sure her name was on the front of key reports she wrote—despite the complaints of her colleagues who wanted it buried five pages deep.

I've been guilty in the past of underestimating my achievements.

For not taking credit, and avoiding the spotlight.

That's wrong.

It's not just hurting you—it's hurting women and girls who need to see you.

So starting from today you're not allowed to do it!

And I'm thrilled that silicon round-about have put together such an incredible group of women ready to tell their stories.

So—what more can I say?

Well if Joan, Katherine and Edith were with us today.

They would say don't let this moment pass.

Don't shy away from it—revel in it.

Be excited.

Be curious.

Be bold.

We hold the pen of history in our hands—let's write something amazing together.

Thank you!

# WINNER: ANALYST CALL/INVESTOR MEETING

*“Address to Annual General Meeting”*

By Michel Reinders for  
Wael Sawan, CEO, Shell

//

Delivered in London, May 23, 2023

Thank you, our shareholders, for joining us today. This is my first AGM as Shell’s CEO. Allow me a moment to introduce myself. I am Lebanese-Canadian... and I started my career at Shell more than 25 years ago as an engineer. Truth be told, I wasn’t the best engineer in the history of Shell. My first job was to lay pipes in the Omani desert. I tried my hardest... but I just couldn’t get the pipeline to work. Still, I was a stubborn young man with a simple strategy... work hard and try to become better. And thankfully, my managers kept believing in me... in fact, they convinced me I could go further than I thought possible.

Today, I try to do the same. I try to find my team members’ strengths and encourage them to accomplish more than they think is possible. So I’ve learned that... with the right strategy... the willingness to improve... and by focusing on your strengths... there are no limits to what people can achieve. And I believe this is true for me... for Shell... and for the world.

That brings me to today... Because there is a lot the world needs to achieve. The world needs a secure supply of affordable energy so economies can develop... businesses can function... and people can continue to live their lives. The world also needs to make the transition to a net-zero emissions energy system to tackle climate change. It cannot be one or the other... The world needs to cut emissions and it needs enough reliable energy that people can afford. Since we need both... the transition to a low-carbon energy system needs to be balanced.

The last year has shown us what can happen if that balance is upset. The war in Ukraine disrupted the flow of energy. Gas became harder to get hold

of... prices went up... and countries turned back to coal for energy, especially in South Asia and Europe. This is the opposite of what the world needs... because on average, coal emits about 50% more carbon emissions than gas when used to produce electricity, and 33% more when providing heat.

This disruption was the consequence of less than a 1% drop of globally available energy since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Achieving a net-zero emissions energy system requires the world to replace not just 1% of energy... but most of its current supply of energy.

So, for me, it is clear what energy companies such as Shell need to do in today’s world. We must deliver a secure supply of energy that is affordable and increasingly low carbon. And Shell can achieve this by: following the right strategy... always working hard to become better... and by focusing on our strengths.

Let me start with our strategy. As we have seen over the past highly volatile year, Powering Progress is still the right strategy to become a net-zero emissions energy business by 2050. Our current operating plans will have to change to achieve this target... and this change will have to be balanced... with investments in low-carbon energy and in oil and gas.

You see, across the world, oil and gas fields decline by some 4 to 5% every year on average. This means significant investments in oil and gas are needed just to keep production at a constant level, let alone to meet growing demand. Not investing enough in oil and gas could create supply shortages for the future. We have seen how that can lead to higher... not lower emissions.

It is also clear that the world is underinvesting in low and zero-carbon energy. We need some \$3 to \$4 trillion dollars of investment a year in this part of the energy system. The world is far away from that amount. This is a risk for the world... and for us... because if society does not achieve net-zero emissions by 2050... Shell also runs a significant risk not to meet this target.

Again, our role is clear... at Shell, we are investing both in low-carbon energy and oil and gas... all in a disciplined way. Because to make the most impact in helping the world achieve a net zero emissions energy system... Shell needs business models that are profitable and scalable. Put simply, we invest where we see a clear path towards commercial success. Even with this disciplined approach... we are one of the biggest investors in the world in low-carbon energy.

In 2022, we invested \$8.2 billion in low-carbon energy and non-energy products, around a third of our total cash capital expenditure of \$25 billion. Of that, \$3.9 billion was invested in non-energy products. These are products such as chemicals and lubricants that are not burnt in an engine like petrol or diesel... so they don’t produce carbon emissions when used. And \$4.3 billion went to low-carbon energy solutions like solar and wind power, biofuels, hydrogen and charging for electric vehicles.

The remaining two-thirds of our capital investment in 2022 went to maintaining supplies of oil and gas the world needs today. Production at our Vito facility in the US Gulf of Mexico started in February, for example. Vito combines everything we want from an oil and gas platform. It has the potential to add 100,000 barrels of oil equiv-

alent per day, producing amongst the lowest greenhouse gas intensity barrels in the world. It was built 70% cheaper than originally planned. And we plan to use this project as an example for future projects.

That brings me... besides having the right strategy... to the second thing we need to succeed in the energy transition... the determination to become better. We aim to improve our performance... in every part of Shell.

We will also continue to simplify our organisation. Like we have done earlier this year when we focused senior leadership... including on the executive committee... Fewer leaders bring greater accountabilities and faster, more decisive actions.

Doing better also means being more disciplined... about the capital investments I just mentioned... and about cutting emissions. Sir Andrew already talked about the progress we made last year against the carbon targets we set in 2021... but I'll repeat the details here because they are important.

We reduced our emissions from our operations and the energy we use to run them by 30% by the end of 2022 compared with 2016, on a net basis... that's more than halfway towards our reduction target of 50% by 2030.

Also, by the end of 2022, the net carbon intensity of the global energy system had fallen by 2%, compared with 2016. Over that same period, the net carbon intensity of the energy products sold by Shell had fallen by 3.8%. That's almost twice as much.

And we have set short-, mid- and long-term net carbon intensity targets covering all Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions... This means all emissions from our operations... from the energy we use for these operations... as well as from our customers when they use the products we sell. So, yes, I think we are making good progress... and we will continue to play our part in the energy transition while we supply the world with the energy it needs.

And that brings me... after having the right strategy and the determination to become better... to the

third reason why I believe Shell will be successful in a balanced energy transition... we focus on our strengths. Strengths like our deep-water oil and gas assets such as Vito... where we always try to find ways to produce barrels with higher value and lower carbon emissions. Strengths like our world-class liquefied natural gas business... that is both profitable and helps deliver energy to places where it is needed most. And strengths in low-carbon energy... like our ability to collaborate with governments... other businesses... and our customers.

I just mentioned Scope 3 emissions. As I said, these emissions... which we don't control... are dependent on our customers and how they use the energy products we sell them. One way to bring down Scope 3 emissions is if our customers increasingly buy energy products with low emissions. Our decades-long experience in working with our customers means we understand the obstacles they face... so we can help find solutions to overcome them... and we have the infrastructure such as terminals, carriers and pipelines to make these solutions work in real life. And we are focusing on those low-carbon energy products that play into our strengths... products that we think will have commercial success... Like sustainable aviation fuels for planes... electric charging for cars and trucks... and... a bit further in the future... hydrogen for heavy industry.

By focusing on our strengths... both in conventional and low-carbon energy... we will have a path to achieve our target to become a net-zero emissions business by 2050... and equally a path to do this in a profitable way. This helps our customers... the planet... and our shareholders. That brings me to Follow This.

Let me start by saying where we see common ground with Follow This. They want us to achieve net-zero emissions. So we share the same goal. But I don't believe their resolution is the right way to achieve it. In Lebanon there is a proverb that says: "Some men will build a wine cellar when they

have found just one grape." It seems to me this is what Follow This is doing... They have one idea. And that idea is that the world can quickly and easily replace all oil and gas by targeting companies like Shell.

This is simply wrong. Quickly reducing oil and gas from international energy businesses like Shell creates more volatility... and drives higher production from coal producers and national oil and gas companies. Those are two very large groups of energy suppliers that Follow This does not target.

A quick global oil and gas reduction also prevents the energy transition from happening at a pace that allows for the right balance. As we have all seen only too well over the past year... cutting supply while demand remains unchanged does not work... it adds shocks to the system and drives up prices. For a balanced transition... supply and demand of energy both need to change. And changing energy demand can only happen with the help of governmental policies and shifts in society.

It would help if Follow This would contribute to this change... but they continue to focus on the supply of energy. In doing so, the Follow This resolution fails to provide a clear course of action for our business... it does not allow us to help our customers... it is against the interest of our shareholders... and it does not help to mitigate climate change.

You see, the resolution calls for an absolute Scope 3 emission reduction target. To meet such a target... Shell would have to stop selling our oil and gas products to our customers. I already told you we want to bring Scope 3 emissions down by working with our customers, helping them find low-carbon energy solutions. This resolution would not allow us to help our customers, especially in sectors that cannot easily switch from oil and gas to renewable electricity... like aviation, shipping and heavy industry.

What's more, if we stopped selling our oil and gas products to our customers... while there is no reduction in demand or readily available and afford-

able alternatives for oil and gas... our customers will not switch to low-carbon energy. They will just buy oil and gas products from our competitors... and total worldwide emissions would not go down at all. Handing over customers to our competitors would damage Shell's financial strength and limit our ability to generate value for shareholders. So adopting the Follow This resolution will not help reduce total worldwide carbon emissions... it will not help our

customers... and it will not help you, our shareholders.

I propose to do something else. Let us support the world in achieving a net-zero emissions energy system. Let us help our customers. Let us grow our business. And let Shell continue to create value for our shareholders.

Our Powering Progress strategy lets us do all these things and more. We are more than two years into this strategy that is comprehensive, flexible... and

now tested through tough circumstances. And with determination and focus... I'm sure we can make Powering Progress work even better.

So, today, I hope we can count on your support to vote in support of the progress we have made in the last 12 months... and not to vote for the highly unhelpful change in our strategy that Follow This have called for. Thank you.

## WINNER: COMMEMORATIVE SPEECH

*"Follow What Pisses You Off"*

Written and delivered by Janet Stovall, Trustee,  
Davidson College



Delivered at Davidson College,  
Davidson, North Carolina, Nov. 4, 2023

In my junior year at Davidson, the BSC invited Dr. Charles King to speak as part of the MLK lecture series.

He gave an amazing, very provocative, very powerful oppression workshop.

All fired up, I was driving him back to the airport and being quite vocal about the issues that I thought were problematic and Davidson.

When I stopped to take a breath, he looked at me and he said, "you are the angriest little black woman I have ever met in my life. Fair.

But then he said, "Why don't you stop getting mad and start getting meaningful?"

And, from that point forward, I have dedicated my life to doing exactly 50% of what he said.

You see, I DID get meaningful, but I never stopped getting mad. In fact, I actually followed what made me mad.

Instinctively before Dr. King, because that's who I am.

Intentionally after, which is who I've become.

The journey actually began freshman year at Davidson.

You see, I wrote a poem, and it won first place in the literary magazine, and Hobart Park.

A couple days later, somebody who didn't like that poem, smoke bombed Richardson 103 while my roommate Judy and I were asleep.

Made me mad as hell, and stayed mad. Dr. King as not mad—I was the angriest little Black woman at Davidson College.

But I wasn't meaningful.

For that, I needed a process.

I created one, a simple, three-part process to make mad meaningful:

Passion to purpose to practice.

Here's how it works....

First, passion.

Every graduation has at least one speaker who tells you to do that. But passion has two faces—love and anger. You can follow what you love or you can follow what makes you mad.

The day somebody asks ME to give a graduation speech, you know which one I'm talking about!

Why?

Because anger is a heck of a lot more powerful.

Anger tells us a boundary has been crossed

Anger reinforces what's important to us.

When you're following what makes you happy, you're not trying to change

anything. Why would you? You're happy!

But When you're following what makes you mad, you do everything you can to fix it.

Me? I'm mad about racism.

In fact, as I said in my FIRST TED talk, I'm single-minded about it.

And I'm mad about it ALL the time.

I'm not however mad about it the same way all the time because of the second part of the process—Purpose.

Like passion, I have an alternative definition for purpose.

It's not vision, it's not mission, it's not aspiration.

None of that woo woo stuff.

Purpose is parameters. Substance. Shape.

It's naming what can be done, and claiming what YOU can—and WILL—do.

This is the part a lot of folks skip. I did—until Dr. King straightened me out.

But because we skip step two, many of us never get to step three—Practice.

Or at least we don't get to a step three that really matters.

You see, practice is where what makes what makes you happy meets what makes you mad.

Practice is about leveraging what you love—and therefore are most likely the best at—to fix what you absolutely can't stand.

Passion to purpose to practice.

Does it work? Well, let me tell you how it's played out for me and YOU be the judge

Ever since the smoke bomb, I've followed the racism that made me mad.

After Dr. King told me to get meaningful, I drove back from the airport, locked myself in my apartment for two weeks—cried—and turned mad into Project '87.

Senior year, I was mad that nobody thought Black students could qualify for the Morgan Stanley interview, so I did it and landed the job.

Over the years, I was mad at a lot of things—Black women getting extra responsibility but not promotions, no Black speechwriters working with the top execs in Corporate America, business advancing racism.

So, I started a company, became—for a time—the only Black CEO-level speechwriter in the Fortune 100 and did a TED talk challenging business to dismantle racism.

Today, as a chief diversity officer and head of a global diversity, equity and inclusion consulting practice, I'm mad that the leaders I work with speak up about their values but step back when it's time to actually live them.

So, I've provided initial funding for Project 2037, to make Davidson

THE place where inclusive leaders are shaped. Project '87 was about making Davidson better for Black students. Project 2037 will be about making the world better for everyone.

Here's what I've learned—it's ok to be mad. As long as you're meaningful. It's all about the process...

Passion: Find what makes you mad

Purpose: Focus on what you can do

Practice: Follow what pisses you off

Get mad. Get meaningful.

And know this...

If you follow what makes you happy, you're sure to change your life

If you follow what pisses you off, you just might change the world.

## WINNER: COMMENCEMENT/CONVOCATION ADDRESS

*"Tell Your Glossy and Gritty Truths"*

By Aaron Hoover for Damon Woodard,  
Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering

//

Delivered at University of Florida O'Connell Center,  
Gainesville, Florida, Aug. 12, 2023

Thank you, President Sasse ...  
Graduating students ...

I feel like a proud father when my own students earn their degrees—but here, that pride is magnified by thousands!

With my pride comes a sense of responsibility. A responsibility to celebrate your UF accomplishments and send you off on your next great adventures with the right words and the deepest truths.

