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On November 8, 2016, Michael Tubbs was elected to serve as the mayor of the City of Stockton, California. Upon taking office in January 2017, Tubbs became both Stockton's youngest mayor and the city's first Black mayor. Among other accomplishments, he leveraged a \$1 million grant to launch the nation's first ever mayor-led guaranteed income pilot. Here, he talks about building trust with constituents and creating relationships and coalitions across political boundaries, and discusses solutions to pressing racial and economic inequities.



Transcript

Narrator Who you are defines how you build.. 00:00:06,090 (upbeat music) Tina Welcome back to ETL.. 00:00:10,780 - Thank you so much for having me, so good to see you.. 00:00:11,613 - It's so great.. 00:00:15,000 Now, first I wanna wish you a happy 30th birthday.. I know you had a birthday just recently, and I must say you have done more in your 20s than most people have done in a lifetime.. So in this talk, we're gonna do something special.. We're gonna both reflect upon your visit back four years ago when you came to Stanford and look to the future of what you're thinking about now.. So we're gonna play some short clips along the way and highlight some of the remarkable work that you're doing as Stockton's Mayor.. So I'd like to go back, take the way-back machine and start with a clip where you really talk about listening to your users, and extreme users in your community to really understand what their real needs are..

So let's start with clip number one.. - We started with what I learned at the d.school 00:01:02,870 to be done as extreme users.. We started in one of the poorest housing developments in the city, probably not with a lot of voters.. And we spent two weeks just knocking on every door there, talking to them about their hopes, their aspirations, and what they wanted for the city.. But it was in talking to this extreme user group, the group that wasn't on our nation builder files that won't show up on voter registration rolls that we found our campaign message.. It was really one about moving the city forward and that many communities have felt bankrupt for a long time.. That the city's financial bankruptcy was only a symptom of a deeper bankruptcy in leadership, a moral bankruptcy, and a bankruptcy of vision.. And that's what we ran on.. So everyone was talking about the fiscal constraints and bankruptcy, really important topics, but for voters, they want to talk about what's the vision for Stockton? - Well, that was super impressive.. 00:01:52,500 Okay, even back then, you were really using what you learned in school to figure out how can you address the real needs of that community..

So, who are the extreme users that you're talking to now in your community to help shape the policies that you're putting in place? - Wow, I probably should have watched my talk 00:02:11,360 before this one.. But that was great to see.. And I think a lot of that work happen to me over, in my term as mayor.. So to answer your question, extreme users we're listening to now are, A, residents who are homeless.. They figured out sort of a sustainable solution to deal with the homelessness issue.. That's a crisis in Stockton as is it in much in the state of California.. The other user group we've been listening to a lot, are the guys most likely to be victims or perpetrators of violent crime.. We spend a lot of time listening and meeting with them and do so about once a quarter.. And then, for the basic income pattern, we listened to sort of Stocktonians who are one paycheck away, are one \$500 emergency away from really, financial ruin.. And I think, and again, it's so refreshing seeing that clip because I think, more so than just a speech, it's really become embedded in how I and my team try to make policies particularly around kind of big ideas..

It really starts with listening and figuring out sort of who are we designing said policy for and what exactly are the needs that we're trying to meet.. - Yeah, it's super impressive.. 00:03:21,010 I mean, it's funny, in four years, to think how much you were able to accomplish.. Now, you mentioned the basic income program that you put in place.. I know that's been such a revolutionary project that a lot of people were looking to Stockton to get some insights.. Can you tell us a little bit about it? Some people might not be as familiar.. - So one of the first things I did as mayor 00:03:42,730 was identifying the issue of poverty and economic insecurity being kind of intersectional and the crux of a lot of issues we're facing in the city.. So I learned about basic income through studying Dr.. King at Stanford, he talked about this before he was murdered.. And we

decided to do a pilot called SEED, Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration..

