

Diane Tavenner:

Hey, Michael.

Michael Horn:

Hey, Diane. It's good to see you after we've both been on our trips overseas, me to Sierra Leone and Liberia and you, of course, to India. So I'm dying to know how you doing.

Tavenner:

Well, still adjusting to the time zone, but I think maybe the better question is who am I, Michael? I mean, I feel like perspective changing trips like that have just such a huge impact on how I see the world and hopefully how I walk through it and really, who am I?

Horn:

Well, that is existential in nature, I will say. But it relates to I think something that we wanted to do on this episode, which is something a little different from what we've been doing this season because as folks who listen to us know, we started this podcast, of course, in the midst of the pandemic and our goal has been to help educators, parents and policy makers see that frankly there are better ways to do schooling that benefit each and every single child. While we've been spending a lot of time this season working through the nitty-gritty of innovating on the ground in schools, what does that really look like, and you all at Summit have been really nice guinea pigs along that journey, in this episode we wanted to enlarge our perspective, I think, and really just reflect on our trips and what we learned about the schools and education systems there. Not to frankly repeat what people could look up on their own, but to try and pull out any ahas that we had that might help our listeners broaden their own aperture and push their own thinking.

Tavenner:

That's exactly right and I think for me this was such a provocative experience and I suspect for you as well, so I hope there's a lot there that we can offer that, like you said, is not something you can read on Wikipedia. When I got back from Germany and I had reflections about how they teach about the Holocaust and what that might mean for how America teaches about its own past, just those provocations were so fascinating and so I'm really looking forward to today as the education systems we're going to be talking about, there are so many threads to pull here and grapple with and I think they're very aligned with so many of the topics that we're talking about regularly.

Horn:

Yeah, I totally agree. Let's start just with giving folks the context for our trips because they were different because as you went to Germany last year, we talked about it on the podcast, you were in India for the same reason. Your son is studying in India this semester as part of his country rotations with Minerva University. I think first things first, where's he studying? Where did you go?

Tavenner:

Well, similar to Germany, Michael, we tried to really see as much of the country as possible. Now, India is a very big country, but as we checked in with people along the way, they seem to agree that we got quite a good taste. So I'll give you the quick roundabout. We started in Mumbai and then we went south to Madurai, then to Hyderabad where my son is studying. That's where he was and we got to spend

time with him and his friends again. Then we went north to Bodh Gaya and Varanasi and then onto Udaipur, Jaipur, Agra and Delhi. In the course of things, we visited everything from very small villages to some of the largest cities in the world. But of course you were in Sierra Leone and Liberia for educational work, not as a tourist, so tell us a bit about that, Michael.

Horn:

Absolutely. But first let me just say, wow, you covered a lot of ground and wow, that's just a lot of places. But you're right. I was in Sierra Leone and Liberia for educational work and for context for the folks tuning in, I'm a board member at Imagine Worldwide. If you haven't heard of Imagine Worldwide, well, I'll just selfishly say you should because I think it may be doing some of the most transformational work in education in the world. Essentially it's a nonprofit that works in Africa to build foundational numeracy and literacy for children and it does it through child directed tech enabled learning solutions. The basic idea that these solutions, which are rapidly coming down in cost to roughly \$5 a student, use software, they pair it with a tablet, it's incredibly low cost. It's something that we can't even imagine in this country, and it has solar power.

We'll talk more about this, but it's incredibly scalable in countries where literally millions of students as you know often don't have access to school. They don't go, or if they do go, the places that they do, they often have teachers that don't show up or they learn in places where the ratios of students to teachers might be anywhere from, say, 50 to one at the low end to 200 to one at the high end. This is perspective setting. A country like Sierra Leone spends roughly \$50 per student on their education per year.

Tavenner:

God.