So here goes: Everything your just heard about me in that introduction is accurate. Everything is true. But it is the resume-ready, glossy truth.

There is a grittier truth that I've decided to share with you. This unpolished version of my story includes that I dropped out of high school in 9th grade. I have a GED, not a high school diploma. My first career was as an auto mechanic, fixing Toyotas and Oldsmobiles in my native New Orleans.

I'm 50 years old, and for the past three decades, the glossy truth was the only one I talked about. But on the advice of my wife, Kila, I've started opening up about the gritty truth.

To my surprise, this has caused many of my graduate students to open up to me about their own unpolished truth. The things they don't list on their resumes.

Graduating students, each of you has completed all the rigorous requirements to earn your valuable UF degrees. That is an incredible lifetime milestone that you will always cherish.

From my personal experience and from listening to my students, I know that in addition to your academic leaps and bounds, you've faced your own private hurdles.

Maybe those hurdles involve family problems. Or mental health challenges. Financial hardships. Difficulties with a professor or a boss. Uncertainty about choices or an unhealthy relationship

that your friends keep urging you to end—yes, I've had those, too!

Whatever it was ... whatever it is ... I get it. I know. The world can be a treacherous swamp, filled with many dangers but, graduating students, you are Gators, you have crossed the swamp, and you are earning degrees from a top-5 public university! Congratulations!

[Lead applause]

So how are we to square that extraordinary pride of accomplishment with the grittier reality that we all live in, and internalize? How do we get past the feeling that maybe we can't really conquer the world?

My answer lies in how we recognize and respond to opportunity.

Real opportunity doesn't usually arrive as that glossy, "golden" thing you read about. They are often gritty, impossible-seeming, and scary. This is the kind of opportunity I want to tell you about today.

Shakespeare wrote famously in *Julius Caesar*:

“There is a tide in the affairs of men. Which, taken at the flood, leads to fortune.”

I love those lines, and I’ll get back to them.

In our family, I was the second of five sons. My mother went to work when I was 13, leaving me with an abusive father. I had been an excellent student, but because of my home life, I started skipping school, then dropped out at age 14. Every morning I pretended to go to class. But instead ... well, let’s just say that New Orleans doesn’t have a lot of rules, but I still found some to break!

My mother cleaned offices, worked as a cashier in a convenience store, and was a home healthcare provider. I don’t remember her complaining about her hours. But I’ll never forget the look on her face—her disappointment when she learned I had dropped out of high school.

At nearly 18, decided to get my GED, and go to college. To earn money for tuition, I enrolled in trade school to become an auto mechanic. A year and a half later, while working in an auto repair shop, I found out about a night school program in computer information systems offered by Tulane University.

My father said: “I am not about to send my son to a school where doctors and lawyers send their children so that he can fall on his face.”

But my mother believed in me, and with her and my limited income, I enrolled.

I didn’t want to talk much about my mom too much today because I didn’t think I’d be able to get through this speech. She passed away a year before I earned my doctorate, unable to witness the result of all her support. Let’s give a round of applause to all mothers here—and to everyone in your lives who believed in you.

[Lead applause]

While I was a student at Tulane, a staff member in the computer lab picked up on my initiative and con-

vinced me to go see the chair of the computer science department about enrolling in a four-year program. The department chair examined my transcript, encouraged me to apply, and later offered me a partial scholarship.

However, she said I would have to catch up on all the high school math I had missed—algebra II, trigonometry, and pre-calculus—while starting the “weed out” freshmen courses in the computer science program.

At 21, the age of many college seniors, I would have to restart my sophomore year in high school, begin as an engineering freshman, and work part-time as an auto mechanic.

This was not opportunity knocking. This was opportunity growling. I was terrified that I would fail. But I decided to try anyway.

My next two years were so hard, and not just because of work and school. Although New Orleans was my home, Tulane was like a foreign country. When professors lectured, I had to write down all the words I didn’t understand, so I could look them up at home later.

Every day, I thought about giving up, but at age 24, I completed my undergraduate degree.

Graduating students, when you’re daunted by an opportunity ... when it seems scary and impossible and just about growls at you ... but you see that it will move you in the right direction ... that’s Shakespeare’s flood tide. Those are the opportunities that will lead to fortune.

[Pause]

When working on this speech I got curious about the origin of the word “opportunity.” It comes from the Latin “ob” meaning “to” and “portus” which means port, or harbor. In other words, ‘coming to port.’

That gets me to my next story.

While at Notre Dame working on my graduate degree, 9-11 happened. I can recall seeing the hurt on the faces and hearing the pain in the voices of the people I cared about. This motivated me to want to make a difference by joining the Marines. I shared

my plans with a professor at Notre Dame who had served in the Army. He convinced me that I could make more of a contribution by putting my engineering know-how to work for our country.

He introduced me to Prof. Patrick Flynn, whose research focused on what, at the time, was the emerging science of biometrics—the automated recognition of individuals based on physical or behavioral characteristics. In other words, being able to automatically identify the bad guys. This was 2001, six years before the iPhone came out, and facial recognition technology was in its infancy.

Pat would become my dissertation advisor and because of 9-11, from that day forward, my career has focused on making the nation more secure.

Graduates, I hope that you, too, will leap at opportunities to help your country, your community, or your neighbors. Such opportunities are the ultimate flood tides. They will lift you up, along with those you serve, wherever you make port.

[Pause]

For most of my career, I shared only the glossy, resume-ready side of my story because I was afraid to share the grittier side.

But in 2021, a writer for UF’s alumni magazine, Barbara Drake, reached out to write a profile about me. My wife urged me to tell Barbara the unpolished truth, saying she thought it could do some people some good.

Kila was right. Now that students share their own unpolished truth, I’m better at connecting with them and giving them advice for grad school or their careers. In fact, knowing their struggles helps me appreciate their successes. I believe in them, like my mother believed in me.

All of which brings me back to you.

When President Sasse asked me to give your commencement speech, I had the same feeling as all those years ago when the department chair told me I had to learn that high school math.

Being your speaker was a scary, gritty opportunity—but by this stage



in life, I had learned enough to say “yes.”

Graduating students, my hope is that all of you will also say “yes,” starting today. Say “yes” to the same flood tides. To those opportunities that scare you, seem impossible, or come at the worst times.

I hope that you will also leap at opportunities to help others. And whatever private challenges you’ve overcome or are working to overcome, I hope you’ll talk about them so that you can help the people around you who are struggling—even if it’s not on their glossy resumes.’

President Sasse, thank you for giving me this scary, gritty opportunity that I will always cherish.

And now, Class of 2023, you made it! Congratulations, best wishes, and enjoy celebrating with your loved ones. As they say in New Orleans, “Laissez les bons temps rouler!”

## WINNER: DEDICATION/GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY SPEECH

*“Breaking Records, Building Legacy: Honoring the Fastest Man in the World”*

By Tiana Thé for Eli Capilouto, President,  
University of Kentucky



Delivered at the University of Kentucky,  
Lexington, Dec. 13, 2023

Thank you for joining us today as we honor one of the most dynamic athletes ever produced in the Commonwealth and the generosity of Joe and Ambassador Kelly Craft.

A rising star at Eminence High School in Henry County, Kentucky, Jim Green was fast—on the football field and on the basketball court.

But where he was fastest was less defined...

Green’s high school did not have a track—that didn’t stop him from running.

Instead, he sprinted on an old railway bed without cross ties, refusing to let circumstance prevent him from making history in track and field.

After winning Kentucky high school track and field championships and breaking records in the 70-, 100-, 220- and 440-yard dashes, Green was an obvious pick for UK’s track and field coach, Press Whelan.

Coach Whelan was up against nearly 100 other university recruiters, including the University of Southern California—Green’s first choice given its already-successful program and the warm weather that supported year-round training.

Still, the young, ambitious coach and members of his staff made several visits to Green’s hometown.

They told him about a team that was not up to par...they were losing

talent like Jim Green to better, bigger and faster schools.

But Green could help change that... he could make history at UK, on and off the track...but they were honest about what that would entail.

It had been 20 years since Lyman T. Johnson pushed open our doors, integrating Kentucky’s university.

But white athletes still dominated the rosters of every sports team.

Coach Whelan did not downplay the situation and told Green the unjust truth about what he’d have to overcome by being one of the first few Black athletes in the entire SEC.

Green listened, with an open mind and discerning ears, as Coach Whelan said, “If you come to UK, it’s going to be tough...”

People are going to call you names, they won’t like you, they’ll tell you they don’t want you at their school.”

But Coach Whelan also assured him he’d be there every step of the way.

Barely an adult, Green asked himself, “Do I go to UK, or do I go somewhere else where I won’t have all these problems?”

But he saw a university and a sport that needed him...he knew we could be better, and he was going to help us get there.

In an interview with the Louis B. Nunn Center for Oral History, Green said, “I thought I could be instrumental

in helping build a good track team at the University of Kentucky...

I also thought there was a challenge at UK because we always heard UK was a big, white, racist school. I believed there was an opportunity to change things for athletes who would come after us.”

So, in 1968, Jim Green came bursting out of Eminence, Kentucky and onto UK’s track and field team.

He hit the ground running.

The moment he came to campus, he brought to the team a legendary credibility that rippled through the Commonwealth like electricity.

By the time he graduated in 1971—making him the first Black student-athlete to graduate from UK—Green had become the first Black athlete at an SEC school to win conference and NCAA individual championships in any sport, broken three world records and several university ones, earned All-American honors six times and was named the fastest human in the world.

Green was driven by the will to win and the will not to lose.

With his help, UK dominated in sprints...he put us on the map.

More importantly, he made us change.

We opened our doors wider and began recruiting, in earnest, more talented Black athletes and students who

would help build the greatest tradition in the Bluegrass.

Today, we invest in more scholarships that support students from underserved communities and engage in targeted recruitment efforts to hire more diverse faculty and staff.

And we continue to examine our past and meet shortcomings with solutions, not excuses, to drive our future.

When asked about his running style in an interview, Green said it was fluent...he had a good stride to catch other runners, and many said it almost seemed effortless.

But it was anything but effortless.

Green wanted to be the best, so he trained like the best.

He ran whether it was raining, snowing, hailing or zero degrees outside.

He transformed the vitriol that met him at the starting line into the fuel that propelled him across the finish... all while changing our legacy.

This is what it means to accelerate...to move with tenacity and grace...to exceed expectations and confront that which stifles our progress and our people.

Today, we celebrate a man who made a difference...a man who has altered the landscape and trajectory of so many communities.

In 2020, the city of Eminence, Kentucky transformed the old dirt railroad tracks that, 60 years ago, found a second life as Jim Green's earliest racing lane.

In a fitting tribute to his athleticism, the tracks were transformed into a two-mile walking path that traverses his hometown.

And now, the University of Kentucky has the privilege of honoring Green's profound impact through the Jim Green Indoor Track and Field Center...no need to worry about having warm weather for year-round training.

This facility is built on the foundation that Jim Green laid in 1968.

It's also a testament to the power of people coming together, in common cause, to do uncommonly good and important things. Success, of course, has many contributors.

And two of them are here today with us. Today's announcement simply would not have been possible without

Joe Craft and Ambassador Kelly Craft. They have long given of themselves and their resources to this place, their alma mater, which they believe in, and that they love. But they also embody what it means to be of and in service to others—in their professional lives and in recognizing opportunities to make a difference by supporting projects like this one.

They wanted to pay tribute to a young athlete who took a chance and chose us not because of what we could offer him, but because of how he could change our legacy.

It's a reminder that no matter how much progress we make, we must always ask how we can do more and be more for all Kentuckians...that is our responsibility.

That is the University of Kentucky that Jim Green deserved.

Thank you, Jim, for paving the way and leading us to a greater future.

Thank you for believing in us.

And thank you for never losing the will to win.

Your University of Kentucky indoor track and field center is proud to bear your name.

## WINNER: EMPLOYEE MEETING

*"The Tremendous Responsibility of Communications at Corning"*

By Kathleen Costello for Lewis Steverson,  
Chief Legal and Administrative Officer, Corning Incorporated



Delivered virtually, Sept. 21, 2023

Thanks, Missy, and hello, everyone. I'm delighted to be here to help you kick off the second day of your summit.

I see some familiar faces on this call, but there are quite a few of you I don't know. Missy shared some information about my background and my responsibilities here at Corning. But since you're all professional communicators, and communications involves storytelling, I'll tell you a little bit more about myself and my personal story.

I grew up not too far from here, in and around Rochester, and I come from a large family with 6 sisters, a mom and a dad. Yes, I was the only boy in the house with six sisters: three older and three younger than me. My dad—who was also named Lewis Steverson—was the first Black New York State Trooper. You can imagine the experiences and stories he had, joining the troopers in 1958. I would ask him if the other troopers gave him a hard time and he would say: "Well, some of them; but only once."

My dad and I were extremely close and for many years, I thought I was going to follow in his footsteps as a trooper, but he disabused me of that notion when I graduated from high school. That's when he set me on a less dangerous path, which led me here. He really just wanted me to be happy, safe, and take extreme care with everything I did. He used to say, "I don't care if you dig ditches; just be the best ditch digger in town."

My mom, however, had different ideas. She would say, "You're not

going to dig ditches; here's a list of things you can do." High on her list were a priest, a doctor, and a lawyer. The first two held little appeal for me. When I was 13, I got into an argument with Father Philips at Our Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I was an altar boy there, and I learned that when I rang the bell during the service, the Catholic Church believed I was signaling that the bread and wine the priest was holding were actually being turned into the body and blood of Christ. I approached Father Philips and said, "Surely, we mean this symbolically and we don't actually think the bread and wine are physically being turned into Jesus's flesh and blood; that would be gross and make us cannibals and vampires." He stared at me for a few minutes, tried to explain that we did, in fact, believe exactly that and that I needed to have faith. We "discussed" it for a little while, neither of us giving ground and finally, he said: "I don't know if you'll ever get into heaven, but I think you might make a heck of a lawyer." And the rest is history . . .

Back to my mom . . . while my dad led by example, my mom led by sheer will. She was, and still is, a force of nature. She has chilled with age, but she's still quite something. Both of my parents instilled a drive for success in me. My family taught me to have a strong work ethic and to be a very principled person overall. I grew up with a clear sense of right and wrong and to be very ethically minded.

After high school, I went to Siena College on a track and cross-country scholarship, and it may surprise you that my undergraduate degree was in English. I am sure many of you can relate to that. Any other English majors out there? My degree—and my strength in reading, writing, and critical analysis of what I read—served me well in law school, and it also gave me a strong appreciation for the importance of communications. I actually have a plaque in my home office that says: "Words are our tools."