And I know Stanford students love to research.. If you go to stocksondemonstration.org, you can see all the data.. But essentially, for 18 months, and we have just extended it for another six, we were able to give 125 randomly selected families that lived around our city \$500 a month.. And what we found is that \$500 is not enough to replace work or to make people stop working, or to make Stockton not part of the United States of America.. But it has been enough to make work pay, to provide an income flow, and to provide peace of mind, and the ability for people to take risks.. One of my favorite stories is from one recipient Thomas who told me that with his first \$500 he went to an interview.. Now, at first, I was just amazed when he told me that, the way that you're feeding to all these stereotypes, why would you pay money to be interviewed, Thomas? That makes no sense.. And he said, "No, mayor I work hourly, which means I don't have paid time off.. Which means if I take time off to interview, that's \$200 out of my pocket and we live paycheck to paycheck.. I can't take that risk..

But with the \$500, I was able to be entrepreneurial.. I was able to take time off work, take a risk and bet on myself, and now I have a better job, with more benefits, less hours, I'm able to do more for my kids." And stories like that have been so inspiring to me and I think, again, particularly during this time with COVID-19, and people unable to work, and people being told, If you're coughing or have a fever, don't work but also being told, you have to pay your bills, and don't have paid time off.. And our wages haven't increase due to inflation, that I'm just more resolute than ever.. That we have to have some form of a guaranteed income and income flow, if not for everyone, for the vast majority of people, to allow people to build a resilience, but also to allow people to be entrepreneurs in their lives, to make decisions about whether to pay for the car note, to pay for tutoring, to start that business.. So it started with sort of a deep design session for a year with community groups listening.. And that's what made me a believer, Tina, it was realizing that folks know how to spend money.. I can trust the people who I trusted to vote for me to know how I spend money, but a lot of it, again, came from listening, and sitting with people in their environments, and hearing them tell me how they would use \$500 before we even disperse any money.. - So how did you pick \$500? 00:06:19,070 And how did you pick 18 months? What were the reasons and the ways that you scoped this project? - I mean, we have real researchers who are PhDs, 00:06:29,870 who had some rigorous analysis, but from my layman's vantage point, we were able to get the million-dollar grant.. And we just did the math and we said, okay, well, we can do 1,000, where you get \$2,000, \$1,000, \$500.. And what we found was \$500 was enough to get us to a longer period of time, 18 months, where there's some more rigorous conclusions could be drawn from the data, because of the length of time..

We settled on \$500 a month because one in two Americans can afford one \$500 emergency.. So I never did this, and it feel too big.. It felt like \$500, it's a lot, but it's not too big.. And then, number three, I literally sat in the back of the envelope and added up my internet bill, my night bill, my water bill, my trash bill.. And it was about \$500.. I was like, well, look, this is a good amount that'll pay for a lot of bills for people.. So we settled on \$500, which I think is great.. 'Cause we're showing that if \$500 is beneficial, then that's the floor, and anything more would be better.. But at the very least, we know \$500 will still matter for a lot of people.. - Yeah, super interesting..

00:07:48,367 So you'd ran it for 18 months, right? And then did it stop? - No, so it was supposed to stop in July, but then 00:07:55,320 in March COVID happened, and we were hearing from recipients and others about how they were waiting for unemployment insurance, which they qualified for, which they paid into, which they still haven't received, and their bills kept coming and that the \$500 was their lifeline.. It was the only thing that was keeping them afloat, which was very scary for me, as a mayor of 300,000 plus people 'cause I'm aware these people in the basic income program are fine, but what about the 300,000 other people I represented, how are they making it? And then folks were saying that they needed the \$500 'cause they was forced to quarantine, they're forced to stay home.. They're not driving Uber any more.. They've been laid off.. Their kids are home more now so they spend more on food.. It became very apparent that it will be inhumane to stop the program in the midst of a pandemic.. So we're able to extend the program to January, which I think is important because we're able to do research around how basic income is particularly important in times of crisis.. That as a pandemic response, as a way to build national resilience, economic security has to be a part of that.. And now, we'll have the next nine months to illustrate that.. So we're gonna continue to January..