Horn:

Just to give some context, the US is spending ... I don't know what the current dollar amount is, probably 13,000 or something like that per student per year. So these are countries, to state the obvious, that don't have a lot of resources. They're areas of what you might say are in certain respects like that non-consumption, right? There's literally no alternative. Of course, it's not that simple on the ground, but we were there basically as a board to see what that ground really looks like. We got to visit a lot of schools in Sierra Leone in a range of circumstances, rural, urban, private, ministry run, city run, supported by different private intermediaries. You get the idea. Then we also went to a rural school in Liberia in a village where the Imagine Worldwide solution has actually been implemented fully so we got to see what that looks like as well.

Tavenner:

Wow, that's amazing. I don't want to be on another board, but that one sounds fascinating. What a interesting learning trip. I knew there was a reason we've been waiting for this conversation because while unlike you, Michael, I didn't spend my trip in schools, you know that I couldn't leave India without doing a lot of learning about education. I get kind of fanatical. I did visit a music college in the south and an orphanage and an elementary school and college in the north, in a rural part of the north, and I just also had an opportunity to talk to a wide range of people about school and their experiences, everything from students to parents and different ... I hate to say it, but different castes because that comes up still and different classes. One of the first things I noticed is similar to what you've described, Michael, is there's a fair amount of non-consumption still in India.

Even though they've made education compulsory for ages six through 14, a lot of people still aren't going to school and for the most part what I found is people agree that the ... actually, this was universal, people agree that the public schools aren't good and the primary reasons they cite are a lack of resources and very high absenteeism rates for teachers. As a result, I think there's this growing and competitive private market because literally every person I spoke with agreed that education was the most important thing for their child.

We have this ongoing conversation about is the return on investment there in American education still people seem to be losing a little bit of faith in that, especially at the higher ed level, but in India it is alive and well and paramount. So right from the start, there's a whole bunch of similarities and I would be remiss if I just didn't ground in the scale that we're talking about. Everything about India that just smacked me in the face was how big it is. There are 1.3 billion people in that country. There are more kids aged six to 14 in India than there are people in our entire nation. We're just talking about a scale that is hard for us to grasp.

Horn:

It's not even on the same glide path, if you will, or magnitude. You're right, there are a lot of similarities at Imagine, we actually wondered for a while should we be focusing on the subcontinent around India, but ultimately we decided to focus on Africa. I'm not frankly sure that focus is an appropriate word when you're talking about a continent, but the point being that there's a lot of room in these countries for novel solutions and innovation. As you alluded to, these countries often ... I mean, this is common, I found, in my travels, they'll often say that schooling is compulsory or they'll say that public schools and these places are free to families. But as I remember reading in James Tooley's book *The Beautiful Tree* that came out years ago, talked a lot about India. There are often a ton of hidden fees that families must bear and it makes the public school experience for them quite costly.

So, it's no different in Sierra Leone, I suspect. We talked to parents who told me that the fees in public schools were everything from paying for every homework assignment that's given out, which was mind-boggling to me. Or paying fees for materials. I mean, I won't list them all.

So a lot of these families, frankly, Diane, they would enroll their students in one of Rising academies, low-cost private schools, that's where we were talking to these parents, and one of the things that they loved about this low-cost private school was, yes, it costs money to attend. Nominally, it's more than they would pay for the public school, but the billing is simple, they said, the tuition covers everything. There's no surprises or hidden fees along the way. I guess it sparked a bigger point to me, which is that these low cost private schools are really what I would call market creating innovations. They target non-consumption or the low end of the market and in some cases they could even be disruptive and that they could theoretically, we'll get into this, I'm sure, use technology to improve over time.

But I guess I want to get into that in a moment and first to pause for a moment on this phenomenon, because I know from a Facebook post of yours talking about this phenomenon, it sparked a whole lot of thoughts for you and from you. So I'd love you to reflect on that and then we can break it down a little bit.

Tavener:

I heard a different flavor of the extra costs and fees that I think adds even more nuance and complexity here, and so I'll tell you a specific story I heard from a woman in Hyderabad. She shared that she had been out of the country living in the Gulf for a few years and was returning, she had a son who was entering the fifth grade and she had a school that she wanted him to attend because from her view, it provided a pretty quality education for relatively reasonable tuition amounts. We're talking about this

group of people who are going to a "private school", but not like we think of private school oftentimes in the US. These are pretty nominal costs.

