



Stanford eCorner

Advancing Opportunities with Endeavor

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Bronfman argues that the problem with America is that while values of integrity, hard-work, the rule of law and meritocracy are exported, the advancement of opportunities is not. This is why Endeavor is such a powerful role model; it provides economic opportunities in countries where democracy cannot flourish. With the growing availability of opportunities he says, cultures change, countries evolve, and the world becomes a better and more peaceful place.



Transcript

But for me, Endeavor represents the greatest opportunity for me to give back along those lines of creating opportunity for other people. I'm extremely blessed in my life. I was born not only into a wealthy family, but into an honorable family. And that's a unique thing. Not many people get to have those two things. And many people don't even get one of those things. So I have both of those things. And for me, that meant that it was my responsibility to try and create opportunity for people who were not so blessed. That's always been important to me. And when I was introduced to Endeavor by Alex, and the more I got to learn about it, the more it fit with my own personal convictions.

And I said at the board meeting yesterday, "I'm extremely proud to be an American." I recognize that that's not as popular to say as it was 5 or 10 years ago, but I am extremely proud to be an American because with all of the mistakes that I think we've made over the past many years, but most particularly in the last 5 years, it's still, in so many ways, the greatest country on earth. It has the most freedoms, it has the greatest rule of law. And it has something fundamentally critical to what we do. And other people have talked about it, particularly at the board meeting. It's really the only nation in the world that celebrates success. You know, in almost every European country, if man or woman becomes a billionaire, they're not revered, they're reviled. Because somewhere in the psyche of that country, they believe that there must have been a criminal act that allowed that to occur. And that's true, really, almost throughout the entire world. Where it's not as true is in some parts of Asia, which is why I think they're going to be very successful. So exporting America's values, to me, is incredibly important.

Honesty, integrity, hard work, getting ahead. The lack, really, of a class system. The American elite changes over every two or three generations. That's really not true in almost every other country. I remember my wife telling me that when she lived in Paris, she was invited to a party. And she told this friend of hers, "Oh, I'm going to that party." This friend of hers said to her, "You can't go to that party." And she said, "Why?" And they said, "Well, that's a post-Napoleonic family." She said, "It's a what?" But people think about, where did your family come from? How many years of history do they have, etc. And she said she was taught a very important lesson by her father, because she would grow up, and friends of hers in Venezuela would talk about their Spanish heritage, or this or that. And he said to her, "Listen, let me be very clear with you. If your friend is a Venezuelan, one of their ancestors either beat the drums or threw a spear. Okay? So let's get over that." [Laughter] So I really believe in America's value system, which is that success is a good thing, that anybody can get ahead, that honesty is important, that integrity is important.

And that the rule of law, and a meritocracy, universally ... well, if not universally applied, at least applied as fairly as any

system in the world ? is a really extraordinary thing. The problem is that with America, we export those values, but we don't export the opportunity. And so the values fall flat on the ears of people because they don't have the opportunity. And that fundamental opportunity is the difference between our values resonating with people, in my mind, and having no meaning at all. And so as Jim said, when someone has no economic opportunity, why are they interested in anything other than giving vent to their frustration? So when I saw this model, which is all about creating that economic opportunity, allowing people in each of the countries that you represent to look at someone just like them, who growing up, believed had no opportunity to break through the oligarchs that sort of control the economies in each of these countries and say, "Wow, look, that person did it!" The power of that as a role model in changing the culture and changing the country is just, to me, incredibly powerful. And Linda's introduction of Fay Deraspe when she talked about the amount of GDP that was in the room when the Mexican board gathered for the first time, and she said, "That's both good and bad." Right? The aquarium issue. Because in all of these countries, particularly in Latin America, but in frankly, most of the countries that we're in, most of the countries around the world, the wealth of the country is controlled by very very few people. And people who are not in that group know--they don't think, they know--they have no opportunity. That their life is not going to be any better than it was the day they were born.

And that's their lot in life. If that's true, democracy cannot flourish. Ultimately, that's what people who want a different system of life and government exploit. Whether it's for terrorism purposes or communism purposes or populism purposes, that's what is exploited. It's that fundamental lack of opportunity, that knowledge that my life is not going to be any better, and that the control of money and wealth is in the hands of a few who are, because it's in the hands of a few, corrupt. Endeavor is that opportunity, in my mind, to change that. There are lots of other ways to change it, but Endeavor is the most powerful way I've seen. And that's why I celebrate what Peter and Linda and Jason and Gary first conceived of. I celebrate what everybody here has done to make that model grow and prosper. And for me, it's an honor and it's a privilege to be associated with this organization, to have had a part in making it grow.

And I hope that you'll all continue to give back and expand that so that the opportunity that we all hope is available to you becomes available to 5 of you and 10 of you and 20 of you. And as that happens, cultures change, countries evolve, opportunity grows and the world is both a better and more peaceful place. And to have the opportunity to play a role in that, it doesn't get any better than that for me.