And then, at the same token, two months ago, I started a group called Mayors for Guaranteed Income, which includes 20 mayors, including the Mayor of Atlanta, the Mayor of LA, the Mayor of Oakland, the Mayor of St.. Paul, et cetera, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New Orleans, who are all saying that we need a national guaranteed income during this time.. And they're all gonna do how exactly we've done in the Stockton.. Particularly, because COVID-19, has just made it very clear that we have to make sure people have the tools for the basics at least.. - Well, it's so interesting because I wanna play 00:09:41,870 the next clip which is very closely aligned to this, where you talk about the relationship between profits and policy, and should you let profits drive policy or do you to make a policy that then you figure out, okay, here's a policy, but now we're gonna have to figure out how to fund it and make it work.. So let's watch the second clip and then talk about how you sort of tried to turn this around.. - I'm extremely worried about my kid asking me one day, 00:10:08,570 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 determined policy.. And I think we've seen some of that with the private prison industry where literally 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 smart on making cool products, but really forgetting about people.. - You have been totally consistent here in the way 00:10:53,240 that you have been approaching your role.. So how do you do this? I mean, how do you think about the role of financial support for the types of policies that you're trying to implement? Yeah, well, I think part of it, Tina, is understanding that profit in and of itself isn't bad, the idea of making money and doing well isn't a bad idea.. What is bad is that becomes the overriding rationale for policy.. My job as a policy maker isn't just to make some people money.. My job as a policy maker is to create the conditions where everyone can do well.. And I think, even now as mayor, I understand that so much more now that folks who have influence and folks who have access are able to influence policy in a way that not only drives profit, but also hurts people.. And also doesn't allow other people to enjoy some of the growth.. So I'm not sure I'm answering your question, So what was your question again? - Well, just thinking about what drives.. 00:12:01,790 How do you figure out what policies you want and then how do you figure out how to support that? These things are very expensive, universal basic income..

In fact, I wanna just even underline that because one of the questions that a lot of the listeners are asking about is, how do you come up with the idea for universal basic income and how did you even get support? So it's a perfect example, here's a big idea.. How do you then garner support for something that feels so radical and expensive? - Got it, no, I think for me, 00:12:31,383 for most things we look at as a team, is the status quo untenable? That's our first question.. Can we not live if this doesn't change? Will we feel like we failed if this doesn't change? If the answer is yes, that gives us the courage, the energy, the moxie to move forward with okay, then how do we find a solution that at the very worst is a little bit better than the status quo? So we're making progress.. So that's kind of a decision-making matrix.. Then once that happens, I was lucky enough.. At the basic income front to meet the economic security project, one of the cultures that we foster at an event, called for Tech for America in San Francisco.. And we talked about how they had desire to do a pilot for a basic income.. At the same time, I had my staff researching tools to eradicate poverty and basic income rose to the top.. So we're able, in that way, to do a public-private partnership.. And I talk about all the time, public-private partnerships are great to test ideas 'cause to your point about taxpayer dollars, even though we waste a lot of them on crazy things like space wars and things of that sort, they're still a finite resource and we still should be as good stewards, mindful of how we're spending money..

So probably a part of it that are helpful it's test ideas.. And that's what we did with the basic income program.. 18 months, we tested off on top of we funded.. And now with this group of mayors that managed to guarantee income were advocate for tax payer funds, we're saying, okay, the idea has been tested, now we have to scale it.. Because charity, or I think I say in that speech charity is an injustice, programs aren't policy and we have to incubate ideas.. But then when we know it works, then we have to scale it.. So to answer your question, part of it just comes from understanding how expensive the cost of inaction is, that if we don't do anything, how much will we continue to pay? And also just the idea that the status quo, in many cases, or in some cases, just is not sustainable, it doesn't work.. And as leaders, we are called to address those issues and you can't do that with everything, but there's one, two, three, four, or five issues where you absolutely have to, at least to create the society I will argue that we all deserve to live in.. - I think it's a really good point, 00:14:46,490 is that doing nothing is expensive, right? I mean, if you're in a situation where things are really not working, it becomes very expensive to be inactive.. So there's a question that a lot of people are curious about, politics is very divisive right now, what is your approach to building coalitions to get meaningful things done? - Yeah, I think in Stockton I'm lucky in a sense 00:15:14,170 because my council is four Republicans and two Democrats..