But her son was denied admission and it turns out she was at the longtime family barber and she shared her disappointment and frustration around this, and the barber offered to help. So that's curious just right there. Anyway, to her surprise, she was willing to accept that help, and sure enough, the barber got her son into school. All she had to do was pay the tuition for grade three and four before entering grade five, because as it turns out, the school's policy of only accepting transfers before grade three really isn't a policy. It's just about needing the money that they would've lost.

Horn:

Because these are businesses.

Tavener:

These are businesses. So, as she described it, she was happy to pay that back tuition. The barber took his cut and her son's diploma years later stated that he had attended school there from grade three through whenever he went and that gives the family a good laugh still.

Horn:

Fascinating.

Tavener:

I mean, I relay this story, I relay it to you now, but when I was in India, I got a chance to talk with one of my son's classmates who is Indian and I told him the story and he said that's typical. School principals routinely required families to pay them for acceptance and school board members who are allotted seats for admissions auction them off publicly. I asked him how he felt about that and quite frankly, he seemed surprised by my question. I mean, he just looked at me and said, "Well, it's normal."

Then he quickly added, and because this is a big theme, India's really trying to clean up corruption, he said that this is the way of India, but it's fine because in the places where it really matters, there's no bribery, like in the military because everyone agrees that the military's critical. So he said that the military's clean. Take that for what it's worth, I've been pushing myself, Michael, not to judge this, but rather to really use it as a lens to examine our systems and practices. On the one hand, I have never in my experience in the US been asked to pay someone off to get admissions to something. That said, I pay companies and systems for privileged access to things all the time. I pay for the fast lane on the freeway, I pay for overnight shipping, I pay to expedite my COVID test.

There are so many things that are made faster and easier and that I can get done with money. So I'm asking myself, so what's the difference here? Why do I have such a visceral reaction to this story? My immediate response is that it feels like our system is transparent and less biased, clearly classist, but otherwise not discriminatory or arbitrary in the way that this bribery type system feels. I think that that matters from a psychological perspective, but I got to start looking at our public and private schools and colleges and universities and how they allocate seats to children of donors to board members to those with influence and power.

Over the years, Michael, even in a public charter school, I can't tell you how many times I've been approached by people offering to make a donation to bypass the Summit lottery for their child. Obviously never took any of those. I think that's obvious. Well, clearly I'm still reflecting in thought

process here. I'm not sure the Indian military is totally clean, but I'm also pretty sure that our education system is paid to play in ways most of us would never equate to the system in India.

Horn:

Obviously the Varsity Blues scandal at the elite schools showcase this for everyone to see on the front pages and I think it reinforced a lot of people's view that admissions into these rarefied places is a game and it is tilted in terms of those who have access and money and so forth. I think it further soured a lot of the population on our higher ed system here. I think this is totally a dynamic you see. There's the other piece of this, I think, which you're calling into question, which is universal schooling and this sense of our public school system is the baseline that we go to in our country and that it's there and it's free and accessible and we hope that it's good for everyone and we invest a lot into it.

I guess when I reflect on your story, I'm sort of grappling with this a little bit. I think there's actually pluses and minuses of a universal schooling system. I mean, this might be shocking for folks to hear, although maybe not at this point because you and I seeing something as shades of gray rather than all good or all bad is sort of par for the course I think at this point, Diane. We're sort of the king and queen of seeing things with nuance and third ways I think at this point.

Tavener:

I only wish we were the king and queen of education because imagine what we could do then, Michael.

Horn:

Ooh. No, that's fun. But just to say it, obviously when you have a true universal free public schooling, all kids get served. It's sort of that basic human right idea and there's something very strong about that, particularly when your country is fully developed and can afford it and so forth. But for a country with a lower GDP per capita, and just to state it, Liberia or Sierra Leone, I believe, are in the bottom 15 countries of GDP per capita in the entire world with less than \$800 of GDP per person per year. You just can't afford and maintain the sort of infrastructure that we have in the United States. If you say you can, it's just a lie. You're telling yourself a lie. That's the upside, I think, of universal public schooling.

