

NEW GOSPEL OF WEALTH / THE FUTURE OF PHILANTHROPY

The power of a name featuring Jon Stryker and Van Jones

Jon Stryker, founder and president of the Arcus Foundation, explains how the act and choice of naming give power and influence to the work we support. Moderated by Van Jones of REFORM Alliance.

This video is part of a collection of conversations with leaders, thinkers, and activists from philanthropy, business, the arts, tech, and beyond outlining bold visions for the future of philanthropy.

Transcript begins.

[The power of a name. Van Jones, CEO of Form Reliance. Host of “The Redemption Project” and “The Van Jones show”. A Black man with glasses wearing a navy blazer and navy polka dot shirt with jeans and black boots. Jon Stryker, founder and president, Arcus Foundation. A middle-aged white man wearing a brown suit.]

ANNOUNCER: Please welcome Jon Stryker and Van Jones.

[applause]

VAN JONES: All right, Jon Stryker, I get to talk to you in public. Very few people get this opportunity. You, you are one of the least egotistical, uh, self-promoting people that’s ever given away half a billion dollars uh, to make the world a better place. And when you’ve given this, this money away—not even usually in your own name—usually in the name of the Arcus brand. Why are you doing so much good and demanding so little credit?

[laughter]

JON STRYKER: Well, I hope that’s true, um—It’s really to me—I always go back to the impact and the mission. So, I do gifts in different ways. I do, occasionally, do gifts with my name. My sister and I gave a significant gift to the, the lynching memorial and, uh, that was a leadership gift for that. And so, we wanted people to know we were doing that. But, uh, recently, I’m about to establish a chair at a college um, and it’s going to be in queer studies. We haven’t announced it yet, so I’m not going to tell you where, but um, we’re naming it after Audre Lorde.

VAN JONES: Come on now, Audre Lorde, Audre Lorde.

[applause]

JON STRYKER: So, it just, it seems like that’s a more, much more powerful way to do a gift. Um, we named the foundation Arcus because, uh, well, first of all, arcus pluvium is a Latin word for rainbow, and I’m also an architect. I love the idea of an arc that supports, shelters, and spans

distances. And, um, I wanted it to be like, kind of like a rainbow, where it's like a symbol to people of a place to go for resources and, and for power. So, it's not, it's not about me. A lot of people never even see me, um.

VAN JONES: True.

JON STRYKER: They see the, the, you know, the people we have working on the frontlines from—of our organization.

VAN JONES: They're probably people who are watching this, who would love to be at your level in terms of, you know, one of the great philanthropists with, you know, such a big track record. What is, what are some of the lessons that you've learned, mistakes that you've made, the dos and don't dos, if you're going to give somebody some advice?

JON STRYKER: Well, think hard about doing it before [laughs] you jump in. Uh, it's a huge amount of work. It really is, and the dust never settles. So, you know, you think you've got everything working. And, uh, and then, things are constantly changing. The environment's changing. The laws are changing. The, you know, the administration of the government's changing. Social justice work is really hard. It's amazing and it's very satisfying, when you meet people, and they tell you that you've had an impact on their lives and their communities. It's very meaningful for me.

VAN JONES: You carry yourself with such humility and such grace, but the impact that you have had has just been extraordinary, and we really, really love and appreciate you. So, thank you.

[applause]

[New gospel of wealth. What does #GenerosityToJustice look like to you? Ford Foundation dot org forward slash new gospel.]

End of transcript.