And I have to get four votes to get anything done.. So anything we voted on, I've had to work with both Republicans and Democrats and some of the most influential people in the business community, in my community are Republican.. So I think part of it's just understanding that you have to work together, that, as someone who's a pragmatist at heart, who likes to get things done, I understand I have to work with people I may not agree about on 100 issues.. If I agree with you on this issue, I will work with you, and congratulate you, and amplify you for your great work on this issue while knowing we may have to fight about an issue tomorrow.. So I think that's part of it.. And I think, for me, even though the policy is personal, the politics isn't, meaning that I am deeply impacted, like the work I do, it's personal and I try to be hard on policy, but soft on people.. So I try to go drive hard on this is what we need to do, is what we need to do.. If we have to disagree about, we'll disagree, if you have to have public rebuke, public rebuke.. And then next day, realize I might need to work with you.. So the next day it's like, bygones be bygones, let's figure out where we are, can we agree on this issue? So I think that's part of it..

I think part of it is also, especially the local level, you could invest the time in relationship building, 'cause I think because of the diversity of Stockton, not just ethnically but politically, I've learned so much about how my more conservative constituents, more conservative colleagues think about things or how they hear things.. And I think it's made me a more effective communicator, more effective messenger.. And it's allowed me to consider issues from a different vantage point, which may not be my frame even if I don't always agree with it.. So I think it's been a useful kind of tool and skill.. But underlying all this is this idea that I'm gonna get things done, right? Things have to get done and you won't get anything important done just working with people who agree with you all the time.. You'll do some things, but for the big thing, you need to have a big tent of people who may not agree with you, again, on every issue.. But you found some common ground on this one.. - I love this because although you didn't use 00:17:22,130 the word empathy, you really talk about having incredible empathy for the people who have different points of view and I'm sure you learn a lot from them.. So I wanna just point out, we have a number of people who've written comments about just how they're big fans of yours.. One person said, "I went to Stanford with you, and I remember your commencement speech about growing up in Stockton, and I'm so impressed with what you've done." Another person said, "I went to Stockton, to high school in Stockton before you were born and to Stanford

too, And I'm just so impressed." And this person wants to know if you're running for reelection, which, I think you are..

- Yes, I am running for reelection at 83 days to November.. 00:18:03,970 I'm looking forward to it and thanks for all the people, for the well wishes.. It's so funny when I hear people say they were there for that convocation, I think speech, probably means you're four years younger than me, which makes me feel some type of way.. But no, but I appreciate it.. - Great, well, let's go on to the next video clip.. 00:18:28,988 So I love this one a lot because when you started, when you came, you were just beginning, you were just starting your political career.. And you basically talk about the fact that you didn't have experience and you had to learn from other people.. And that importance of really being a good listener and asking a lot of questions.. So let's play clip number three, about this, and then talk about, who you're listening to now.. - There's a lot of pressure to feel like 00:18:51,700 you're the expert..

But I realized that in not knowing everything has been so freeing because it's opened the door for me to connect with people who do have the answers.. So it's been great to work on issues like poverty and realize that I have some Stanford experience and lived experience, but there are some subject matter experts who've been doing this work in this community for 25 years, who may not have the degrees or the pedigree, but they know what they're talking about.. It's been so freeing to say, You guys, you know what? I don't know, I don't know.. I know that someone knows, let's find this answer collectively.. So don't feel pressured to know all the answers or have all the answers.. 'Cause part of, in my opinion, entrepreneurship and iteration is not knowing if what you're doing is going to work.. It's that iteration, the experimentation that leads to knowledge and knowledge is not already baked in.. - I'm curious though, 00:19:43,720 as you become an expert and get more experience, who do you continue to go to? And do you worry that if you go to people who've done it before, you're gonna get the same old answers as opposed to something fresh and new? So how do you gather new and fresh ideas? - Genuinely, I try to go to the people who've been doing it.. 00:20:03,910 Because even if I disagree or even if I want something new, for me, it's important to understand what's working in the status quo or why something's the way it is.. Because I've found that oftentimes, there may be a policy reason, an administrative reason, a grant report..