But I think the downside is that as we've discussed on this show, there's really no room for disruptive schooling solutions to really take root. I mean, maybe micro schools will be disruptive but they aren't what I would call would call a new market transformational disruption. As a result, when there's no room for disruption, there's no real non-consumption, I think you take away the dynamism of a sector that is important for improvement and renewal and transformation and so forth. So in a country like India or Sierra Leone or Liberia, I think you have this potential for some incredible innovations to emerge. I think at least the barriers are theoretically lower anyway, and theoretically I say.

Tavener:

Well, I think theoretically is the key word there, because I believe deeply in what you're saying, and I suspect it might be true in some places, but I wasn't seeing a lot of innovation. Again, I saw a teeny, teeny, teeny, but it seemed to be fairly representative based on the people I was talking to. What I actually saw was a whole lot of people doubling down on the same things that we are doing in our comprehensive system with far fewer resources, with far more kids, with just a huge ... if they were going after what we're doing right now, which both of us are unsatisfied with, there's such a giant gap there, I don't know how it could ever be closed. That doesn't feel exciting to me and I was trying to figure out why aren't they doing these innovative things given where they are? That's what we should start seeing.

I think one of the challenges, and this will be familiar to people, but is there is this scarcity model at the higher ed level, there are very few seeds in very excellent institutions, especially the ones that are paid for, and the way you get in is through test scores. So there is this drill and kill mentality. I was stunned, Michael, at how short the school day is in India, literally. Maybe they took our advice and they're not wasting time and they just go there for four hours and get everything done. I'm not sure about that.

Horn:

Somehow I doubt it, but yeah.

Tavener:

But the school day is short and so what is happening is kids who are trying to compete are doing a whole second school day through private tutoring, et cetera. I know you've seen this in many other parts of the world, just this sort of arms race towards education that seemed to keep pushing people back to the old style and old way of learning. I'm so excited about what you're doing because I wasn't seeing it. I was seeing schools that barely had a book. I couldn't find a computer. The only person who had a computer was a principal at a college.

Horn:

No. So I'm glad, and I'll just say to the audience, you and I are both wrestling real time with what we saw and so forth so you're getting some raw feelings here and analysis as we sort of sort this out. But I have the same reaction, Diane, which is ... and that's why I think I said theoretically because it's a bit of a mixed bag on the ground, at least as far as I'm concerned. I'm going to put aside what we're doing in Imagine Worldwide for the moment. But broadly speaking, it seems that when you have these low cost or affordable private schools come in, they are creating improvement relative to the government school baseline. You get teachers to show up. In the case of Sierra Leone, for example, you have a for-profit provider like Rising or a non-profit like Educaid that we saw, both of which we got to see in operation and, Diane, they're just working to get rid of corporal punishment in schools.

Sierra Leone recently outlawed beating children and yet it's still a common practice. They literally said, "There's no enforcement of it. We just have the law in the books." You want to get schools to be safe places for kids, you want to get schools to be safe places for girls. As you know, this is a huge phenomenon where girls start dropping out because it's just not safe for them to walk to the school, let alone be in the school.

Then you have innovations like "structured pedagogy." Diane, you're looking puzzled.

Tavener:

Because that's usually a phrase that I would say, so I want to dig into that for sure and ask you about it. I just want to plus one what you're saying, Michael. I always think of the phone analogy. What I would be wanting in these countries we're talking about, or what I would be hopeful for is they never installed landline phones, they just went straight to smartphones essentially, and they never wasted the time and the infrastructure and the money on a landline system because by the time they got around to the system, this other thing existed and they could skip right to it. That's what I would hope we would be seen in these places or a lot more of it. I'm just not seeing it and I just have to ask you. Structured pedagogy, what do you mean?

Horn:

I'm glad you asked, but it's the same thing. So just to state, we have the same reaction to this. We want to see the disruption that would leapfrog, and yet what we're seeing is basically structured pedagogy instead and this is basically scripted whole class learning, Diane. Bridge International, which you probably know and many have heard of, is a network of private schools around the continent of Africa. They also now increasingly work as a partner to the governments in these countries to help transform the practice within government run schools and this is what Rising is doing too, frankly, is they basically are perfecting the one to many model. I don't know how else to describe it. It's like call and response. They literally script out every single thing a teacher says.

