

KINNEY ZALESNE

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“microtrends: the small forces behind tomorrow’s big changes”

Kinney Zalesne

SUSAN BOOTH

My job is to introduce our first speaker and before I do, I want to let you know that after she’s done speaking, we are going to have about fifteen minutes for some Q&A, so store away those questions. She would be more than happy to respond to them after her remarks. It is a great pleasure to kick off our time together with Kinney Zalesne. She is the co-author, with Mark Penn, of *Microtrends: The Small Forces Behind Tomorrow’s Big Changes*. Kinney Zalesne is an authority on small communities and social entrepreneurship. With Mr. Penn, she worked on the 1996 Clinton/Gore election campaign and provided strategy for Senator Clinton’s presidential bid. She was a White House fellow in Al Gore’s office, focusing on domestic policy and education technology. She worked as counsel to attorney general Janet Reno in the mid-90’s. And here’s what’s cool: she left all of that to become president of College Summit, a not-for-profit that helps low-income school districts send kids to college. She’s a graduate of both Yale University and Harvard Law School and it’s my delight to welcome to the stage Kinney Zelesne.

[Applause]

KINNEY ZALESNE

Thank you very much Susan and Kent and Teresa and all of you for having me here. What Susan didn’t tell you about my biography is really what’s most important to me is that in Junior High, I was quite the actress. And the problem, the reason I didn’t stick with this is that I went to a girl’s school and I was small and I had really short hair and so I got typecast as the boys. I was always -- so I was Tom Sawyer, and I was the brother in *Our Town*, and I was the son in *I Remember Mama* and so after a while, so the typecast didn’t really fit for me and I think that signaled the end of my theatre career but otherwise I’m sure it would have been unbounded.

[Laughter]

So, I feel I’m kind of at home, now, in this space. But I really, I so admire what you all do and I want to share that with you before I begin. My husband and I are longstanding season ticket holders at the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, D.C. and regular attendees at Arena Stage and Woolly Mammoth, so it’s a big part of our lives and it’s really an honor for me to be with you all at your conference.

We’re going to talk about microtrends, but before we do, I suspect, even just looking around the room, that we already have some microtrends at play. So if we could just start with a little show of hands, how many people here like hiking or backpacking? Or kayaking? Ok, so you all may be what we call in the book “archery moms” or “archery

dads.” How many of you have children who are very picky eaters? Ok, so they may be part of the growing trend we call “vegan children.”

[Laughter]

Any men in the room....[pause]

[Laughter]

Sorry! That’s what you get for thinking one step ahead while you’re....Any men in the room father a child after the age of forty? So you are part of the growing group in the U.S. and around the world we call “old new dads.”

[Laughter]

Now, we don’t know each other very well yet, but I feel comfortable asking you this question: anyone here have a tattoo? And the rest of you can tell me later, but, so you’re part of what we call the “uptown tattooed.” Anybody regularly sleep fewer than six hours a night? So you are part of the growing group we call “thirty winkers.” And anybody have a pet they love like a child? So you are part of the exploding group in America we call “pet parents.”

Now these may sound like just kind of quirky questions, sort of marginal life interests, you know, personal preferences, but the truth is, these kinds of passionate preferences and personal lifestyle choices are at the heart of the way society is working these days. So what I’d like to do is talk a little bit about the theory of microtrends and then talk about a few specific ones that are particularly relevant to the arts and theatre.

Twenty-five years ago we could understand the world in terms of megatrends. And maybe some of you remember that book from the early 1980’s. Megatrends were the big, universal forces that would sweep through and affect everybody’s life, you know, the rise of technology, the rise of women, the big forces that changed the way everything was for everybody. Now we have -- there has been such an explosion of choice in America, both in our lives as consumers, and in our personal lives, that we have entered the era of microtrends. Small forces -- they may never grow to be more than 1% of society, but these are the forces that are powerfully shaping who we are and how we live.

In the book we joke that when they had the Boston Tea Party, they probably threw overboard, you know, one or two types of tea, right? It was probably Earl Grey and English Breakfast. Right? [Laughter] Today, if we were to stage that same revolution, we would throw overboard 962 different kinds of tea. Right, and everything from, you know, from Sweet Thai Mint to caffeine-free Jasmine Rose. There’s just an infinite variety of things we can buy. We call this the triumph of the Starbucks Economy over the Ford Economy. So in the old Ford Economy, mass consumerism meant churning out one black car, hundreds of thousands of times. Today, mass consumerism means

what it means at Starbucks: it means getting everything just the way you like it. So, your precise blend of coffee or tea, with milk, with just your precise level of fat content, and sweetener, with just your precise level of artificiality. [Laughter] And your flavor shot, like, just what you want, doesn't matter what anybody else has ordered. This is the kind of economy we're living in.