Oftentimes there's a reason whether you agree with it or not, there's a reason for a certain behavior, or a certain outcome.. So I'm always curious for the people who are working in like, okay, why is it like this? Because it helps me create different solutions, which may look different than what I originally imagined.. And then, number two, I think, I still go to experts.. So for example, I just reported to the Host Commission for the state.. So by around the 15 people who determine police standards for the State of California, who are the first or second-largest police force in this country, And I'm a mayor, but I've never went through police training.. So I've had meetings with the Community College Chancellor who had overseas lobby training to hear sort of where his pain points are.. I've talked with my police chief about what we'd like to see better.. I've talked with residents of my community and I've also spent time with Center for Policing Equity, the nation's experts on policing, to understand from them sort of what needs to be done, and from all those inputs, and then from our own research, I come up with kind of, okay, well, I'm going to advocate for you, so I'm gonna push, I think I tried to do that on every issue.. I'm usually, once a week, on a call with someone who's a subject matter expert, a policy person.. Raj Chetty who used to be at Stanford I used to bug his office all the time, every time to report to understand sort of, what's your opportunity index? What does it mean for Stockton? How do I operationalize it? How do I do it? And so, definitely still part and core of my governing philosophy is, 'cause I think oftentimes leadership is not about being a subject matter expert..

It's about kind of using values to guide priorities, resource allocation and just decision making.. But it doesn't mean you have to know everything, you have to know, sort of, you should be smart, be able to read in complete sentences, but you don't have to be the expert on everything but you should be the expert, like going to experts and people understand what's happening on the ground and use their information and put it in conversation with sort of the values you have to kinda come to decisions and the benefit of all people in the community.. - I love the idea of being an expert on going to experts.. 00:22:28,860 So that's a great line to remember.. So we have a number of students who are really curious about, how do you prepare to go into a life in politics that they're saying, what sort of skills and capabilities should they be developing if they aspire to go into a life of service like you? - I think in terms of service, number one, 00:22:49,210 it's about service, which sounds very basic.. But Dr.. King talked about using a conversation like Jesus powers his disciples about this idea of a drum major instinct.. And intrinsic in and all human beings is this desire to be the drum major, to be first.. And he was saying, when Jesus told Peter and Paul, can't give the left and the right, but the greatest of you should be the servant of all.. And Dr..

King interpreted that to mean that the drum major instinct, in and of itself, isn't bad, but the idea of wanting to be first or wanting to be important, because it has to be connected to purpose, so be a drum major for justice, be a drum major for peace, be a drum major for something.. So I think that's the most important thing, is understand, like why do you wanna run to run? What are you running for? And then what do you wanna do? Because I think oftentimes people run with the idea of getting into office, but then they get into office, they're unsure of what to do 'cause they didn't really run to do something.. They ran to be something.. We need more people who are running to do something.. - I love that.. 00:23:52,920 The wisdom that you're sharing is just wonderful.. In fact, this next clip is one I think that is particularly powerful, especially for the students in the room.. And you talk about the fact that you didn't intend to run for office.. This is not when you went to school, this was not your, and that ended up resulting, after some real big disappointments, where the path you thought you were gonna take got closed.. And there were some opportunities that you basically said, you know what? I need to do this..

So let's play this clip, the fourth clip about how the pains you experienced actually unlocked the door to your passions.. -

So I told my mom, you know what, Mom, 00:24:32,730 one day when I'm 30, 34, 38, 42, 50, I'll come back to Stockton and help out, 'cause the city really needs help.. But then my senior year, I was applying for fellowships and jobs and I didn't get what I thought was mine, I was an entitled Stanford student.. I had good grades.. I had worked hard.. I had the best recs.. I had the best resume.. I thought for sure that was my job and my purpose in life to be a Rhodes Scholar.. And that's just what it was going to happen for me.. So I put all my eggs in that basket and then didn't work out for me..

So there I remember being so upset, so hurt, like I thought I found my purpose.. This is what I'm supposed to be doing.. And now I can't do it.. And I start with that because it was an all these valley experiences, all these low points, whether growing up in poverty, or losing my cousin or not getting the fellowship that really clarified the path that I was going to take.. - This is super important.. 00:25:28,220 So, the idea that the lowest lows helped you unlock your path.. So, what allowed you to actually get out of that low spot? A lot of people hit bottom and it's super difficult to get out.. What was it that allowed you to get unstuck, as opposed to becoming, bitter and broken? - I think it's just my spiritual practice 00:25:52,030 and just coming from a community of faith that speaks to sort of all things happen for a reason.. And that even when bad things happen, part of the journey of being human is to walk in and try to understand, what God, the higher power.. But once you understand there for this experience, so that one was super helpful..