So we would go to a school, for example, that Rising ran, it's an elementary school and the teachers there at the front, they have a smartphone and it tells them what to say and how to give the example and what to put on the board. Everything is incredibly scripted. I have to tell you, relative to what I saw in Malawi a few years ago, what they're doing is kind of impressive. It's way better than what the baseline is. It's an interesting use of technology and it's working with teachers that likely in many cases have limited capacity and knowledge themselves. But it's a mixed bag, Diane, because on the one hand I can try to be in the context and appreciate what's going on there. On the other hand, it makes me really sad because they're doing exactly what you said. They have this opportunity to leapfrog the Western assembly line education system and they're not doing it. They're perfecting it.

It reminds me a lot of what the early no excuses charter schools in the US did in certain respects. You walk through these places, though, with classrooms on top of each other, kids spilling out. This is a government run school, 75 to one or so, and it's loud. If you think if you're an introvert, you must be going crazy during it. It's just impossible to focus. The kids are repeating stuff back, but I don't think there's a heck of a lot of comprehension going on. Rising is, to its credit again, another innovation, they've introduced tracking for the first time, so you're not just by your age and so they have faster maths and faster reading. But then you have the situation where you have the 13-year old with the six-year olds and it's like, how would that make you feel? So I'm trying to be respectful of the context and not judge and saying it's better than it would be, and yet what else could you do? So as I'm processing this, it just gives me a lot of struggle, I guess, as you can hear.

Tavener:

I hear why and you asked what else could you do and that's what we try to focus on here, so I don't want to get lost from what we try to do. I want to read you this quote, Michael, that I came across when I was preparing to go to India and it really altered how I viewed the country coming into it and walking through it and I think it leads us to potentially what else could we do? The quote is, "India's not, as people keep calling it, an underdeveloped country, but rather, in the context of its history and cultural heritage, a highly developed one in an advanced state of decay." That was said by Sashi Tharoor, who's a politician from Kerala, who has quite an interesting backstory, but I'm not going to go there right now. I admit that the narrative I think we have in the west of India is that it is an underdeveloped nation, albeit on the rise.

So it was fascinating to look at it from the flip of like, no, no, it's a very advanced society, which is exactly what I experienced. I just want to tell you this one story about this laundry that we visited. There in Mumbai, there is a laundry community, and this is going to stretch back hundreds of years to where basically people who are all doing the same role and yes, it is grounded in caste so there's that issue, live in a community and do the work in a community. There is a massive, massive laundry that sits in the middle of the city and does laundry for so many people and places and things like that. They live in the community, so their houses are stacked up on top. I'm not even going to do it justice. You walk into this community and people have grown up into it.

But the thing I want to point to here is the level of sophistication when you are doing laundry for millions of people and they're picking it up, bringing it in, washing it, pressing, all of that and then delivering it back to people. There's not a single computer, there's no written system to do this and they have a perfect track record. They have another whole industry in that city that is ... I forget the name of what they call it, but they deliver lunches. They deliver millions of lunches on a daily basis with specific orders directly to people without any technology, any computers. When you dig into the sophistication of the systems, they're using these little codes that they put into the clothes. I mean, these clothes get separated, put back together, they make it back to the right people. They don't use clothes pens because they take too much time so they have these twisted ropes that things hang in.

It is a level of sophistication at a system level that we would all be envious of and it's been going on for hundreds of years and people grow up in it and learn it. Now you might ask, "What are you talking about? What does this have to do with anything?" and here's what I would say. They are expert at the stuff that I'm killing myself to try to do every day, which is how did kids get real authentic learning in a hands-on way in the community and see these things? This needs to be brought into the new world, the new time that we're in, but they have something to build upon that they've just cast to the side when they think about their formal education and instead are trying to copy our industrial model. That feels like a huge missed opportunity to me.

