

Thank you Mr. Zhu for your kind introduction.

We live in the best of times but also the worst of times. Today, I stand in front of you with my almost 40 years of experience in the government, business, and philanthropic sectors in China and in global aid. To be honest, I feel exhausted and frustrated.

We have so much potential, but too many opportunities are wasted every day. For example, we're facing a crisis in which AI and Big Tech, while affording us with unprecedented convenience, will soon automate away many jobs and continue to erode the trust between us. For the past 20 years, led by Chairman Hsu and president Chiling Tong, ILF has been dedicated to fostering the next generation of leaders in public service. Now, I want to share 3 ideas I have learned from my 4 decades of work.

The first idea is about liberty and equality, two spiritual cornerstones of America, which closely link rights and obligations as inseparable as two sides of a single coin. The Founding Fathers wrote in the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." But these rights do not exist without obligations. In fact, think about the Bill of Rights. Each right is accompanied by an implicit responsibility. For instance, the First Amendment "Right to free speech" comes with the obligation that you cannot stop someone else from saying things that you don't agree with.

But in today's world, we're so ready to give out these rights without requesting obligations in return. One solution we often hear is, "Let's give them more money." The intention might be good - we should have the goodwill to help each other. But, people should not be given handouts from the government. As former prime minister of the U.K. Margaret Thatcher said, The government only spends tax revenue but actually creates nothing, therefore it has no right to further interfere with the distribution of wealth.

Instead, as I tried to do back in China and now with our family foundation here in the US, we should give aid to people in need through private charities in response to specific moments of need. This will activate gratitude instead of encouraging people to endlessly request from the government.

This brings me to my second concept: gratitude is linked to personal responsibility. There is more serious lack of gratitude in this world than before. When we do not feel gratitude, we do not feel obligated to invest in the process. We just feel entitled to share in the outcome. When people feel grateful, then they feel responsible and are eager to repay society. This really helps us find solutions to the problems we face

today. For example, in addressing income inequality, some say that we need to redistribute wealth. As Aristotle says, “The worst form of inequality is to try to make unequal things equal.” A numeric average of people’s income being equal is not the same as the true meaning of equality, which is defined by God, not by us, nor by the government.

Now, I want to bring up my last point: invest in people, instead of simply giving them money. let’s treat people with dignity. Private charities can fairly provide micro-finance loans to help poor people get on their feet and pursue their own happiness. Because this is not a simple handout, the beneficiaries feel gratitude and can take personal responsibility to enhance their capacity through their own efforts. For example, my initiative CD Finance Inc, has made small loans worth \$2 billion US dollars annually to nearly 500,000 women in rural China.

We live in troubled times, but we can do so much better, if we return to the fountainhead of truth - if we return to God. It’s time.
Thank you.

Daofeng He
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