Just having a faith tradition that teaches us that like, everything's happening for a reason, even if it feels terrible.. So it's figuring out, okay, how can this be used for a greater good? And then number two, I think, is realizing that as I think, as I said, rejection, it's just a redirection that this, you're doing everything right.. If know you've done your best, that maybe the no was a good thing, and maybe there was something else that's more in line into what you shouldn't be doing and the rejection was going to get you there.. It's easier said than done.. I mean, I wasn't happy.. I was upset.. I was like, I felt like a failure.. I felt dumb.. Being a Rhodes Scholar felt a lot safer, a lot more conventional, a lot more like make sense than running for city council.. So even afterwards, the decision to run for council wasn't easy one to make..

It was pretty scary, but you always look smarter looking back, like looking back, it makes so much sense.. But in that moment where you just understand that rejection also isn't permanent, and that no one lives life lineally.. Like no one's life, is one where everything happens the way you want it to happen or everything happens the way you think it will go.. And that the best things happen actually, when you're rejected, when you face some resilience, because actually to figure out how to get through.. When you look back like, you are like, oh, wow, I'm so happy I was rejected, wow.. - I love, again, 00:27:29,760 your line about rejection is really about a redirection and using, thinking like, you know what? I'm not going to the right direction, that's a messenger sign.. So there are a lot of people who are pointing out, and this is very critically important, that we are living in a very unusual, and very special moment in time, where the nation's grappling with racism and inequality.. And, in your position as Mayor, what do you recommend to aspiring students who really wanna help build systems that are actively anti-racist and foster more equitable society? - Yeah, well, I think first of all is understanding 00:28:12,733 that this is a marathon, not a sprint.. I mean that we're talking about 400 years of a history that we're confronting with.. Which doesn't mean that we have to be nihilistic and it doesn't mean that we don't need to push and demand, but it does mean we need to be realistic and understand that this, we have to take care of ourselves and have a strategy for the next 50, 60, 70, 100 years..

Number two, I think, with Stanford comes immense privilege and I tell people all the time, don't apologize for your privilege, but put purpose to it.. And a big way, put purpose to it, is to allow other people who may have more experience who may actually be very equipped to work on the issues you wanna work on, a seat next to you at the table.. I think one of the things I've been conscious of as mayor is making sure I bring as many people in with me to the table, because I know that I'm able to get there because I went to Stanford, I'm the Mayor.. And they may not, although they're more impacted, by what happened with these decisions than I'll be, because my privilege insulates me from a lot of the insidious impacts of bad policy oftentimes.. Number three, I would say be educated, read, read, read, learn, listen, so you're equipped.. And number four, understand that no matter where you go, because what we're talking about, in terms of racism, white supremacy, is ubiquitous, meaning that it's not just in politics, it's not just in policing.. It's in every institution in our country, which means when you're in the tech boardroom, where you're creating your startup, when you're like, no matter what you're doing, you have to actively make sure you're fighting against and not perpetuating the system that you wanna change.. And then we also have to acknowledge that for some of us, there's real benefit to the current system.. And to understand that in changing these systems, you may be giving yourself less privilege.. maybe giving yourself less authority, You may be giving yourself opportunity to drive the agenda and be comfortable with that because that's part of this process, is understanding that so many folks have been excluded, marginalized, meaning that we bring more people in, you might not have as large a slice of the pie as you may be used to enjoy which isn't a bad thing..