Horn:

This is so fascinating, Diane, on multiple levels because I'm having a few reflections. One, I remember when I was in Egypt probably about a decade ago at this point, and having this thought of this was the pinnacle of civilization and then seeing the decline. Then I think about my friend and colleague at the Christensen Institute, Efosa Ojomo, who wrote this book *The Prosperity Paradox* and basically his argument is that systems should not be trying to replicate what the West has today because the United States was not birthed with a universal schooling system and roads. We developed, it's a process, not a thing. So these things need to be done in context locally in community for the challenges and priorities that they're solving for themselves, not to replicate the US and then measure based on how many schools do you have, how many ... which is what happens.

Similar reflection, when we were at the National Museum of Liberia on the last day, they talked about how there were 16 tribes before the freed slaves from America came back and effectively colonized the country and brought it together. These villages, or these tribes rather, had their own schools and the curriculum in these schools back in the day was not reading and math. It was how to braid hair, how to take care of a baby, how to hunt, how to cook, things for survival. So much, I think, speaks to that which is I love to see schools built around the opportunities and challenges of the local context because then you give it value, right? You see this right now in Africa is people graduate from universities, there's no jobs for them because they're learning a curriculum that has nothing to do with the jobs that are available, which I think is awful.

Now that said, I think there's background here in what Imagine Worldwide solution is because reading in basic numeracy are critical in today's world. They're critical for the mobile phone revolution you talked about before. What we're doing is ... it's not going to be a panacea by any stretch, but the barriers to using technology to put a child in the driver's seat of their learning, to personalize it to what they need when they need it, to help them make progress, they're completely different barriers from what they're in the US and whereas in the US it's really about the adults, protecting the system as it is, layering on top of an antiquated education system and the like. In places like Sierra Leone or Liberia or in Malawi where, get this, over the next six years, Imagine Worldwide is implementing its solution in every single government school in the country. So like 6,000 schools.

The barriers effectively are cost and technology. It's a totally different playing ground. So Imagine is essentially playing the role of an ecosystem coordinator because there isn't a market here at the moment. No one is building software for a \$5 a student solution that also includes hardware and power supply and uploading and so forth. So essentially what Imagine Worldwide exists to do is coordinate procurement, coordinate implementation through partners and source solar panels, source security for those solar panels, source batteries, source headphones, source plugs for those headphones that can easily be swapped out, make the tablets even more durable so that they last in the field for, say, eight years instead of three years in the US. Get offline software because you can't have internet based software in these places.

They work with this nonprofit 1Billion that has created reading and math software for the early grades in, I think, five languages, Chichewa, which is the Malawi language, English, French, Swahili, and I think Portuguese as well, which covers most of the continent. Then we've done a heck of a lot of research. We've done eight randomized control trials in a way you just couldn't do in the US and the effect sizes, I'm going to geek out for a moment, 0.4 standard deviation in reading and 0.7 in math, which is off the freaking charts.

Tavener:

Oh my god. Wow.

Horn:

So I think this is the sort of thing that could leapfrog, and I saw it in action in Liberia, I've seen it in Malawi. I'm jumping a little bit here, but I guess my bigger hope, Diane, is you still need a place where kids go because the parents are working and busy and you still need adults. It's not the teacher's just watching them and doing whatever. They're going one by one and addressing misconceptions or seeing when they get stuck or whatever else and they're still getting their math and reading lessons outside of it.

But what I would love to see is what would it look like if one of these affordable private schools that we saw built their solution around this kernel that Imagine Worldwide has developed? Or what would it look like if individual communities were able to build their own community run ... I don't know, we could call it a school, we could call it something else, where this place where kids could learn and frankly maybe you could stand up entrepreneurs with this technology and other sorts of ... who knows, right? Then I think you'd see something really scalable and maybe address my worry, which is \$5 a student is not a lot of money, but it's still 10% of what these countries are spending on their kids. I don't know if they'll be able to sustain that or not, Diane.