Enough about me! Let's talk about why you're all here today: for the ICT Summit.

It's so important to bring your team together, and I realize how difficult it is to find a few hours to do this and put down your to-do lists. So, thank you for carving out that time and for participating in this summit.

I understand that this year's meeting aims to help promote professional development, reinforce industry best practices, and introduce new skills. I also know that any time a department or a group of like-minded colleagues is able to gather together, you form a closer connection that improves collaboration and enables stronger teamwork. Plus, it's just nice to be able to spend some time with your team, right?

This is definitely the case whenever my Law Department has gathered together for a Global Conference. We end up discovering details about what we've all been working on for months, which naturally makes us feel more connected. Of course, the pandemic—and its resulting economic challenges—have prevented any in-person opportunities for our conference within the last couple of years—as it has for your summit too. However, it's great that you're able to hold this meeting virtually—to have a chance to network with each other and bond as a team.

This time together is especially important for all of you since you're in a transition period as we search for a new communications leader. You've had quite a few changes over the past year, and I'm grateful that you've got Missy to lead you through this time. Not only have her years in HR given her the experience to navigate transitions, but she's also one of the kindest, most compassionate people in the company, so you're in great hands. Plus, you've all got each other—and reconnecting this week is a great reminder to work together and bounce ideas off one another as you're moving forward with new leadership.

One thing I regularly say to my department—and just ask Kathy . . . I take every opportunity I can to remind

my legal people of this—The company is our client. It's not Wendell, it's not the Board; it's the company. The Law Department serves Corning. And this is similar for all of you, whether you provide communications for a business, a function, or Corporate Communications. Everything you do is ultimately in the best interest of the company. And that's why Communications plays such a crucial role within Corning.

The reality is that good communicators are vital to a company's profit margin and reputation. Communications professionals, like you, who understand their company's vision and mission, who promote key messages with clarity and accuracy, help make the company successful. But of course, there's much more to it than that.

You are also responsible for elevating the company's brand and reputation. You inform others about what we do, where we do it, and why it's meaningful, relevant, and vital to progress. You motivate employees to make them proud to work here. You inspire customers to want to work with us. You convince shareholders to invest in Corning. You have the power to control how people perceive, think, and feel about the company. That's a tremendous responsibility!

One of my favorite quotes about communications comes from Nelson Mandela. He said, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to a man in his own language, that goes to his heart."

Think about that. If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to a man in his own language, that goes to his heart. As communicators, you have the ability—and the power—to do both. You can—and must—communicate clear, important company messages that are informative, that relay Corning's priorities and objectives, and that people can understand at a high level. But your messages, your platforms, your images, and your language, can reach people on a more visceral level—You can affect their hearts, metaphorically. You can

impact the way our stakeholders feel about the company, our products, and what we represent. I challenge all of you to elevate your game, to not only get into people's heads, but to impact people's hearts.

As all of you know, the company is feeling the impact of an uncertain macroeconomic environment—and I know that on top of this, you are experiencing a significant change in leadership—which can also feel uncertain and a bit tumultuous at times. However, I promise that this too will pass. It will take time, but we will find the best candidate to lead Corporate Communications and to work collaboratively with all of our businesses and functions. This new leader will align Corning's communications with its inevitable bright future. The entire Senior Leadership Team, as well as the Board of Directors, is confident in the company's long-term growth.

Corning has weathered tough times before, and we have always gotten through them, forged ahead, and become an even stronger company. Corning has proven its resilience, time and time again. Its people are resilient

too, so I encourage all of you to look ahead to the future.

We have multiple opportunities on the horizon—in all of our market-access platforms, and in areas outside of our MAPs. This means we have an enormous amount of work to do to promote them and to share them internally and externally. We need each and every one of you to help communicate our news and our stories about products, initiatives, awards, and accolades.

I encourage you to keep doing what you're doing, to continue to learn from each other, to hone your craft, and to keep moving forward. Please know that what you do makes a tremendous difference to Corning on so many levels. Each of you, around the world, whether you focus on external, internal, or functional communications, whether you sit in a business or in Corporate Communications, plays a crucial role in helping Corning be successful. What you do makes a difference to the company, and ultimately, to the world.

After all—to use language that you're familiar with—you show others how Corning solves tough challenges,

transforms industries, and enhances people's lives.

I want to remind you to learn from each other. Those of you who are veteran communicators: don't forget that you are role models. I encourage you to share your time and talent to help the next generation of communicators. Those of you who are just embarking on a career at Corning: I encourage you to meet with the veterans and learn their tricks of the trade—and maybe you can even teach them a new trick or two!

After today's summit ends and you return to your to-do list this afternoon, remember that you are part of something larger than yourself—including this outstanding network of peers. You are a part of this company that has existed for more than 170 years—and you have so much to share about it. You have amazing stories to tell, and you're the experts on how to tell them. Your work helps ensure that Corning will continue to grow, and that our world is a better place. Your work can impact people's heads and their hearts.

Thank you for inviting me to speak with you today. And thank you for what you do and are doing.

## WINNER: EULOGY/TRIBUTE SPEECH

*"Rehabilitatie van Tula"*

By Walt van der Linden for Alexandra van Huffelen,  
Minister of Kingdom Relations, the Netherlands

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Delivered in Curaçao, Oct. 4, 2023

**E**xcellencies, dear attendees, We are here today to reflect on the life and words of a very special man. A man who had the courage to stand up for his freedom—and that of many others here in Curaçao.

Like many of you, I wondered if Tula, on the day of his death yesterday, had something he wanted to tell us. The unprecedented storm last night abruptly ended what began as a dignified ceremony.

However, the resilience of Tula deeply ingrained in Curaçaoan society

becomes evident time and time again. Therefore, I would like to express my great admiration and appreciation for the way you have recovered so that today, together, we can still commemorate what he meant to us.

I would like to begin with a few lines from a poem about Tula, penned by Frida Winklaar Domacassé, which I believe touch upon the essence of this day.

Tell me, moon, how steadfastly he stood

So that I may remember his example  
So that I may stand without falling

Without falling into a perspective devoid of a future

We know little about Tula's life before August 17, 1795. Where was he born, who were his close ones? What might he have experienced, thought, felt? How did he motivate his fellow fighters, and what were his thoughts about Curaçao's future? Extensive research in the National Archives has only been able to answer these questions to a limited extent. It underscores that the Dutch State, deliberately and efficiently, at-

tempted to erase the history of your ancestors.

I say that with shame and regret.

And little of Tula's words have been preserved. But what we know is incredibly powerful. You might be familiar with his words, but I repeat them here because they are beautiful words. Speaking to Father Jacobus Schinck, he said:

'We seek to harm no one but seek our freedom. Is not everyone on earth a descendant of Adam and Eve? Did I err in freeing twenty-two brothers from prison, where they were unjustly held? Father, even an animal is treated better than us; if it gets wounded, it receives care.'

They are poignant words, but also beautiful, poetic words.

Words that give a universal character to freedom and equality and call to mind the works of the great black writers and poets of the '60s and '70s. Voices that translated pain and struggle into beauty and inspiration.

The revolutionary voices of Gil-Scott Heron, Amiri Baraka, James Baldwin. The latter wrote: 'Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.'

Tula saw injustice and fought for change. And I am here, on behalf of the Dutch government, to face history.

Freedom, equality, and brotherhood.

The ideals of the French Revolution, which, through France, also reached the enslaved people in Haiti—Tula believed that these should apply to him and his people too. The proclamation of the Batavian Republic meant that French law would also apply to Curaçao, or so he reasoned. Here began the struggle of the enslaved, their descendants, and their allies to expand the definition of 'human' to encompass all of humanity.

Tula fought for himself and for his people, but also for something timeless and universal. Tula first attempted it with words, but those words were met with gunfire.

The Dutch state did not heed the desire for a dignified existence and chose to respond with brutal force.

It wasn't just a plantation owner or even the island's government that Tula stood against. Tula stood against a State, a colonial power. A monstrous structure of armies and trade fleets. A criminal system in which one human turned another into a commodity.

Established to amass wealth and willing to use any available means to defend that wealth. Wealth that is still visible in Dutch museums and city centers. Tula knew what he was up against. And he also knew that if he lost against that system, a horrific fate awaited him.

And yet.

Still, Tula fought.

I tòg.

Tòg Tula a lucha.

With his words and actions, he united 2000 allies. All people he inspired to risk their lives for freedom. People who often paid for their courage with death. I therefore mention their names today with reverence.

The courageous Bazjan Carpata, Pedro Wacao, and Louis Mercier.

And alongside them were many others whose names I cannot mention because they have not been preserved. Thanks to the actions of the Dutch State.

Their deeds are no less magnificent; their lives no less important.

Tula and his allies fought like lions, liberating half the island in a just struggle using legitimate means. And against overwhelming opposition.

For far too long, hundreds of years, the Dutch approach to this history was one of turning away, justifying, masking—and, as mentioned earlier: erasing. That's why the least I can do here, in this place, is to be open and honest about the facts. Open, honest, and also: complete.

Because anything less would be a continuation of the turning away that characterized the Dutch approach to this history for so long.

I want to explicitly mention today, here, in the place where we now stand, the atrocities committed against Tula and his allies. Tula was the first to be executed. An iron rod was used to break every bone in his body. His

face was burned, and finally, he was beheaded. Bazjan Carpata had to watch all of this and then endured the same fate. Pedro Wacao had his hands chopped off. His head was smashed with a hammer. The bodies of the three were dumped into the sea. The heads of Tula and Karpata were put on stakes. 29 others were hanged.

Yesterday, we were shocked witnesses to the cruelty of their fate. Tula was meant to be a terrifying example, according to the Netherlands. But now, 228 years later, Tula is a symbol of courage.

Of courage, of resistance, of the ability to effect real change, no matter how insurmountable the opposition seems.

Tula is a hero, a historical hero.

Tula's wish was justified. His struggle just. And the means used, legitimate. And that makes the execution of Tula a crime.

Tula's desire was just.

His struggle just.

And his method justified.

A gruesome, cruel crime, committed by representatives of the Dutch state. And that also applies to the decision not to heed Tula's wish. The decision to engage in a struggle, to use violence against people who desire nothing more than a dignified existence.

On December 19, 2022, Prime Minister Mark Rutte, on behalf of the Dutch government, apologized for the actions of the Dutch state in the past. Posthumously to all those who suffered under that action worldwide, to their daughters and sons, and to all their descendants up to the present day.

At the same time, on that day, here in Curaçao, I announced that the Dutch government would formally grant Tula rehabilitation. And on July 1, our King also apologized for the history of slavery and asked for forgiveness. He spoke with respect about Tula.

Two hundred and twenty-eight years after his death date, the government of the Netherlands is formally rehabilitating Tula!

With this, it is fully recognized that Tula's struggle and that of the others

who opposed slavery were just. Also, it is observed with pain and shame, at how predecessors of past governors treated them.

On behalf of the Dutch government, today, I rehabilitate Tula, and I recognize him as a hero of Curaçao and of all of us. And on behalf of the Dutch government, I ask for forgiveness for his condemnation and cruel death.

And I ask for forgiveness for the fact that you had to wait so long for his rehabilitation.

Tula's struggle was meaningful. In the past, and in the present. After the uprising, the enslaved got better—slightly. The reason was cynical: the rulers didn't suddenly embrace the values Tula advocated. No, they slightly improved out of fear of new uprisings. And the legacy of the criminal system against which Tula rebelled is still palpable in patterns of exclusion and inequality.

For too long, young people in Curaçao learned about life on the other side of the ocean but not about the heroic acts of their own ancestors. This is what we aim to change.

We must and want to put an end to passing down trauma to future generations. This includes enabling research and continuing to share stories. Textbooks rooted in our own land. Cherishing culture and tradition.

For instance, the *Tambú*, a remarkable blend of music and dance, communication, and spirituality, rooted in West Africa, which the Dutch State failed to eradicate.

Today, we take a new step on the long and difficult path of emancipation. The harsh truth is: this rehabilitation comes late, too late, and did not come automatically. It is the result of the tireless efforts of a large group of Curaçaoans. The result of numerous letters and petitions, poems and books, singing, and dancing. That's why today, I also express my appreciation for them.

I aim to be comprehensive but might not succeed:

Humphrey 'Pim' Senior,  
 Andechie Albert,  
 Angel Salsbach,  
 Rene Rosalía,  
 Sygmond Montesant,  
 Moises Boeis Augusta,  
 Ruben Severina,  
 Charles do Rego,  
 Gladys do Rego Kuster,  
 Deonísio Martina,  
 Frank Quirindongo,  
 Stanley Quirindongo,  
 Jeanne Henriquez,  
 Max Elstak,  
 Magaly La Croes,  
 John Djaoen,  
 Druusje Jansen,  
 Lionel Janga,  
 Gibi Basilio,  
 Henri Vijber,  
 Suzy Camelia Römer,  
 Jaime de Sola,  
 Dimitri Cloose,  
 Rose Mary Allen,  
 Richenel Ansano,  
 Philipson Rafaela,  
 Marlon Regales.

They and many others fought tirelessly for rehabilitation and emancipation, sometimes for decades. Thanks to them, Tula's voice will resonate in the coming centuries.

The Dutch government wants to amplify that voice. In the one and a half years that I've been Secretary of State, I've spoken with numerous people emphasizing the importance of Tula's legacy, such as Gibi Basilio, who brought Tula's history to life with street theater in the '80s, and Lionel Janga and Rose-Mary Allen.

But also, young people at the Juan Pablo Duarte school who told me they feel like second-class citizens. Heart-breaking. These conversations deeply affected me. Recognition is growing, knowledge is increasing. For several years now, the slave registers have

been digitally accessible to everyone. Children write stories and poems about Tula. In a primary school on Curaçao but also in Amsterdam. And the youngest generation of descendants will soon be able to point to a statue and ask, 'Mom, who is that gentleman?'

They will live on Tulaplein or attend school in Tulastraat. Tula and his struggle forever deserve a place in our collective consciousness. It's Curaçao's story and the story of the Kingdom. It's your history and my history, even though our ancestors played different roles. This history has our full attention—from the government and the Royal Family. That's why, together with the Minister of Education, Culture, and Science, I want to offer a Tula scholarship to Curaçao for the next 4 years.

Through this scholarship, one student per year will have the opportunity to pursue a full-time bachelor's degree in history education in the Netherlands, receiving financial support. Additionally, for the next two years, we want to offer a slavery history professorship to Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten. This will be divided among the educational institutions in these countries.

I hope the pain and courage of your ancestors remain a lasting source of inspiration and pride.

