Stanford eCorner

Focusing Innovation on Societal Problems

Michael Tubbs, *City of Stockton*

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Video URL: http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/3635/Focusing-Innovation-on-Societal-Problems

Stockton City Councilman Michael Tubbs expresses concern that Silicon Valley has become indifferent to humanity's greatest injustices in its bid to be a hotbed for startups. The Stanford alum calls on the tech industry to turn its innovative efforts to solving society's biggest challenges, such as racism, poverty and failing educational systems.

Transcript

If I'm honest, my biggest fear is that I'm going to commit myself and my Stanford education to fixing these very difficult problems in communities in Stockton, but that our society won't progress with it. I'm worried that I will continue to spend all my time, and resources, and energy thinking through how do we make sure every kid can read at grade level in third grade? How do you make sure every kid is in a high quality preschool? How do we help parents learn the importance of reading to their children? How do we make sure that police-community relationships are OK? How do you make sure everyone has access to fresh fruits and groceries? And I could do all that great work in Stockton while society continues to get worse and worse. I'm extremely worried about my kid asking me one day, why, dad, in a time with all these technological advancements, and all this good stuff-- people figuring out how to live on Mars and on the moon, and you guys had a black president-- but people still had to go to the streets and tell people that black lives matter? I'm worried. I'm really, frankly, afraid about what happens when we let profit determine policy. And I think we've seen some of that with the private prison industry, where private prison corporations have helped write the country's criminal justice policies for the past 20 years. I'm worried that we'll spend all our time, and all our energy, and all our smarts on making cool products, but really forgetting about people.