But I just want to be really realistic about this, what we're talking about.. We're talking about bringing more people in, expanding opportunity, and giving the ability to lead, the ability to be part of the conversation to folks who have traditionally been left out and marginalized, which means some of us have to shut up, some of us have to be quiet.. Some of us have to listen and lead that way.. - So that was really helpful.. 00:30:50,820 I mean, I think that we probably have to listen to that many times over and internalize all of those insights and recommendations.. This leads us actually to the final clip that I wanna share is one where you talk about the difference between charity and justice.. And how important is, I mean, when I hear this clip, I hear that charity is important, but that's in the short term, you really need to make some really systemic changes.. So let's watch this clip and then talk about, in this moment in time, what is the bounds of need for charity and justice? - Charity is what we do and it feels good, 00:31:25,850 and it's important, but justice is the hard work of surgery, of

what it takes to move the country forward.. And then I also think that in terms of our own work, that charity is me throwing resources at an issue and making the assumption that the problem is one of resources.. If they had more of this, if they have more in that, if I give to them what I have, then that solves a problem..

But justice is really about putting myself, my brain, my resources, my talent, my time and my body and on the line in a way until we really get at a solution and that's not sexy, that's not easy, that's incredibly difficult, but that's the only way we as a society, will progress in my humble opinion.. - Okay.. So that is a strong statement.. 00:32:12,480 So, what do you think about, I mean, I'm sure you want people to donate and give money to the initiatives that you're running, right? That might feel like charity, if you want me to write a check, okay? So I think you want people to do that, but then justice is longer-term.. So can you talk a little bit about the balance between these two? - Yeah, absolutely.. 00:32:35,370 I think charity is necessary but not sufficient.. That charity is important to do because as we work for these larger structural changes and ideals, we have to deal with the problems of today.. So charity isn't a bad thing.. I think charity becomes a bad thing when that's all we do.. And the underlying conditions that gave rise to the need for charity aren't addressed..

So I think like most things, I like to have my cake and eat it too, Is like a both ends.. And so I think charity is something that's necessary, charity is not bad, it's necessary, it's not sufficient.. And charity is a great entree into the justice work, because in giving to charity or donating to charity or helping a charity, you're implicitly acknowledging that something's wrong.. That I'm doing more, than I should be doing, I'm giving more because this is not right.. So then the next step into the justice, is you ask, why is it not right? And it's usually some underlying structural or policy reason that gives rise the need for charity.. And I think without rigorous questioning and analysis, we can all hold ourselves more accountable to do charity, but to make sure charity goes further.. And the best way to make our charity go further, is that it's in service of justice.. Now we understand, we're getting dollars, we're getting resources, we're helping who we can, while at the same time pushing and advocating and voting in a way, that brings us more aligned to a day where our charity's not needed any more.. - Interesting.. 00:34:04,530 So this leads to one of the questions that's been asked by the students which is, they're studying entrepreneurship and they're saying in ventures, we learned about business models and competitive strategies..

How does this translate into politics? Like what's the business model that underpins the things that you're doing and maybe is the business model, a combination of charity and justice? How do you think about that? - Yeah, I think 00:34:34,430 charity is like making payroll, but justice is the reserves.. And particularly in the time we know that the economy goes like this.. If you're just barely making payroll every quarter, you're not gonna be a successful business long term.. You're not gonna be able to pivot when things like COVID-19 happens.. I think it's the same way for a society, that we have to make sure at the very least we make payroll, but that's not enough.. We can't invest in new technologies.. We can't invest in new pivots.. We cannot withstand the storms if all we're doing is paying payroll.. So I think charity is payroll, but justice is the reserves necessary to be able to pivot, to be able to invest, to be able to research, and to try and to iterate, and you can't do that if you're just barely paying people their hourly wages under salaries.. - So, there's a question about, 00:35:31,000 especially in this very unusual time, are you seeing more community-led as sort of bottoms-up change as well as tops-down city-led? And you already seeing more diversity in the types of groups that are getting involved with helping to make change in the community? - Yeah..

00:35:49,310 I think that over the past four years and particularly now, people are saying that even though we like Mayor Tubbs, he's our guy, we have to also be part of the conversation on driving change and all the answers can't come from City Hall, or it can't come from one person.. So during COVID-19, a lot of initiatives like Stockton Strong, which is a group of the community coming together to provide mutual assistance and information to each other.. The San Joaquin United, which is a group talking about how to hold our county government accountable for delivering services to people during this time, has really reflected an idea, that the community understands that they too have a role to play, but they too have to lead and they too have to play.. So absolutely, I've seen more, community-led leadership and also very diverse members of our community.. There's this discussion, where the groups had, about women of color in Stockton in leadership and highlighting their work and some of the barriers they face.. So I'm actually proud of the way that's been progressing in this city.. - Great.. Well, obviously great progress.. 00:36:56,360 There are a number of people who are very curious about your long-term political aspirations.. I'm sure people ask you all the time, do you aspire to higher office, governor, president? I think you're starting to get a following here..