Two hundred and twenty-eight years is an incredibly long time. But I'm convinced that Tula's voice will be heard for much longer. As Martin Luther King put it:

'The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.'

Tula's spirit lives on in everyone fighting for equality and emancipation within the Kingdom. For all those exposing injustice, addressing wrongs, and demanding their rights. It's up to us, here and now, to follow that arc together and do justice to Tula's legacy.

Thank you very much.

# WINNER: FAREWELL/RESIGNATION SPEECH

*“Farewell to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley”*

By Eleonora Russell for Admiral Rob Bauer,  
Chair, NATO Military Committee



Delivered to NATO Military Committee,  
Oslo, Norway, Sept. 16, 2023

And now the moment has come where we have to say a deeply fond farewell to our brother in arms General Milley, who will retire at the end of this month.

Dear Mark,

Where to start...

It seems impossible to summarize your stellar career.

And perhaps that's not my place.

But in preparing for this speech, I found out that it was actually never the plan to spend your life in the military.

Your father Alexander Milley, a Marine himself, strongly advised against it.

He even rallied your brother and several acquaintances to sabotage your introductory visit to West Point and only show you the absolute worst parts of the college regimen.

Your father succeeded temporarily, because you went on to study at Princeton and later Columbia University.

But in the end, the military DNA proved impossible to beat.

And here you are, four decades later, about to retire as the highest ranking officer of the United States Armed Forces.

It was the first Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (who by the way combined this job with being Chairman of the NATO Military Committee) General Omar Bradley, who said: you need to set your course by the stars, not by the lights of every passing ship.

And that is exactly what you have done.

Throughout your career, especially in your current position, you have demonstrated a unique ability to trust your inner compass.

The North Star being the Constitution of the United States.

In front of the Senate Armed Services Committee, you once said that

your loyalty to the nation, its people and the constitution will never change. As long as you have a breath to give, your loyalty is absolute.

This loyalty was the source of your boundless efficiency and energy.

And it enabled you to work with both a big-picture vision and an eye for microscopic detail.

Always thinking ahead, knowing that the pain of preparation is always less than the pain of regret.

Foregoing old-fashioned concepts such as “sleep”, “time zone”, and “week-end”, you stood firm at the helm while your country and the world went through unprecedented times.

A pandemic... the retrograde from two decades in Afghanistan... and now a global security crisis...

Through it all, you have shown relentless determination and unparalleled leadership.

Not only in your own country, but across the world.

I will never forget the way General Zalushny thanked you in the first Military Committee Chiefs of Defence Session after the start of the large-scale invasion of Ukraine.

He said that the people in his nation know full well who to thank for the unwavering support: it's not just the United States, it's Mark Milley.

As a testament to your involvement, you carry a big green map of Ukraine with you wherever you go.

Constantly studying the enemy's formation, doing literally everything possible to help your brothers in arms chart a course through the fog of war.

Guided by the belief that self-determination is an unalienable right.

Again: the constitution is your North Star.

Another key principle derived from the constitution is that all people are created equal.

Every time you hand out your commander's coin to a service member, you point at the constitution and emphasize this point: you are all American citizens, equal under law, only to be judged by the content of your character.

You actively fought against manifestations of racism, bias or discrimination in the armed forces.

When we dedicated a session to diversity at the Military Committee Conference in Estonia last year, you stated that this is “not just a woke subject”.

You explained that if you don't practice the values that you preach and if you exclude people, you miss out on valuable talent and resources and you simply cannot win the war.

I distinctly remember how you graciously said that even bearded admirals deserve a seat at the table.

Blunt, to the point of being rude: that is exactly the kind of banter we have come to know and love.

I will fondly remember the times when you and Supreme Allied Commander Europe Tod Wolters had irrelevant spats about Army versus Air Force, when in fact we all know that the US Navy is the only service branch that actually has a constitutional role...

At some point Tod would then always tell you to go shave your eyebrows. I'm glad you didn't.

Because I think your big bellowing voice and bulky eyebrows are the most important signs of deterrence we have. No one wants to be on the other side of that...

Mark, in all seriousness: on behalf of all of us here at this table I want to express our deepest respect and grati-

tude for the military leadership that you have shown.

Perhaps we at this table are among the few people who can even begin to comprehend the pressure you have been under, also from the political level.

At a time when your nation's constitutional values were shaken to their core, you made sure that the U.S. military continued to embody the values and ideals of the Nation.

You showed an unrelenting devotion to democracy.

Navigating with your North Star and your inner compass, you prevented many a crisis from spiraling out of control. Both on a national and on an international level.

There were mornings when you didn't know if you would be fired by sunset, and yet you continued to fight for what you knew to be right.

For this, your country and in fact the whole Alliance owes you a great debt.

Nobody will know the full extent of what you went through.

But even without knowing the details: please allow me here to express

on all our behalves our deepest respect, by using a quote from Thomas Paine:

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he who stands by it, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."

Dear Mark,

It was Saint Augustine who taught us that we should pray as though everything depended on God. And work as though everything depended on us.

By God, how you have worked...

If there is one person in the world who deserves to "sit under his own vine and fig tree"... It's you.

And when you do, I hope you realize just how big of an impact you have made on this world.

As a fervent student of history I hope you know that you in fact made history.

At a promotion of a Colonel to Brigadier General you quipped once that the rank is just Velcro.

It can be ripped off at any time. And at some point we will all put down our

uniform and pass on the torch to the next one.

I hardly ever disagree with you, but here I must.

Because even though the Velcro may come and go, you have left a deep mark in the lives of thousands if not millions of people.

Not only on the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces, who have been honored to serve alongside you.

Not only on the 330 million people living in the United States.

But on all of the 1 billion people who live on Allied soil.

And on millions more around the world, who live in countries where the U.S. military helps provide peace and stability.

You have lifted us all up with your strategic vision, your dedication and your deep personal involvement.

Under unimaginable pressure, you performed a task that was nothing short of herculean.

Thank you.

We will miss you tremendously.

## WINNER: HEARING TESTIMONY

*"Tumbling Up: Ranking Member DeLauro on the Labor-HHS-Education Funding Bill"*

By Ben Cowlshaw for Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations



Delivered at the United States Capitol, Nov. 14, 2023

**M**r. Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to congratulate Chairman Aderholt on his first bill as Chairman of this Subcommittee. Also, I would like to thank the minority staff, particularly Stephen Steigleder, Philip Tizzani, Laurie Mignone, and Jackie Kilroy for all of your hard work, as well as the majority staff, Susan Ross, Kathryn Salmon, James Redstone, Emily Goff, and Laura Stagno. As I have often said, they keep our names on the door.

I have never seen an appropriations bill quite like this one. I have never seen a bill that was this inhumane, and

which defies all the values and ideals of a society which promises to address the needs and the challenges of its people.

In Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, Pip observes the Pocket family children as, quote, "not growing up or being brought up, but tumbling up." This bill leaves America's children tumbling up.

This bill is the largest domestic appropriation bill, and for good reason. The programs funded in Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education ensure that our workforce is strong, our families are healthy and safe, and our children's future is secure. Indeed,

last Congress, we passed a Labor-HHS bill that supported middle class and working families, lifted up vulnerable Americans, and prepared our nation for future crises.

Which makes it even more disappointing to see where we have ended up in this year's process. The majority's 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education bill—and its 28 percent cut of \$64 billion—brings us back to a level unseen since 2008. It heralds their intent to end public education in the United States. This bill eliminates present and future job opportunities for young adults, for



seniors, and for working families. And it jeopardizes maternal, pediatric, and public health.

This bill is shameful—which is presumably the reason why it was never marked up or voted on by the full Appropriations Committee. As disappointed as I am to see the authority of the Appropriations Committee surrendered, sadly, based on where the majority has taken this entire process, it is not surprising.

154 days ago, the House Appropriations Committee held its first full committee markup of a 2024 bill. Nine more followed. This bill was not one of them. Nonetheless, the House majority circumvented the committee process—they air-dropped five new poison pill riders into the Labor-HHS bill—without any bipartisan consultation or a vote by the committee. We are left to assume that the majority knew this bill had no path forward in committee—and they know it has no path forward, period.

Horace Mann called education “the great equalizer.” Perhaps then it is the majority’s aversion to equality that explains why they cut 28 percent from the Department of Education. They will take at least 224,000 teachers out of low-income classrooms and eviscerate the programs that help at risk youth build a bright future.

This cut would entail a loss of 3,700 teachers in Alabama; 800 teachers in Idaho; 4,400 teachers in Maryland; 4,300 teachers in Tennessee; 6,500 teachers in Michigan; 5,000 teachers in Louisiana; 8,300 teachers in Georgia; 1,500 teachers in Kansas; 22,300 teachers in Texas; and 4,400 teachers in Arizona. Explain that to your constituents. I am deeply concerned about the impact such a colossal retraction from public education funding would have on children across our country.

This bill tells the story of where the majority seeks to take this country. Republicans have made it clear they are opposed to public education and they seek to destroy it. Quality education will no longer be accessible to working families—but it will be the purview of

the rich. I must underscore that point: this is no messaging bill. This is their “Commitment with America.” I am taking Republicans at their word, as should all of the American people—this is what they want to do.

When 161 House Republicans voted earlier this year to eliminate all K-12 funding at the Department of Education in the Massie Amendment to H.R. 5, I was horrified, but that was only the beginning.

House Republicans are in lockstep behind the most extreme ideologues in their party. Just this summer, former Secretary Betsy DeVos penned an op-ed calling to eliminate the Department of Education; the Heritage Foundation’s Budget Blueprint includes a proposal to eliminate the Department of Education; and former OMB Director Russ Vought wants massive funding reductions to “thwart” a public education system he sees as an “existential threat to the American Republic.”

We are witnessing a widespread attack on public education that should shock every American family. If left to their own devices, Republicans would gleefully take public education to the graveyard.

So, how will this bill move us closer towards those ends?

English language acquisition funding to help five million English learners nationwide is eliminated, disadvantaging and discriminating against students who primarily speak another language, restraining their future ability to compete and succeed in the economy.

Supporting Effective Instruction State grants—which provide professional development opportunities for educators—are completely gone.

The Federal Work Study is no more for the 660,000 students who need it to help finance their post-secondary education—limiting their potential earnings and future success in the job market.

Nearly \$1 billion cut from Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants would eliminate need-based financial aid for 1.7 million students nationwide.

Promise Neighborhoods, Social and Emotional Learning grants, Magnet schools are all completely erased as well.

And the programs that are not completely abolished in this bill are so poorly funded as to be completely nonfunctional. A \$14.7 billion cut from Title I—the very foundation of public education in America—is patently unthinkable and would remove hundreds of thousands of teachers from classrooms, directly harming children in every single one of our districts.

Students nationwide are struggling with rising college costs, and this bill provides no relief by freezing the maximum Pell Grant for the first time in 12 years.

I believe we all agree we have a crisis in our nation’s classrooms. But rather than address the teacher shortage and fully fund our children’s future—our nation’s future—the majority’s solution is to abolish the public classroom altogether. If you cannot afford a private education for your children—well, too bad. This is the Every Child Left Behind Act.

Regardless of your age or stage in life, this bill means you cannot count on your country for assistance getting back on your feet. Youth Job Training, Adult Job Training, Job Corps, Senior Community Service Employment Programs are all eliminated. If you want to work and just need help finding the right job or finding a better job, this bill has nothing to offer you.

They are putting workers who do find jobs at risk by cutting \$313 million from worker protection agencies, like the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. And a 30 percent cut to the Wage and Hour Division, the agency that is tasked with enforcing wage law and ensuring our children are not working illegally, will send the rights of workers in this country back to a time before World War II.

The bill hangs working families out to dry. Healthy Start, diaper distribution, teen pregnancy prevention, Title X family planning—all abolished. And with riders that block access to abortions and reproductive health care services and force providers to withhold

critical information about health care options, it is clear that the majority does not trust women to make their own decisions and want to move us to a nationwide abortion ban. These provisions amount to the majority simultaneously ensuring that anyone who may get pregnant, will get pregnant, teenagers included—and that there are no resources or lifelines available to help those children and families.

People can only hope they do not get cancer—you will not find support from House Republicans. From the National Institutes of Health, over \$2 billion is cut from the National Cancer Institute, the National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Stroke, the

National Institute for Mental Health, and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Cuts to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are as outrageous as they are dangerous. Firearm Injury Prevention, Tobacco Prevention, and Ending the HIV Epidemic—which, by the way, was an initiative of President Donald Trump—Republicans have decided addressing these problems is not worth a single dollar to the American people.

What should we be doing if not combatting the leading causes of death in this country? What should we fund if not the health and future of America's families?

Supporting our children and working families is the bare minimum of what the greatest country in the world should do for its people. But this bill goes well below the bare minimum.

This bill steals from our children's future, from our families' health, and from Americans' livelihoods. It abandons young adults, it stifles biomedical innovation, it surrenders to current and future public health crises, and it hurts women with poison pill riders on abortion. For these reasons, I vehemently oppose this bill, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you, and I reserve the balance of my time.

## WINNER: INAUGURAL SPEECH

*"I Choose Optimism"*

By Jeffrey Crooks for Dr. Jesse M. Ehrenfeld, President, American Medical Association



Delivered at the AMA's 2023 Annual Meeting of House of Delegates, Chicago, June 13, 2023

Thank you, Dr. Fryhofer. Thank you to all of these remarkable physician leaders seated behind me.

And thank you to all of you for being here tonight. What an incredible honor to address you for the first time as your AMA president.

With us tonight are so many people from all periods of my life. Childhood friends from Delaware, classmates from college and medical school. My long standing and primary research mentor who opened the door for me to an academic career, colleagues from Vanderbilt, the Medical College of Wisconsin and several shipmates that I was privileged to serve alongside in the Navy. All of you are so incredibly special to me, thank you for being part of this special night.

I want to recognize two in particular, seated here on stage: Army Commanding General Mary Krueger, a courageous advocate for the inclusion of LGBTQ individuals in the military and beyond throughout her storied career as

a family physician. Thank you Mary for always standing up when it matters.

Also beside me is Dr. John Raymond, president and CEO of the Medical College of Wisconsin, who is a remarkable physician leader and an even more remarkable man. Your kindness and compassion inspires me every day in all my work. Thank you, John.

And of course my immediate family in the front row: my father David Ehrenfeld, a retired family dentist who practiced for 45 years and never turned away a patient who called with an after-hours emergency. My mom Katharine Nicodemus, a psychologist with a still incredibly busy solo private practice, you always showed us the importance of education, even though you prioritized mine over yours, resulting in our simultaneous graduation from high school and graduate school the same year. My brother Josh who was always there for me in a pinch even if meant driving a car halfway across the country in the middle of the night.