Tavener:

Gosh, what you're saying super interesting and what's coming up for me is the visit with the nonprofit and the orphanage school and then the 200 students also from the village and the leader of this, the man who started this, he literally started when he was 17. He has this fascinating background where his parents were sick and so a Buddhist monk sort of took him in and he lived 10 years in the monastery and he was exposed to learning and language and whatnot, otherwise had never gone to school. At 17 he just knew he had to give back to his village and so he literally took a very small amount of money, bought a tarp, some bamboo sticks and a mat for the ground and started teaching. So fast-forward 17 or 18 years and he has built these institutions and it was so profound and so uninspiring.

He's such an entrepreneur, Michael, he will not take government money because he knows it's going to be corrupting. He won't give money to the students because he knows that their families will take it. He

understands the community and the culture so much and one of the most profound things to me is he said, "I tell my students you don't need a teacher. You have Google and you have your curiosity." You and I both know googling things in and of itself is not enough, but he was onto something there and so I was like, "Oh, do you know about," for example, "The Khan Academy? Do you know about some of these products?" He didn't know about any of them, but he knew about Google.

To me, here's the opportunity. India is creating a ton of ... the job that people want to go into is technology and engineering because it's more lucrative. There's a huge opportunity for them to build their own solutions that are personalized to the communities that they grew up in and the places they understand and what people need to learn and so that's what I'm hopeful for.

Horn:

No, I love it. I mean, this is probably where we land the plane, which is I think there's a solution now in what Imagine's doing that can take care of those foundational aspects and then take it to the next level where these entrepreneurs, like you just described, sort of take it into the next level, if you will, and really build something, Diane, that is of the community, for the community, by the community, if you will, to bastardize President Lincoln's words, and make it very authentic to the context and grow something that is incredibly local. Again, this is from Efosa's work. I just think the real cure to creating prosperity, and that's different from eradicating poverty, but really creating prosperity is to empower local solutions and have them drive the dynamism to grow something. That's what's going to be sustainable here so I'm thrilled by the solution that's on the ground. It gives me a tremendous amount of hope. I think it's revolutionary, and I think it creates the floor from which I love to see people build.

Tavenner:

That's a good place to leave it for today. I mean, we could go on for another five hours, I'm sure.

Horn:

I think we could.

Tavenner:

Michael, in your travels, playtime, et cetera, did you get a chance to read anything, watch anything?

Horn:

Oh, yeah, plenty. There's a lot of flights, as you might imagine. But I'll actually reflect on a book that I finished right before I left, and then I'll share the book that I finished on the plane. I read the biography that came out, I think, last year about Maria Montessori, which is called *The Child Is the Teacher: A Life of Maria Montessori*. It's by an Italian professor and translated into English by Cristina De Stefano. Obviously, as you know, my kids are in a Montessori school. Montessori has a ton of the principles that we talk about every single time we get together. It was really interesting just to read about what a scientist she was. Also, her experience in India was fascinating and getting to know that a little bit better and just really remembering that when kids are doing something and they're repeating it, just observe them and get out of their way. They're doing the work. What about you?

Tavenner:

I was very worried I wasn't going to have enough reading so right before I left for the trip, I downloaded a whole bunch of things and then I got there and I was like, "Why did I download this?" I don't even

remember the why. I always know why. One of those things was Parable of the Sower by Octavia E. Butler, and I still don't remember exactly who told me about this or where it came from. I know I've seen Octavia Butler's name in a lot of quotes lately, so whatever. Here's what I'll say about this. It was pretty profound to be reading it while I was traveling through India. It is not for the faint of heart, it's pretty intense, and it's fascinating personally because it's said in California, in literally basically this timeframe we're living in, but it's an alternative reality to what we have today but it hits very, very close to home. There's a whole bunch on sort of religion and spirituality, which is not for here, but certainly the trip to India, that was a big part of the experience. So that's what I have read recently.

Horn:

Unbelievable. Well, we've covered a ton of ground here. I hope people, it allows you to pause and, Diane, just thanks for letting me unpack what I'm sort of wrestling with, and it was fun. As always, for all you listening, thanks for joining us on Class Disrupted.