Do you think about this? Or are you really rooted just in Stockton right now? - No, I definitely think about the future.. 00:37:18,550 I'm excited.. I'm running for re-election, but I think in 2024, I'll be termed out as mayor and then they'll have to be a conversation with my wife about, sort of the sacrifices.. The amount of time and energy invested in the political world, is it worth it because there's a lot of ways to make a difference.. I spend a lot of my time talking to philanthropists, for example, I spend a lot of my time meeting with organizers and advocates, for example, I spent a lot of my time talking to business people, for example, and they all had media people, the all have the incredible influence in terms of shaping culture of bringing resources and providing opportunity.. So to answer your question, I'm not sure long-term what office or if any office I'll be in, but I know I'll continue to work on the issues I talked about four years ago and I'm still talking about now.. And they really having recreated the opportunity structure in this country.. That's be flagged into what we say on paper that we really believe that all people are created equal, that we actually do believe that everyone has inherent human dignity.. And if that's in the government role, I'll do that.. But another role, I'll do that as well..

So open to title, but very clear about vocation.. That's just to create a better opportunity structure in this country.. - Really, thank you for that.. 00:38:37,050 The idea is, it doesn't matter exactly the title, but you're gonna be working on having an impact on your community.. So, I would like to sort of take the way-back machine.. We looked four years ago, but let's go back to when you were a student.. - What do you wish? 00:39:02,380 And then what do you wish you knew when you started in politics? What's sort of insights have you gained over those years that would've changed your trajectory along the way? - I did a fairly good job of this, 00:39:14,240 but I wish I had known more explicitly just how much college was about the classes I took.. And more importantly about the people I met, and the relationships I formed and forged.. Some of them, I met my wife at Sanford, met Evan Spiegel, one of my closest friends who's been a great partner in the work in Stockton, at Stanford.. Met some of my best friends at Stanford, but I had no idea going in that the most important part of college would be building relationships with as many people as possible because in five, 10, 20, 30 years, these are the people really helped shape the world, right? So I wish I'd figured it before I did get a job, I wish I had spent just more time being intentional about spending time with people, not in a weird networking way, but then like, I just want to build a relationship with all the folks I can, 'cause these are the people who are gonna help create the world that we'll live in..

In terms of my time as.... And also I'm glad I was nice person, 'cause I realized people have long memories.. So to all the students watching and listening, treat everybody well.. You have no idea when you'll need somebody.. When somebody will come up at a dinner conversation, where somebody will be a gatekeeper, someone is a key to a connection and people remember how you treat them.. So don't be weird, don't be a jerk, and treat everyone well.. In terms of the beginning of my political career, I wish I had learned that pop-like change only moves at the speed of trust.. So you can have the best ideas, but if you don't spend time in community building trust and rapport with people, it'll be very difficult to face opposition.. And also the fact that even when you're doing well and doing things well, you have to go back and report to your people because what you're doing up here may not be felt on the ground or understood on the ground, and in that environment chaos and misinformation can spread.. So I wish someone that told me then, the importance of this over-communicating, and say things over and over and over again about the things we're doing so that there's a common, nomenclature and common narrative of community, could work with..

- Well, I love that during every one of your answers, 00:41:40,720 there's some comment you make that I just wanna get written down, and put on a tattoo.. I don't know.. This one is, change happens at the speed of trust.. Honestly, I think that's something we should all remember, that without that trust, you can't make things happen.. Michael, Mayor Tubbs, you are a true inspiration.. I know that our team at Stanford, the students who look to you as an inspiration, the community that watches, is so inspired by you.. And what you've done in a few years really sets the bar high for all of us to make really, really positive change in the world.. So thanks so much.. - I appreciate that, thank you.. 00:42:22,001 Thank you for having me..

(upbeat music)..