My two beautiful boys Ethan and Asher, 4 years old and 4 months old respectively—you have brought indescribable joy into our life and I love being challenged by you and watching you grow each day. And of course my husband Judd Taback: a public service attorney who has dedicated his entire professional career to service, you have been my partner in crime for nearly twelve years now, married for half of them. You have given up so much to support my dreams, including every birthday since we met to come to the AMA annual meeting. You have been there for every celebration, every sorrow, always with the right words and the right embrace to support me and our family in any and every circumstance.

You inspire me through your strength and your love, each and every day. I can't imagine this moment without you and Asher and Ethan.

Now Ethan just turned 4. His road to pre-kindergarten hasn't been an easy

one. He was born 10 weeks early and weighed just 2 lbs 7 oz.

For the physicians in the room—ok, most of us—you know the serious complications that can arise when a child is born that early and that underweight.

Ethan spent 49 days in the neonatal ICU at Illinois Masonic Hospital, just a few miles from here. While in the ICU, Ethan required a lot of care, a lot of medicine, and a lot of love to keep him alive. Judd and I will be eternally grateful for the physicians and nurses, and the medical innovations that saved his life.

As new parents—seeing our child struggle was unimaginable. In those kinds of moments, you want to do everything possible, and give anything you can, to help your child's recovery.

When he was just a few weeks old, Ethan needed a blood transfusion. And as an anesthesiologist, I have given thousands of units of blood to hundreds of patients.

But at this moment, watching my son cling to life, I was struck by the painful reality that, even though I was a physician and now, a father ... neither I, nor my husband, could donate blood—simply because we are gay.

Discriminatory policies—policies rooted in stigma, not science—barred us from doing the most humane of acts, donating our blood.

Thankfully, Ethan got the blood he needed. But that feeling of helplessness lingered with me for some time.

I tell this story because I want people to understand what we mean when we talk about inequities and injustices in medicine.

This is just one of many experiences my husband and I have had with health inequities, and I know that too many of my colleagues and too many of the patients we serve also suffer from discrimination and discrimination in health care on a daily basis.

It's the reason why Black women in the U.S. are at least three times as likely as than white women to die during pregnancy... why Black men are 50 percent more likely to die following elective surgery.

It's why LGBTQ teens and young adults suffer higher rates of mental health challenges, both diagnosed and, far too often, undiagnosed.

In Milwaukee, where I work and live, the infant mortality rate for white families is 3 per 1,000 births. For Black families, it's 18 per 1,000 births.

So many injustices in health care remain—and are the focus of our AMA's advocacy on health equity and my much of my personal work leading the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment.

Just recently, the FDA, thanks in large part to a decade of advocacy by our AMA and others, rescinded some of these discriminatory practices, making it possible for my husband and I to give someone else's child a much-needed blood transfusion.

This kind of advocacy is why I am so proud to lead our AMA at this moment.

The AMA has made tremendous strides in recent years to recognize past wrongs, to take a stand against discriminatory practices in medicine, to stand on the side of justice and equity, and to partner with allies who are committed to advancing the rights of all patients to receive equitable care.

Today there is an unconscionable effort to interfere in medicine. An assault on patient and physician autonomy. Legislative over-reach. Attacks on maternal health ... on LGBTQ patients.

There are also relentless efforts to redefine how medical care is practiced by expanding scope of practice for nonphysicians, creating more inefficiencies in the system, further siloing care, and putting patients at greater risk. And I will tell you these misguided efforts negatively impact patients in historically marginalized communities.

The aspiration shouldn't be to provide lesser quality care to more people, it should be to provide high quality care for all people.

All communities—including our nation's veterans and those from Native American and other historically marginalized communities—deserve access to a physician-led care team.

As far as we have come, we have even further to go. And as I stand here tonight, I can't help but to be awed by the willingness of our AMA to make difficult and necessary change.

I have a vivid memory of walking for the first time into the AMA House of Delegates meeting here in Chicago in 2001 when I was a medical student. I had just finished my first year of medical school at the University of Chicago and the possibilities ahead of should have seemed limitless. But as I stood near the back of the room, I was struck by two competing feelings. I was in awe of the open and deliberative process. Here were physicians from all over the country, and from every specialty, debating health policy in minute detail. Here were medical experts establishing the policies, guidelines, and directives I would one day follow.

But another feeling settled in as well. I had an unshakable feeling of insecurity, knowing that as a gay man in medicine I was an outsider who might never be accepted for who I was, limiting my choices.

The policy debates I heard were jarring to me. To hear the arguments against inclusivity... to hear arguments that flew in the face of science because of homophobia and ignorance. I knew who I was, but I wasn't sure there would ever be a place for me in our AMA.

You have to remember that in 2001, there were no federal hate crime protections for LGBTQ people. Same-sex marriage was not legal in any state. Don't Ask Don't Tell was still the law of the land—and it would remain so when I was commissioned as an officer in the Navy some years later.

In 1998, a young college student named Matthew Shepard was brutally murdered in Wyoming because of his sexual orientation. Matthew and I were the same age. I had only recently told my closest friends in college that I was gay. And for me, as for many of us in this community, Matthew's murder was as shocking as it was predictable. It was a salient reminder of the very real threats that people like me face every day when we live as our authentic selves.

Here at our AMA, there was not yet an LGBTQ Advisory Committee or Section. There were no policy discussions that focused on the health needs of my community.

There were few openly gay physicians to look up to. Our AMA had only amended its policies eight years earlier to specifically prevent discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation—and had only outright opposed the practice of conversion therapy, one year before I joined the organization.

And so, as a medical student—standing in that room and watching the deliberative process of the House of Delegates unfold—I had well founded fears about my place in society, never mind the profession of medicine.

A few years later, I became active in my state medical society during my residency in Boston and I helped to write and pass a resolution to form an LGBTQ committee to elevate the concerns of our community, not only as patients but as physicians and health care professionals.

It was an effort that clearly did not sit well with everyone. I was pulled aside by a colleague and told that while creating an LGBTQ committee was all fine and good, continuing on this path would bring a swift end to my career in organized medicine.

I realized at that moment that my choices were to continue to hide who I am, or to help organized medicine evolve into a place that welcomed people like me.

Standing on this stage tonight and accepting the honor of the AMA presidency is proof that our organization can and has evolved.

This is why visibility matters. And this why, when you have a platform like this one, you have a responsibility to use it for the greater good ... and to try and lift up those who haven't yet found their voice.

Everyone in this room tonight knows that the profession of medicine is at a crossroads.

On one hand we're witness to incredible new technologies and breakthrough scientific discoveries. Remark-

able treatments. Amazing new medicines that make it easier to diagnose and cure common diseases and prolong life. And we're only just beginning to see the promise of A.I.—which has the potential to transform medicine.

At the same time life expectancy in the U.S. is lower than it was when I was in residency. Maternal mortality is surging—more than doubling at the rate of other well-resourced countries. And we continue to face daily shortages of critical, life-saving medications.

COVID-19 may not be the threat it once was, but we still face the twin epidemics of substance use disorders and deaths from firearm violence.

And we face an ever-worsening mental health crisis in our nation, which has taken a disproportionately high toll on physicians.

A dear medical school classmate of mine, who went into emergency medicine, worked tirelessly on the frontlines throughout COVID, struggled. I knew he struggled. But I didn't know how to help him. And he didn't know how to ask for help. And two years ago, I lost that friend to suicide. He was an energetic and loving soul, and I am haunted by his loss. He is yet one example of why I know our AMA must continue to advocate for the mental health needs of all physicians and of our patients.

Our profession—and our society—can do better.

We must do better.

This is why both physicians and the public look to the AMA for leadership ... for guidance ... for reassurance ... and for help making sense of our complex world.

At a time when so many aspects of society have become dangerously polarized, we have seen the proliferation of medical disinformation, junk science, the criminalization of medical care, and a growing distrust in medical institutions and experts.

Our AMA has a duty to call out politically appointed judges who would upend 80 years of FDA precedent and threaten access to critical drugs long proven to be safe and effective.

We have a duty to push back against legislative interference in the practice of medicine that is leading to the criminalization of care.

We have a duty to fight for the recovery of America's physicians in the aftermath of the pandemic, pushing to fix our broken Medicare payment system, reform prior authorization, and end the stigma around physician burnout.

We have a duty to make sure that the human connection that is so essential in medicine remains at the center of our increasingly digitized world.

When I am sick, I want to know there is someone helping me who actually cares about me. Someone who understands my struggle, and my pain, and brings with them the human emotions that are at the center of the patient-physician relationship.

We have a duty to push for change to address the crisis of violence.

Every physician who has cared for an innocent victim of violence, whether from a school shooting, the Boston marathon bombing, the siege on Tree of Life Synagogue, the Pulse Nightclub massacre any of the other countless and completely senseless acts of violence that our country has endured can tell you of the heartbreak and the moral injury they suffered while trying to save as many lives as possible.

We have to think about how we can engage in this divisive environment if we are to be successful in pushing for policy changes, advocating for what we believe in, and working to make a difference for our patients and our colleagues.

And as president, I pledge to do all that I can to ensure that your voices—and your priorities—are heard.

Too often, it seems like many have forgotten the rules Ethan is learning in pre-kindergarten about sharing, being kind, and accepting others.

I often think about the loss of trust and respect for one another that we see play out at every level of society. I hear from parents in my son's class about how they come from different backgrounds, different jobs, and different parts of town. There is a richness in

the diversity in his class and in watching how these children interact.

How the kids engage with one another oblivious to bias, to stereotypes, or to the fractures that have often been ingrained in their parents.

So how do we break this cycle?

What can we do, as physicians, to rise above division and bridge divides?

We use our voice.

We speak up.

We advocate.

We call attention to injustice.

We don't back down from the good fight.

That's why I am so proud of the courage our AMA has shown by standing up for science... standing up for ethics at a time of increasing aggression and hostility.

I am proud to be at the helm of our organization as we continue to champion health equity and racial justice despite vocal—and powerful—opposition.

It is easy to be discouraged by the enormity of the task at hand, but as I begin my term as president, I choose to embrace optimism.

I choose optimism because I've seen how physicians have stepped up to counter disinformation, to shine a light on the unacceptable toll of mental illness and violence, to address health disparities, and to get all patients access to the care that they need and deserve.

I choose optimism because I work with young physicians and aspiring physicians who are driven by a bottomless sense of curiosity and a commitment to making a difference. The next generation's passion for medicine gives me hope for the future.

I choose optimism because I have seen the impact of our AMA—and our capacity to speak out, adapt, fight injustices, and support physicians and patients in every corner of the country.

I choose optimism because I believe there is still joy to be found in medicine, a reason nearly everyone in this room has dedicated our professional lives to helping, and healing, others.

I choose optimism because even though I once stood in the back of this very room afraid of being rejected for who I was ... I now stand before you as the first openly gay president of our AMA, proudly representing everyone in this room, including everyone who has ever, or will ever, feel like an outsider.

While our AMA may not have the power to change every part of society that rejects people who are seen as different, we do have the ability and obligation to ensure health care is always a safe space.

We can work to make sure all our patients are seen, heard, and accepted as they are.

For too long medicine has been an unsafe place and an unwelcoming

environment for far too many people. Although the work is difficult, slow, and imperfect, our AMA continues to strive to change medicine for the better, and to make the exam room a safe place for everyone who seeks our help.

This is our charge as physicians.

And this is the charge of our AMA.

Physicians across the country continue to shoulder the weight of enormous challenges.

Yet despite these immense pressures—we physicians continue on.

We do the work.

We provide compassionate care.

We make a difference.

We change lives.

Twenty-two years ago at my first AMA meeting, I could never have predicted what medicine looks like today—both its challenges and its potential to lift up society. The challenge that lies before me and before all of us tonight is to collectively imagine what it should look like twenty-two years from today.

Let us move forward with confidence and purpose.

Let us speak with conviction.

Let us hold firm to science and the ethics of our profession.

Let us serve with honor, courage and commitment.

And let us always fight for a more inclusive, and more equitable, tomorrow.

Thank you.

# WINNER: MOTIVATIONAL SPEECH

*“An Olympian’s Journey to Make Mental Health Beautiful”*

By Kylie Moore and Megan Pope for Karsta Lowe,  
Professional Volleyball Player, Olympian



Delivered at Loyola University,  
Chicago, Nov. 14, 2023

I was 23 when I won my first Olympic medal after leading the USA women’s volleyball team to victory. Over the span of just a few days, I had played eight games, and in those games, I had 38 kills, two aces, and one block. I was literally one of the most valuable players.

I’ll never forget the moment they put me on a podium in Rio de Janeiro, said my name “Karsta Lowe, Team USA,” and placed a bronze medal over my neck. That was it. Everything I’d ever dreamed of and worked for was happening at that moment.

But that wasn’t what I was thinking about.

Instead, I was panicked. As I continued to smile and look calm, my palms had gone clammy, my stomach had curled into knots, and my hands had started to shake. My mind was racing a mile a minute, and my heart wasn’t far behind it. Had I locked my door? I hadn’t left my windows open, had I? What if I didn’t unplug my appliances, and my room in the Olympic Village was currently engulfed in flames? What about my boyfriend? Was he thinking about me? Did he even love me?

And, most importantly, was I as focused as my other teammates?

Turns out, I had locked the door, shut the windows, and unplugged my appliances. My room was in one piece when I returned. My boyfriend was thinking about me, and he did, in fact, love me. But I certainly wasn’t as focused as my other teammates.

That loop took hold and repeated itself over and over again in my mind without mercy, but it was nothing new. Growing up, I struggled with obsessive-compulsive disorder and anxiety that manifested as depression. Before long, I

was diagnosed with what’s called Pure O: purely obsessional. It’s rare, with just 1% of the global population facing it, but it is hard.

Pure O is a type of OCD that causes the same kind of distressing and intrusive thoughts that typical OCD does, but there are no signs of compulsions. I didn’t have to do the kind of things you see in the movies, like wash my hands until I scrubbed them raw or turn the light switch on and off 50 times before I could leave the house.

Instead, it caused elongated depressive episodes worse than what I’d become used to, often centered on a single thought that was anything but what I should’ve been focused on.

It followed me through to adulthood and even to the Olympic stage, where it draped itself on top of that bronze medal and continued to drag me down.

I didn’t tell a soul, and for years, I thought I was alone in that experience. I couldn’t have been more wrong.

