

Remarks of Thom Ruhe
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Thank you President Jeremic, Mr. Secretary-General, the Israeli Delegation, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is a pleasure and an honor to address the assembly today.

The Kauffman Foundation exists primarily to advance thinking in two broad areas: education and entrepreneurship. These two areas are complementary in that a good education is the foundation from which entrepreneurial opportunity can grow.

In our hometown of Kansas City, Missouri, we are leading two significant educational programs. The first is our Kauffman Scholars program, which is a comprehensive multi-year program, designed to help urban students in Kansas City prepare for and complete a college education.

Working with students who would otherwise find a college education unattainable, Kauffman Scholars counselors collaborate with family and community members to help each scholar prepare for the next step of his or her academic journey.

The other big initiative in our education portfolio is the Kauffman School. Our charter school prepares students to be intellectually curious, economically independent, and confidently self-directed – all characteristics that are shared by successful entrepreneurs.

Whether the students of these education programs will go on to become masters of industry is unknown. What is known, however, is that their lives will be forever altered. They will gain a mindset that is open to and excited about the value of living a self-directed life.

Within the entrepreneurship group of the Foundation, we are creating experiential entrepreneurship education programs. We are working to advance innovations from the laboratory to the market, promote active mentoring, and foster entrepreneurial communities.

We are doing all of this while researching the impact and effectiveness of such programs, and the government policies that either advance or hinder these important activities. Through our research and policy efforts, we hope to encourage an informed discussion on important matters, like immigration reform for example. We also fund this vital research so that it may support the activities of other groups that seek to promote entrepreneurship.

One of our programs that incorporates many of these ambitions, on a worldwide scale, is [Global Entrepreneurship Week](#). This year, during the week of November 18, over 20,000 events will take place in 135 countries to raise awareness of the economic benefits that come from encouraging entrepreneurs to start and grow companies.

With nearly 7 million people participating, Global Entrepreneurship Week is delivering on the promise of entrepreneurial opportunity for all segments of humanity.

After all, it was entrepreneurial opportunity – and success – that led to the creation of our Foundation. Our founder, Ewing Marion Kauffman, was born into poverty – he was even bedridden for a year with a heart ailment as a child. But he was passionate about reading and committed to lifelong learning, as is reflected in the focus of our work.

Yet, without the advantages of wealth or family influence, Mr. Kauffman founded Marion Labs in 1950 and built from that company a legacy that has served the greater Kansas City community in deep and tangible ways, and has served the world by advancing the understanding and appreciation of entrepreneurship.

That is why our actions are directed by our donor's intentions and made possible by the fortune he entrusted to the care of the Foundation. And we take great care to invest our time, talent, and treasure into programs that will engage the community and serve as best practices for others to emulate.

One such program has origins from a past similar to that of Mr. Kauffman's.

On February 19, 1945, a boy named Clifton Taulbert was born to an unwed teenage mother in Glen Alan, Mississippi, in the heart of the Mississippi Delta. For those who don't know, the Mississippi Delta region was then, and is yet today, a severely economically distressed area. Many current residents of the region still live well below the federal poverty level, and the average life expectancy for men in the Delta is eight years below the national average.

Within this environment, a young Clifton Taulbert was being raised by relatives to assume his place in a cotton economy that drove most of the economic activity of the region. As a young boy, he would learn how to pick and chop cotton, but he likely would never learn about the potential he had to change the course of his life.

That course did change, however, when he was thirteen years old and his Uncle Cleve Mormon gave Cliff a chance to get out of the cotton field and work for him in the ice house.

His Uncle Cleve was an unusual man. He was unusual because he was an entrepreneur – a choice that very few African Americans made in the Delta. But black or white, everyone needed ice to survive the sweltering hot summers of Mississippi, and Uncle Cleve built a small business enterprise around supplying ice and other products and services for people of the region.

So it was that young Clifton was brought into a world he couldn't have imagined, and it became the foundation of a lifelong education that would eventually lead Clifton to become a successful entrepreneur, Pulitzer-nominated author, banker, and community builder.

His life provided the framework for Kauffman's newest and most ambitious entrepreneurship education program: the [Ice House Entrepreneurship Program](#). Beyond a typical entrepreneurship curriculum, the Ice House program was built as a framework for understanding and implementing an entrepreneurial mindset – a mindset that serves all members of our society, whether or not they choose to start a company.

The three primary objectives of the program are, first, to provide a fundamental understanding of the entrepreneurial process. Namely, how do individuals with limited resources identify and pursue uncertain entrepreneurial opportunities?

Second, we help students identify specific beliefs and assumptions that drive the behavior of successful entrepreneurs. And finally, we are immersing students in the real-world

entrepreneurial experiences of others that will enable them to develop critical thinking, effective problem solving, and other entrepreneurial skills.

We all know that encouraging and supporting entrepreneurship – at all levels – is vital to the growth of our economies, and it is THE most effective tool for alleviating poverty. That is why we have invested in this particular program – a program that is changing the way entrepreneurship is being taught and experienced around the world.

The World Economic Forum summarized well the need for such education when it stated: “It is not enough to add entrepreneurship on the perimeter – it needs to be at the core of the way education operates.”

For our part at the Kauffman Foundation, we have created the Ice House Program to be offered as a general education requirement and then complemented that mindset with cooperating programs like FastTrac, iStart, and Startup Weekend. All of these initiatives offer rich and unique experiences meant to help entrepreneurs move from having an idea to developing a company that creates value for themselves and others.

Unfortunately, time does not permit me to elaborate more deeply on each of these programs, but we have supplied collateral for your reference.

Through the broad offerings of such programs, and with support from organizations like the United Nations, the World Economic Forum, and Global Entrepreneurship Week, we hope that we can assist all nations in providing your citizens with unlimited opportunities by supporting and promoting an entrepreneurial culture and environment.

In the words of Mr. Kauffman, "Every individual that we can inspire, that we can guide, that we can help start a new company, is vital to the future of our economic welfare."

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this vital work.