So many of us are fighting that sort of mental health battle on a daily basis, even if we don’t realize it. Whether we’re fearful of the reaction to asking for help, simply don’t want people to know, or are embarrassed, there’s a stigma that leaves us to suffer alone.

I’m here to tell you that there is hope. There are ways that you can embrace your mental health right here, right now, and change your life.

Over the next few minutes, I’m going to take you to the deepest, darkest corners of my own mental health journey and share three steps that you can use to help you on yours. It’s time to make taking care of your mental health beautiful—because it is.

I didn’t always believe that. I thought mental health was something that made me weak or that caring

about it meant that something was wrong with me. But it’s not. Having the ability to acknowledge and care about it makes you strong and beautiful.

The truth is that even if they don’t talk about it, everyone is fighting a battle that we have no idea about—your friends, family, and even the people standing on a podium with an Olympic medal around their neck.

I knew I was struggling and needed help, but it wasn’t easy for me to get it. I actually couldn’t get it at all. See, mental health wasn’t something we talked about in my family or community. My parents had mastered the art of making me feel like my mental health struggles weren’t a big deal, even in the moments that they were taking up every inch of my headspace. I was left to just keep it all in.

But the reality is that a majority of us are struggling with mental health, and that’s true even among young adults—even the ones you’re sitting next to right now. Research shows that about half of young adults had symptoms during the pandemic, and while 39% were able to get counseling and medication, more than one-third of them were unable to access therapy.

The stigma that surrounds struggling, illness, and addiction makes it nearly impossible to ask for help, which leaves you to blame yourself and feel more alone.

That sort of shame and guilt is entirely unhelpful, and when we attach those kinds of feelings to our struggles, we avoid them. We end up getting stuck. If we can’t learn to compartmentalize and put them away, we’ll never be able to accept ourselves or adequately deal with the pain.

And when we can’t do that, we can’t heal.

That's what makes honesty and vulnerability true assets. They're the skills you want in your toolbox.

Honesty and vulnerability are such beautiful things; how else are you going to find such a profound way to connect with the human condition? If we can find a way to destigmatize this experience and stay open, honest, and vulnerable, we can talk about it and heal from it.

And hey, even if you're one of the lucky ones not struggling with any particular mental illness, there's always room to grow in how you take care of yourself and those around you.

As Carl Jung so brilliantly said, "Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life, and you will call it fate."

I want you to know your struggles are not your fate.

But they will turn into your fate if you can't learn to face them. And it's hard to face them when there's such a stigma surrounding mental health. So let's talk about that stigma and the ramifications of it for a minute.

The stigma is the elephant in the mental health room. We know it's there, but we're all just kind of turning a blind eye. However, turning a blind eye is what makes it impossible to help ourselves and others who might be struggling with mental health issues, illness, or addiction.

I remember asking myself, "Why don't I have it as easy as those around me? What's wrong with me?" But I didn't have it harder than anyone else; we just weren't talking about it.

A majority of Americans believe that the US is in the midst of a mental health crisis, and I'm inclined to agree. In one study, half of adults said they have had a severe mental health crisis in their own family. One in five said their own mental health is fair or poor, and those under 30 and who identify as LGBTQ+ were more likely to say so. One in eight of us is on antidepressants.

Despite those numbers, only one in five has gotten mental health treatment over the last year. But that is higher than it has been in years past. In fact, the us-

age of mental health services increased by almost 40% between 2019 and 2022.

Maybe the stigma is lessening, but our mental health is still declining. Only 31% of adults said their mental health is excellent, and that's down almost 15% from 20 years ago.

Those are heavy numbers, huh? But as heartbreaking as they are, to me they also offer some comfort and, dare I say it, hope. They prove that you are not alone, even in your darkest places.

But stigma often leads us to ignore symptoms rather than acknowledging or accepting them. Being vulnerable enough to be honest about what you're struggling with is so brave, and sharing that vulnerability with others is beautiful. After all, if we don't talk about it, we'll never know the inner workings of other people's minds.

So, how can we continue to destigmatize the conversation around mental health? How can we make it possible to help ourselves and help those around us? By sharing openly about our struggles; by turning to friends, family, and professionals; and by finding ways to embrace our mental health journey.

Society intuitively—and wrongly, might I add—attaches weakness to mental health. But it's 2023 now, and choosing yourself and putting yourself first is the strongest, most beautiful thing you can do.

I hit my own rock bottom when I came home from Italy at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. I was really struggling with an eating disorder and body dysmorphia without even knowing it.

I found myself in a constant state of rumination, negative self-talk, and suicidal ideation but had no idea how bad it really was until I went to live with my mom and started to feel isolated and confused.

I moved in with a friend who had gone to rehab for an eating disorder, and that was when everything clicked. As my suicidal ideations got worse, I knew I had to do something about it. If I'd not had that realization, I'm not sure I'd be standing here talking to you today.

I quickly learned that on that kind of journey, you have to have self-awareness and be willing and able to put in the hard, lonely work it takes to survive.

Trust me, I know that working on your mental health feels like standing at the base of an impossibly tall mountain or on the edge of a dizzyingly high cliff. But there are three steps you can take right now to start that trek, and I'd like to share them with you.

The first step is to put yourself first. I know this can be hard to do. There are so many other things and people to think about, right? Your parents, your friends, your schoolwork. Not to mention the opinions that others have about how you should live your life. It makes it all too easy to put yourself on the back burner.

But it's crucial that you focus on yourself and prioritize your own well-being and life satisfaction. And that's true even if you're one of the lucky ones who aren't dealing with a mental health disorder or other struggle.

What does it mean to put yourself first? A few things:

It means giving the most weight to your own opinions and feelings rather than those of the people around you. I know it's hard, especially at this age, but it's a beautiful thing to experience the balance between prioritizing yourself and your community. It's like when you're on an airplane, and they tell you to put your own mask on before helping others.

Just look at Naomi Osaka, who so famously withdrew from the 2021 French Open to focus on her mental health. It helped her, but it helped others as well by destigmatizing the struggle.

It also means prioritizing yourself and your well-being, whatever that may look like for you. For me, it's meditation, quality sleep, creative outlets, my community, and medication.

I want to pause here to acknowledge that in the healing world, there's a lot of rhetoric that says you have to have some sort of practice, whether it's something like journaling, breathwork, or anything else. It's crucial that you figure out what kind of practice works

for you. If I'd listened to someone else about what was going to help my mental health, it might not have worked for me. Remember, your healing journey is your own, and it's going to be a nuanced one.

Finally, it means trusting in the power, depth, and capabilities of your mind. Your subconscious is far more powerful than you might realize, so listen to and trust your gut. At different points throughout my life, I've been offered incredible contracts, some of which I really wanted. They were the kind of opportunities that kept me up at night trying to justify saying yes, but I couldn't drown out the little voice in the back of my head that told me I knew I couldn't for the sake of my mental health. And it was right.

It's true that you are your problem, but it's also true that you are your solution. But if you don't prioritize yourself, you won't find a solution.

The second step is to incorporate daily practices into your life.

I've found that daily practices like sleep, therapy, meditation, exercise, getting outside, and focusing on nutrition have helped me tremendously. But these will be very specific to you, and there's no right or wrong answer. Meditation, journaling, and creative outlets are great places to start. You might try focusing on your community, too, whatever that looks like—even if it's staying in touch via text or phone call with people from across the globe or joining a new club to meet others.

I used to be unaware and unconscious of the majority of my struggle, but my daily practices have helped me see when I'm spiraling and stopped me from letting my thoughts get big. Now, I can see myself thinking those things and hear myself thinking them. I know when to stop and ask myself, "What am I telling myself? What am I thinking?"

Incorporating daily practices into your life may seem like a small step, but they're actually one of the basics of positive psychology. They've been

shown to reduce stress and anxiety while helping people with their mental health. It's because they provide a certain sense of awareness, which is 80% of the battle; it's easier to use thought replacement when you're able to accurately explore your thoughts.

You will need to accept help from others as you learn to use daily practices, so don't be afraid to ask for it. Remember that it's okay to rely on those you trust for guidance and support; they want to help you.

Finally, the third step is to remember to stay open and patient with yourself. Give yourself grace and recognize that changing yourself on a deep, subconscious level isn't easy. It most certainly doesn't happen overnight, either. This is something that can take months or even years.

Our brains are mysterious and complex. It is so complicated, in fact, that we probably will never understand it, and research suggests that it doesn't even understand itself. We're learning something new about it every single day. In just the past year alone, we've found out that it even has the equivalent of a thumbs-up-thumbs-down switch that could trigger anxiety and depression. That might be something to remember on your mental health journey.

We don't know everything, but here's what we do know: mental health is medicalized, but so much lies in our own power, subconscious, and spirituality. The connection between your mind and body is your subconscious, and it's made up of trillions of cells that are in constant communication with each other. They know everything about you, and they're keeping score. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but your issues aren't just going to magically dissolve. Instead, they'll bury themselves in your subconscious and take root there.

And, sure, trauma lies deep within our subconscious. But so does the real treasure: the ability to help and heal ourselves. Again, we are our problems,

but we are also our solutions, and this journey calls for adapting and evolving over time, even on your healing journey.

Mental health is a journey, and it is a beautiful one. How lucky are we that we get to feel things?

I heard a question the other day that really stuck with me. Let's say that you started out as a celestial being who got offered the chance to go to Earth. It would be for an incredibly short time, let's say 75 years, but you'd get to experience every emotion—love, heartbreak, euphoria, and sorrow—during your time there. Would you want to go?

I don't know about you, but it is an immediate yes for me. Even though there will be hard times, it's still worth it. Many people think that when they start to focus on their mental health and self-care, it will be depressing and sad. That it's about self-pity or feeling sorry for yourself. And yes, you might have to sit with scary, hard feelings, but that is part of this human experiment. It's part of the process, part of the adventure. You can't have the bad without the good. By going through and dealing with the big scary feelings, you will then be able to find happiness and peace.

Now, any time I'm feeling intense emotion or struggling with my mental health, I think back to that question.

And this is what I wanted when I said we need to make mental health beautiful. Life is full of ups and downs, hard and good times. But the hard times are what make the good times worth living. Without knowing what hard means, how would we understand good?

So, remember, on this journey, it's not about reaching any particular destination. It's about being strong enough to show up, help others, and embrace your mental health through prioritizing yourself, incorporating daily practices, and staying open and patient—all on a daily basis.

Thank you, and remember: your mental health journey is beautiful, even the parts that are scary and sad.



# WINNER: STATE-OF-THE-INSTITUTION SPEECH

*“President’s Address—Biennial Convention 2023”*

By Katherine Russo for Erin Ariss, RN,  
President, Ontario Nurses’ Association



Delivered at ONA Biennial Convention,  
Toronto, Nov. 7, 2023

[Slide 1]

Play: Alan Parsons Project

[Erin takes the stage.]

[Take a pause: look around the room. Try to see all corners, wave and take it all in]

## Introduction

Hello everybody!

Hello to my ONA family together with me in this beautiful room and to my ONA siblings watching on Facebook Live!

I am profoundly honoured to be here today. Our amazing events team assembled this stage during the wee hours of last night. It takes about 18 solid hours to build this—incredible! Thank you!

And can we get some applause for Ang? Love the welcome, Ang, and thank you for being our First Vice-President!

Here we are today—more than 1,100 fantastic members, dedicated ONA staff, special guests, labour siblings, students and retirees—at the Sheraton Toronto Hotel.

Many more are watching us at home on Zoom or Facebook Live.

This beautiful hotel and our incredible union have something in common: each was established in the early 1970s. The Sheraton opened in 1972, and of course our ONA was created in 1973.

Beautiful and bold ONA. Fifty years young. ONA continues to inspire me... Every. Single. Day.

I’m barely into my address, and I’m already getting verklempt!

Can we rise up and give our great badass union a standing ovation? She deserves it!

Cheer: O-N-A! O-N-A! O-N-A!

[Pause. Applause.]

You have to pardon my language over these next few days. Sometimes I just can’t help myself, especially when I’m talking about our ONA and what we have been through to get where we are today. And our future? Well, it is bright indeed.

Okay, I’m getting carried away here.

Let’s take a step back and time travel together. I want to paint a picture for you of what was happening about 50 years ago across Ontario, as a brave group of ticked-off nurses were organizing to improve their lives and the future of nurses in this province.

It’s a full-circle journey.

[Slide 2]

## The Past

Cast your imagination back to the 1970s in Ontario—in many ways, people were footloose and fancy free.

Canada’s Prime Minister was [Slide 3] Pierre Elliott Trudeau... the more things change, the more they stay the same...

Ontario’s premier was [Slide 4] a Conservative—Bill Davis.

The top pop/rock singles in 1973 were a bit all over the place—a wild mix of meaningful songs protesting social issues—[Slide 5] from artists like Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder, to pop songs like the number-one single of the year—[Slide 6] Tie a Yellow Ribbon by Tony Orlando and Dawn—really!

[Slide 7] In 1973, food prices rose 8.6 per cent over the previous year. Sounds familiar, huh?

Bread was 27 cents a loaf: gas 65 cents a gallon, and a three-bedroom home in Toronto? About \$41,000.

[Slide 8] GM workers in Oshawa received—get this—a cost of living raise

in 1973 which brought their hourly rate to \$4.80. Of course, overtime and shift premiums were on top of this base.

[Slide 9] Women around the world were fighting for equal rights, and in the U.S., they were fighting for access to abortion.

[Slide 10] The fight for same-sex relationship rights was heating up in Ontario.

And what about nurses? What was going on? Well, we can summarize that in three words: [Slide 11] disrespect, anger and frustration.

[Slide 12] Fifty years ago, nurses were expected to be seen and not heard. They had no say in the workplace and literally worked for pennies. They were told to basically “shut up” and be grateful for what they got.

It got to a point where the nurses were told by hospital managers time and again that nothing was going to change for them.

But you know what?

They ignored the voices of their managers and instead decided to do something about it. Something changed.

Nurses were fed up with being treated with disrespect, at a time when women around the world were rising up, challenging sexism and achieving equal rights.

Each time a hospital manager said “no” to a nurse or “it’s not gonna happen, you’re not getting anything,” a spark grew.

They were fed up and were not going to take it anymore.

Let’s hear what ONA’s first CEO Ann Gribben said about what was happening on the ground around that time: [Slide 13]

Play: ONA: 35 Years of Progress - Pt.1 - YouTube 3:34-3:53

Employers and the government dared the nurses to organize a union.

The government didn't think nurses had it in them. As so often happens, they completely underestimated nurses.

[Slide 14] And so, the nurses met and organized. They put the wheels in motion to form a union—what would become our ONA.

It was no easy battle—far from it.

And I can't emphasize enough the sheer courage it took to organize.

There were more than 100 separate nursing groups across Ontario working under their own unique local wage structures, working conditions, and rules.

Imagine having to try to reach out to these pockets of nursing groups back in the 1970s: with no internet, no cell phones, no easy ways to communicate except for dialing the rotary telephone and making calls—what a concept!

In some ways, the lack of technology made organizing more challenging. In others, this personal interaction was ideal. I'll have more to say about that later.

Let's hear what Anne said about those initial days of organizing: [Slide 15]

Play: ONA: 35 Years of Progress - Pt.1 - YouTube 4:27-4:47

These wonderful, fierce and courageous nurses were fed up and ready to do something to achieve the respect they deserved!

They took huge risks to organize. They could have been disciplined or terminated at the drop of a, well, nurse's cap.

But they kept going. They persisted and fought and demanded and did not back down!

[Slide 16] And finally, on a clear and beautiful fall day—on Saturday, October 13, 1973—at a meeting at a Toronto hotel, more than 100 nurses from across our province met to Form Our Union!

[Pause. Applause]

These renegade, badass nurses became the founding members of

the Ontario Nurses' Association and started a burgeoning labour movement for nurses.

It took guts, determination and in truth, probably a bit of luck.

We all owe these women a huge debt of gratitude for their bravery and desire—or need—to change the brutal conditions they were working under. They were fed up and refused to be walked over, ignored, disrespected and dismissed for even one more day.

[Slide 17] Anne Gribben, ONA's first president Lois Jean Lowery, and so many others are my inspiration to continue our work and advocacy.

I want to be as brave as our forebearers were in ensuring that everyone—from our workplace CEOs to our MPPs to Premier Doug Ford—knows that nurses will not be silenced!

We will not be ignored!

[Slide 18] Nurses and health-care professionals WILL demand respect!

And we will achieve it.

[Pause. Applause]

[Refocus]

[Slide 19]

[Play: Aretha Franklin's Respect—chorus]

## The Present

[Slide 20] Respect. It is such a short, two-syllable word that carries so much meaning.

One of the biggest feminist anthems in music history is about Respect and it still resonates today. I love the song and its significance.

Respect—[Slide 20 animation] it can take many forms and have many meanings:

[Slide 21] Listening without interruption.

[Slide 22] Transparency.

[Slide 23] Valuing people and their experiences.

[Slide 24] Being considerate and helping people.

Seems pretty basic, doesn't it? My family ingrained these values in me at quite a young age and they are automatic for me—kind of like breathing.

Here we are, 50 years later, and I'd like to tell you a story about respect—or shall I say the gross lack of respect that was shown to me, our members and our professions this past summer.

This past July, Ang, Dawn Armstrong, our CEO Andrea Kay and I attended the Council of the Federation in Winnipeg with our counterparts from nurses' unions across the country.

[Slide 25] Every year, the provincial and territorial premiers gather at a large-scale meeting—called The Council of the Federation—to talk about the issues of the day.

[Slide 26] Our labour sister organization, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, holds a breakfast for the Premiers and the presidents of the nurses' unions.

All premiers usually attend, including Premier Ford.

The Council meeting was my first national meeting as ONA Provincial President, and I was determined to be respectful.

Breakfast was to begin at 7 a.m., with premiers to be seated along with the country's nurses' union leaders by 6:40.

[Slide 27] At 6:40, the premiers began to enter the room and take their seats. Premier Ford was nowhere to be seen.

[Slide 28] 6:50, [Slide 29] 7 a.m. comes and goes with no Doug Ford.

The presentations were about to begin and Ford strolls into the room at about [Slide 30] 7:10, brazenly late, a full 10 minutes after the latest time he was to be there.

We shook hands and he just sat down beside me and... turned his back to me. So, I leaned in.

You don't believe me? I have the photo as proof! [Slide 31]

There are a few takeaways from this photo: Ford's look of boredom and contempt, but more importantly, my barely controlled disgust and rage.

I think this photo can turn into a meme for the word, [Slide 32] "Frosty."

The photos and the mood at the table do not get much better, I'm afraid. [Slide 33]

I think we both knew that we had to speak to one another and try to be civil. “Try” is the operational word, here.

The Premier of Quebec was speaking about health care.

At one point, Ford said, [Slide 34] “there needs to be flexibility.”

I inserted myself into the conversation and told him, “You need to do something about the nurse-to-patient ratios. [Slide 35] We are 24,000 nurses short.”

Ford bristled for a moment and said, [Slide 36] “You know what Erin? I respect nurses.”

I shot back, [Slide 37] “We don’t feel it.”

This left Mr. Ford a bit flustered. He turned to me and said, [Slide 38] “You need to stop attacking me.”

Well, well, well. So, he thinks that nurses are attacking him? GOOD!

In my most calm, cold but even voice, I said to him: [Slide 39]

“Oh Premier, we haven’t even BEGUN to attack you...”

[Pause]

He stood up and left our table and went home to Ontario.

After my so-called chat with Premier Ford, I spoke with his Special Advisor.

I told him what had transpired at our table and reinforced that they must bring us into health-care conversations and discuss and solve the health-care issues, together.

We refuse to rubber-stamp something unless we are in the room and providing meaningful input.

What did I learn from this encounter?

A couple of things:

One: We upset the premier, which means he is very aware of ONA and our demands; and

Two: He wants us to stop attacking him.

Silly man.

I have a clear message for the Premier:

**WE WILL CONTINUE TO RAMP UP THE PRESSURE UNTIL WE RECEIVE THE RESPECT AND FAIRNESS THAT WE DESERVE!**

**THAT OUR PATIENTS, RESIDENTS AND CLIENTS DESERVE!**

I feel a chant coming on!

Let’s do a chant for the Premier right here and now! I want everyone to be on their feet to chant and I want our voices to carry all the way to Queen’s Park!

[Slide: Chant—bring out Beula?]

[Slide 40] Nurses and health workers, under attack! What do we do?

**STAND UP, FIGHT BACK!**

Nurses and health workers, under attack! What do we do?

**STAND UP, FIGHT BACK!**

Nurses and health workers, under attack! What do we do?

**STAND UP, FIGHT BACK!**

[Pause. Reset. Hold up Beula]

I’d like to introduce you to Beula.

She has been my loud and loyal partner through so much for so long.

[Slide 41] Beula had many workouts earlier this year during our amazing hospital-sector bargaining campaign for better staffing, better wages and better care. She continues to do her work amplifying our voices as the challenges continue.

In fact, I probably could have used her at Queen’s Park on September 25, but I don’t think Beula would have made it past security.

Here’s what happened on that memorable day... [Slide 42] as the legislature resumed sitting after its summer recess, thousands of ONA members, leaders, staff and others joined thousands of Ontarians at an Ontario Health Coalition rally against privatizing health care.

[Slide 43] I admit, when I spoke to the crowd, my badass self came out and I may have uttered a cuss word or two. But you know what? ONA is done with being polite.

[Slide 44] As a union, ONA members for the most part do not have the right to strike. That has made us a bit of an outlier in the broader union movement.

We had a reputation for being polite, for trying to work with policy makers, and of using facts and evidence to stop policies that hurt us and our patients, residents and clients.

Yup, as a union of professionals, we were quiet activists.

No question we were there for each other, fighting for members’ rights, but we did so under the radar and behind the scenes much of the time.

For me, it’s incredibly rewarding to be leading our union’s reawakening, embracing the role of labour in improving our worklives and the lives of those we care for.

[Pause]

So here we are, 50 years after the founding of ONA, a pandemic in which nurses had to fight for protection—and respect and fair pay.

In so many ways, history has been repeating itself these past few years: there is a Conservative premier who disrespects our profession, attacks women, and is trying to distract people from the scandals he is involved in by trying to stir anger in people and attack the rights of L-G-B-T-Q-I-2S-plus people.

What is different now is the proliferation of hate as a weapon...and misinformation that is intended to stoke anger and division.

On the upside, the people of Ontario are now seeing proof of exactly what Doug Ford and his Conservative MPPs have been up to behind closed doors.

The provincial government is floundering across Ontario. Good, I say! Better late than never.

[Slide 45] Their polling numbers are terrible, the Premier gets called out constantly while in public and 70 per cent of Ontarians are angry with his actions and policies. Good!

And that Greenbelt disaster? On what planet would removing protected land from the environmentally sensitive Greenbelt to develop it and line the pockets of already-rich developers—and friends of Doug—be a good idea? For our health or the environment?

We have clear evidence of the impact of a degraded environment on peoples’ health.

We know the impacts so many Ontarians are experiencing these days as wages continue to stagnate, working conditions decline, paid sick leave ends, and our publicly funded and publicly delivered health-care system is being dismantled and privatized.

The Greenbelt corruption scandal is just yet another example that leads directly to Ford and his buddies.

Good!

[Slide 46] I am angry at Doug Ford. And that is putting it mildly.

We are at the point in Ontario where people are recognizing that this emperor has no clothes. The corruption and lies are plain to see if you care to look.

And our public health care is on the chopping block.

Ford is carving it up and expanding for-profit health care to benefit his corporate friends, not the people of this province.

Let's take a look at what Ford put nurses and health-care professionals through these past few years—during the world's worst health crisis in a century.

[Slide 47] There is Bill 124. Yes, that travesty of a Bill which spurred our members—just as they did 50 years ago—to stand up, take action and be loud! One per cent, my ass. And you know how this story ends—we took Ford to court and won. Bill 124 was declared unconstitutional.

[Slide 48] There is Bill 195 - Taking away our workplace rights by depriving us from taking much-needed vacation, leaves of absence, all during a pandemic!

[Slide 49] There is Bill 175—A very intentional bill that flings the doors wide open to health-care privatization. Our H-C-C-S-S members were caught in the middle of this bill and, frankly, the government is still messing with this sector, to the detriment of our patients, residents and clients.

[Slide 50] There's Bill 7—Remember this one? It basically allows hospitals to force patients to be moved to a long-term care home without consent, a clear violation of their rights. So much for freedom of choice.

Last but certainly not least—and trust me, I could spend the entire day on Ford's gross mismanagement of Ontario, but I need to move along—[Slide 51] there is Bill 60. You know this one, where for-profit health clinics are welcome with open arms in Ontario.

As we know, these money-making clinics are siphoning nurses and health-care professionals from our depleted public health-care system.

[Slide 52] Did you hear the latest stats? By 2027, Ontario will be short more than 34,000 nurses.

This is no joke and Ford is doing absolutely nothing about it.

Of course, this Bill has also made it so much easier for private nursing agencies to swoop in and for its owners to make big bucks, draining our public hospitals and health-care facilities of funding.

I want to be clear: we do not fault those who become agency nurses. This situation sits squarely on the shoulders of Doug Ford and his government.

He privatized, he stripped away our rights, and he disrespected nurses and health-care professionals time and again.

In 2026, Ontario is holding a provincial election where a new slate of MPPs will be elected by you and me.

I'm looking forward to the run-up to the election. Why?

Because we are going to show Ford and his MPPs that the nurses are coming!

We are going to show them that the health-care professionals are coming!

We are coming and we are ready to work together with one goal: [Slide 53] to kick Doug Ford out of Queen's Park once and for all!

[Pause. Applause]

As I mentioned earlier, Doug Ford knows about ONA and our demands.

He knows that ONA and our members fought him on Bill 124 and he is very aware of the incredible actions we took in support of our hospital bargaining this past winter and spring.

[Slide 54] I look back on those actions—the sticker-up, workplace pickets, the All-Out rally that attracted thousands of members and labour partners and, of course, the amazing die-in that took place within view of Queen's Park.

The sight of so many people supporting us was incredible, [Slide 55] as were the news helicopters overhead, the many reporters asking us about

our issues and the uplifting posts on social media.

The work we accomplished together was about building our capacity.

I am thrilled to be part of this organizing work and I cannot wait to build on it, together.

[Slide 56] Support for our bargaining actions also highlighted that we have many labour partners across the province who will stand up with us in solidarity—and we with them.

At 50 years of age, this union is changing how we do things to keep up with the changing times and increase transparency.

One of the reasons for this is the role that social media—and unfortunately—disinformation has in our world today.

As I spoke about before, our founders organized and started ONA through face-to-face meetings and phone calls.

Now, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X and more can make it so easy for false information to spread and take on a life of its own.

[Slide 57] Ang and I visited a number of Locals this year during Nursing Week and were able to have face-to-face chats with many members.

One thing that quickly became clear was that there were a lot of assumptions about ONA's bargaining proposals that were incorrect.

I was very happy to sit down with members and explain exactly what we proposed, what the O-H-A proposed, and what the decision was.

This experience made it clear that the exhaustion, frustration and anger that so many of us have felt in our jobs the past few years has had a deep impact on us.

That's why—before the hospital arbitration decision was out—we released our bargaining proposals and supporting documents.

This was a first for ONA and it will not be the last!

[Slide 58] Transparency is a must for us. The Board and I support this, and ONA's CEO supports this principle 100 per cent.

We heard loud and clear that ONA needs to continue to be transparent, and we will be so.

It is vital that we fight misinformation on every front and give ONA members the facts they need.

I ask that if any of you ever hear something about an ONA action or policy that you disagree with, that you ask us.

This new level of transparency is an intentional shift, and we all stand behind it. It is not standard practice in labour relations to do this, but then again, our ONA is extraordinary.

We are hopeful that the successes we achieved for our hospital members will continue with nursing homes, H-C-C-S-S, public health—for all sectors we represent.

We're bringing in the heavy artillery to deal with the nursing homes and we will make sure that you know that ONA is there.

We will apply a massive amount of pressure and will have huge visibility. We will achieve results at the bargaining table through our actions.

ONA has also become more engaged with our union sisters and brothers because we are all in this fight together.

[Slide 59] This past summer, ONA worked with OPSEU, CUPE, Unifor and SEIU Healthcare to spread the word about how bad privatization is for our health-care system. The latest in a series of demands for CEOs to join us in calling for an end to privatization happened in late-October.

This is a remarkable moment for us and for our labour family. Members of our five unions are talking about the issues within our workplaces. And it's been quite an amazing collective effort.

[Slide 60] Across the province, five work locations were chosen for organizing because of the crossover of all five unions in most of the facilities.

Each group is working at the local level as a Joint Union Action Committee, with representatives of each of the unions present in the facility.

So far, this amazing work has achieved actions across the province:

Kingston, Toronto, Kitchener, Hamilton and Thunder Bay.

It is now more important than ever to work with our labour siblings to fight Ford.

I want to show you a video now about our solidarity... [Slide 61]

[Play rally video]

Our present is here and now.

We have no choice but to deal with Ford and his government until 2026. Well, unless the RCMP investigation into the Greenbelt giveaway finds fraud charges warranted in the interim....

What I have witnessed over these past several months among our members is incredible. It gives me, your board and staff the energy we need to keep moving forward through some very long days.

[Slide 62] Our ONA stands for equity for all, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability, citizenship.

[Slide 63] We stand for safe workplaces. We stand for work environments that enable us to provide the kind of care we became health-care professionals to provide. The kind of care we would want our families to receive.

And we are changing to reflect the times and fight against those who want to take us back into the past.

As a student of history, I know that this government and their bloody-minded determination to utterly destroy and monetize our sacred public institutions calls for an equally bloody-minded response.

We WILL go nuclear on this government. We will not hold anything back. We WILL tell the people of Ontario the unvarnished truth about what this government is doing to their healthcare.

[Slide 64] Today, we are a new ONA.

I believe that the RCMP investigation into the Greenbelt is just the tip of the iceberg.

There are now hints of corruption around the destruction of Ontario Place and the government's handing over of hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayers' funds being handed to a European spa company.

I suspect before the term in office for Doug Ford and his merry band of MPPs is up that we will hear there are conflicts of interest, impropriety and corruption involved in the privatization of our health-care system.

Indeed, Ford's house of cards is now on a shaky foundation and I expect it will crash down around him.

And in the meantime, [Slide 65] we will not go quietly into the night.

[Pause. Applause.]

[Music: Fighter by Christina Aguilera]

[Slide 66]

## The Future

[Begin to deliver this piece almost in a whisper]

Our ONA is 50 years young.

We have a storied and inspirational history that began with about 100 nurses who were fed up with the disrespect and the notion that nurses were to be seen and not heard.

They were brave and courageous in sparking a labour movement that has continued for more than five decades.

They organized and met 50 years ago, and that is just how we do it today.

Every action that they took, every rally that they attended, every phone call that they made—those actions were ALL the building blocks to where we are today, and we stand on their shoulders.

Because of them, our ONA movement will continue to reach new heights.

This is the time when we must all demonstrate the same courage as our founding sisters.

It won't be easy, yet we must do it.

[Slide 67] We will face our adversaries and demand respect.

To do so, our ONA must have the resources and the support to meet the huge, growing demands to do our work. We need to build our army and build our networks within our communities. Our ONA must be sustained.

We are privileged to have strong and dedicated staff to help us. They have been instrumental in our victories, our

wins, our rallies. They fight with us and they fight for us.

I have nothing but respect and pride for our staff. They are up late at night, rise early in the mornings and work on weekends to get the job done. We could not have achieved what we have without our staff over the years.

Can we give our staff a bit of love? [Applause]

Our future holds hope.

The hope of our ONA supporting our Locals in the work of our union.

The determination that our ONA will make changes in our workplaces

that benefits members and our patients, residents and clients.

And the hope that, come 2026, Doug Ford has been turfed from Queen's Park.

To accomplish all of this, [Slide 68] our ONA needs you.

### Conclusion

[Slide 69] The story of our ONA is one of courage, of determination, of progress and of resilience. Of always moving forward. Of never giving up.

Our story is unique among women and unions. It is a story of uniting our

working sisterhood, our nurses and health-care professionals and our nursing students. Because the soul of our ONA is strong, because the backbone of our ONA is strong, because we the members are strong!

As I stand here today, I have never been more optimistic about the future of our ONA. Let's all remember who we are, where we came from, and where we are going.

[Slide 70] Happy birthday, ONA. And never forget: [Slide 71] we are ONA and there is nothing beyond our reach when we do it together.

Thank you!

## WINNER: TED TALK/TEDX TALK

*"Are Scientists Bullies? The Unspoken Truth in Academia"*

By Megan Pope for Dr. Taulant Muka, Epidemiologist, Scientist and Author



Delivered at the Toronto Metropolitan University TEDx, Toronto, Feb. 18, 2023

When I was young, I loved science and statistics and was very curious, and my parents encouraged both of these traits. However, I did not have an idyllic childhood as I grew up in Albania, a beautiful country northwest of Greece that up until 1991 was under a harsh dictatorship. During the regime, scientific investment and education were limited, and after the collapse, access to resources and funding was scarce. Since I was a little boy, I had a genuine interest in science, math, and technology, a passion that my parents supported and nourished continuously. I was always encouraged to pose questions because I always believed that in science, you have to question, to know if you've really discovered the right answer. It is challenging to truly know something as "Big T" truth. While science seems fact-oriented and emotionless to some, I've always found it to provide an anchor to navigate the uncertainty and chaos of life. And this tether to science has led me down the road I'm currently walking, as a leading researcher in the field of epidemiology.

Five degrees and academic titles later, I am still enthralled with science and statistics because I truly believe they have the power to change the world for the better. However, there are elements in science that make it, well, not science-y. I'm talking about the H.U. element—the HUMAN element. Sometimes scientists, researchers, and others in academia allow their human element to muddy the precise vision that the scientific method provides. The scientific method is a blueprint, a map for how to find the treasure of knowledge. It is based on the idea that knowledge can be found by following strict guidelines for research and discovery that can be empirically repeated by others. But the scientific method clashes with humans because humans can be biased, bullies, and in a word... human.

I'm here to illuminate a dirty dark secret in the sciences. A secret that has victimized many but is rarely spoken about. I'm talking about academic mobbing and bullying. Mobbing occurs when scientists dare to challenge widely

accepted beliefs, publish findings that are outside the status quo, or question another's work. And when they break these unwritten rules of going against the grain, they often find themselves bullied. In order for science to truly advance and make a difference, we must challenge the status quo and push ourselves to consider new ideas. Unfortunately, this is not always easy in the scientific community, where all too often, we see bullying, intimidation, and knowledge turf wars instead of the pursuit of scientific discovery.

Before I solve the mobbing problem, which is the equivalent of getting a grade school wedgie or swirly from a bully, let's explore a little more about what mobbing is. According to an article in the *European Scientific Journal*, "Mobbing is when academics will gang up on a new researcher or publication and work to discredit the research because it goes against the status quo. While it's impossible to quantify how often it occurs, studies have shown that 25-91% of academics are mobbed in the workplace." There is more docu-

mentation about bullying in the K-12 system than in higher education or the workplace, so you might be surprised to learn that scientists can be bullies.

It's not all white lab coats having pleasant banter; scientists can throw down and be vicious. But as academics, they wage war with words, not fists. Rather than hitting each other with beakers, they argue the validity of each other's research in a non-scientific manner in person or through social media.

Everyone in my field has seen it happen. Maybe a young, new academic does a study and has innovative results, but they are opposite to the majority of the research published by a more senior, more secure, incredibly funded academic. Or maybe a researcher discovers that the medical intervention that has been the gold standard for years actually isn't that great. Or, heaven forbid, a scientist dares to question the results of another's data set. I know this sounds like the equivalent of a nerd WWE smackdown, but it's real, and it happens, and it ruins lives. All these examples happen often in my field, and while as scientists we should be open to critique, new ideas, and fresh perspectives, surprisingly, we aren't always! I know right?! People hate being told that their life's work is potentially flawed. Who would have thought?

Still don't believe me that mobbing occurs? Let me prove it to you through a completely non-valid, non-repeatable silly experiment.

I'm a scientist, humor me. I want everyone to shout out one of the most influential scientists of the last 100 years. Go.

Hopefully, we are on the same wavelength, and one of you said Einstein. So get this: Einstein, whom we consider a brilliant man and the father of modern physics, was the subject of a 1931 book called *Hundred Authors Against Einstein*. I'm dead serious. One hundred people went out of their way to disprove Einstein's theories. I bet they didn't brag about that publication on their CV later. But if someone like Einstein can experience what I can only imagine as an early form of aca-

demic mobbing, it makes you wonder what other brilliant ideas are being ridiculed at this very moment.

And it wasn't just Einstein. An article written in the *Virtual Mentor* produced by the Ethics Resource Center of the American Medical Association reads, "In the mid-1800s, London physician John Snow [not that Jon Snow] created a map depicting where cases of cholera occurred in London's West End and found them to be clustered around a water pump on Broad Street. This led him to believe that cholera was a waterborne disease, a conclusion that went against the Victorian "miasma theory" in which Londoners ascribed the source of cholera to bad airs or vapors entering the human body." Dr. Snow had made a major scientific breakthrough, but not everyone believed him. I think he was a target of groupthink. He had an idea that was not popular, people didn't believe him, and he was essentially made to sit alone at the cafeteria table, the loser no one wanted to sit with.

But why does mobbing occur in academia when it is a group made up of professionals who should be above this sort of behavior? We do not know for sure why this phenomenon occurs, but there are several contributing factors.

One of those could be explained by the Semmelweis reflex. Named after a doctor from the 1800s, the Semmelweis reflex is the tendency to uphold long-held beliefs and reject new ideas that conflict with those beliefs even if there is really powerful evidence. Dr. Semmelweis, despite discovering a revolutionary and simple way to save countless lives, was ridiculed to the point of his own life being destroyed. His outlandish theory that nobody wanted to accept? That doctors should wash their hands and disinfect instruments between patients. Seriously, the guy who said, "Maybe we should wash our hands when we are dealing with patients" was ridiculed as a quack and charlatan. It's inconceivable to imagine how many lives could have been saved through something as simple as hand washing, and people rejected it because

the concept was against the status quo of medical treatments. However, I see doctors, researchers, and scientists fall for the Semmelweis reflex all the time because they are not willing to examine new evidence. And this phenomenon is the fodder for popular fiction also. The movie *Don't Look Up* is a perfect example. The story (I won't spoil it for you, I promise) follows two scientists as they attempt to convince others that a world-ending catastrophic event is on the horizon. Despite scientific facts backing their claim, everyone, including those in power, laughs in the face of their pleas to accept reality.

Another reason I think mobbing occurs and blocks the advancement of science is related to human bias. Remember that human element I was discussing? While the human element is certainly necessary for science, it can also add bias to the equation. As the National Library of Medicine states, "Scientists seek to eliminate all forms of bias from their research. However, all scientists also make assumptions and since these 'philosophical biases' cannot be avoided, they need to be debated critically." The scientific method revolves around the idea that there is no bias in the process. It's pure facts and logic. But add a few humans, and things can get a little bias fuzzy. Science and humans are often at odds. In fact, in a recent study, despite receiving the same starting data set, a group of researchers each came up with a variety of different results and conclusions. They didn't all decide the same thing! This means that fixed data plus varied human bias equals occasionally faculty findings. This isn't necessarily a bad thing; as long as we question what we know and are aware that the human element is present, we can still practice science. But this is just my biased opinion.

So, how do we solve these issues of academic mobbing and bullying? I may not have all the answers, but I have a few ideas.

First, we all need to remember that science is not stagnant, and no amount of bullying, mobbing, or putting our

heads in the sand will change that fact. What if I told you that 9 out of 10 medical interventions may not be backed up by high-quality evidence, and that side effects, in general, are little explored? Would you be surprised? Confused? Or possibly terrified? Our understanding of phenomena can change rapidly, especially when dealing with diverse quality evidence, and thus it is critical to revisit again and again what we think we “know.” Because circumstances, populations, and environments change. Take for example hormone therapy. Hormone therapy originated to help women alleviate symptoms of menopause with a benefit being that it could also lower the risk of heart disease. As research continued, it was later found that not only did hormone therapy not reduce the risk of heart disease, but it could actually increase the risk in some women and also that of several other cancers. Continually revisiting our research and results and being open to new possibilities will greatly help with academic mobbing because we will all be working under the same premise: that science isn’t stagnant, and one person’s research or study isn’t “Big T” truth.

Second, we all need to be open to criticism. If you think about it, criticism is expected in many industries, such as the film or restaurant industry. Both are consistently critiqued by experts who help restaurants or movies meet quality standards that deliver an enjoyable experience for consumers. Why should science be any different? You have been the beneficiary of constructive criticism. Originally, I wanted to just throw a bunch of statistics at you for this talk, but it was constructive criticism that helped me in my attempt

to elevate this talk from reciting statistics to a more engaging speech. If more scientists, doctors, and researchers were open to criticism, their research would be superior because it would be open to the collective knowledge of the many, vs. the thoughts of a few. After all, iron sharpens iron.

Another way to help eliminate mobbing—and hear me out, I know this is a big ask—but what if we adjusted the metrics used to measure success in science? In the science equivalent of a popularity contest, the winner isn’t who can bench press the most or who has the nicest car. The Olympic winners in my field, myself included, are those with the most publications, citations, and grant money. The power goes to those with the higher metrics, but those metrics don’t always mean those in power have the best science. Our current system can actually drive bullying and mobbing in academia so those who are on top stay on top. We need to start regulating universities to ensure their policies secure scientific freedom and independence from conflicts of interest and create clear metrics to apply when deciding between various individuals or outcomes to eliminate the possibility of bias. When those in power have a vested interest in a certain outcome, science will never be upheld.

As I conclude my biased lecture on the problem of bias in science (the irony is not lost on me), I want us to remember that little boy in Albania who loved science and statistics. He and the many others that will follow deserve a more scientific science. We need to recognize that in a world of uncertainty, as science is, strong opinions can rise to the surface and drown out other ideas.

And so my last piece of advice for the field I love so much is to embrace, invest in, and elevate diverse scientists. By creating a more diverse community of scientists, we can ensure that all viewpoints and perspectives are present, and that will be a powerful step for my beloved field. Science doesn’t belong to any one of us; it belongs to all of us, and if it isn’t representative of the varied backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives of the world it serves, then how can it possibly lead to the pursuit of truth?

Data show that the rate of scientific breakthroughs is slowing over time, and currently, there is an unprecedented exodus of health researchers to the bright city lights of more lucrative industry. Whether mobbing in academia and the toxic environment it creates for innovative people and bright ideas are the main factors contributing to this exodus remains to be determined. We need change and innovation to grow, and mobbing halts this forward motion in science. It is time we all work together to combat mobbing, create a safer and more civil scientific environment, and attract the next generation of minds that will make scientific discoveries and medical treatments that will be needed in the future. We need to embrace our human element, our biases and flaws, but not become beholden to them if we want to stamp out bullying in our academic institutions and labs. I truly believe it’s only through what I consider to be the most beautiful of human traits—curiosity—that we will be able to truly unite together and make science more scientific. Thank you, or as we say in my home country, “faleminderit”.