And it's not just in our lives as consumers. It's in our personal lives, too, that there has been this explosion of choice. So, take for example interracial marriage. In the 1970's there were fewer than 300,000 interracial marriages in America; today there are over 3 million. So that's a tenfold increase in just a generation. Huge explosion in the number of people available to us, to love and to marry. Or look at religion. If you look at the Hispanic population in America, most of us tend to think of Hispanics as Catholic, and most of them are. But about a quarter of Latinos in America are Protestant. And more specifically, Pentecostal, born-again. That is -- that's almost 10 million people. Now 10 million -- that's more than the number of Jews in America, it's more than the number of Muslims, it's more than the number of Episcopalians or Presbyterians. Now, you may say, well that's fine, nice footnote for the religious sociologists. But Protestant Hispanics were a significant enough group to tip the presidential election in 2004. So in 2000, you might recall, George Bush did not win the popular vote. He didn't even win the electoral vote without some assistance from the Supreme Court. But in 2004 he won both, the popular vote and the electoral vote, pretty handily. So what was the difference? Who were the groups that switched? Well, according to the analysis, it was married white women -- who were being called "security moms" -- and Hispanics and a lot has been made that these two swing groups may well play a role in this year's election also. But what people didn't pay a lot of attention to was that all the shifts among Hispanics was among Protestant Hispanics. The percentage of Catholic Hispanics who voted Republican in both elections stayed exactly the same, but there was a nine point shift among Protestant Hispanics and it was enough to tip the Presidential election.

In addition to having more choice in whom we marry and how we pray, we have increasing choice in what we look like. Cosmetic surgery in America has become a \$12 billion a year business and it used to be the province of aging, wealthy white women, but now according to the plastic surgeons, teenagers are coming in, minorities are coming in, men are coming in. I won't ask for a show of hands among the men who've had ablative lip resurfacing or something - I don't know enough about what that is. But increasingly, we are making choices, regardless of our heritage, regardless of our gene pool, we're making choices about what we want to look like. And if it isn't enough to choose who we marry and how we worship and what we look like, we are increasingly choosing our gender. And I'm not talking about just the people who have sex change operations, cuz that's still a pretty small group of people, but increasingly there is a growing movement in America, growing group of people and in the book we call them the "unisexuals," who find the traditional categories of male and female too constraining and express themselves sometimes as one or sometimes the other or as a third group. Now again, it may seem like a small and maybe insignificant in the grand scheme of things group in America, but, according to the research there are now a hundred

corporations, seventy-five colleges and universities and eight states, that ban discrimination on the basis of gender identity. So not just gender and not just sexual orientation, but gender identity. And the practical implication is that we're seeing more unisex bathrooms in airports and on college campuses so that you don't have to choose if it's not consistent with your self-expression. We're seeing more ability to have co-ed rooming options on college campuses. Now my secret theory is this all goes back to being asked to be Tom Sawyer, all the time in Junior High. But the truth is, in all areas of our lives, as Americans, increasing amounts of choice.

Now with all of these billions of choices, that we are making every day in our consumer lives and in our personal lives, the patterns and trendlines that define society are getting smaller. So if you want to understand what's really going on out there, how people are making choices, what draws them or not to the arts, what drives their behavior, you can't wait anymore for the megatrends. You can't even wait for the tipping points, which are really just big trends that used to be small. You have to look at the microtrends.

Now, it's hard to do because microtrends are counter-intuitive and they contradict each other. So, for example, there is more affluence in America today than ever. But at the same time, we are working many more years of our lives at both ends of our lives. So there are 2 million teenagers in America making money on the internet, starting their own businesses, even before they've graduated from high school. And then at the other end of life there are more than 5 million seniors, 65 and over, who aren't leaving the workforce. And that number's about to explode as the baby boomers approach age 65. Or look at what we drink: in America today we drink more than twenty-three gallons of bottled water per person, per year. And if Kent has his way, that number will go up. But at the same time -- and that is ten times more than what we drank in the early 1980's. But the fastest growing beverage in America is the exact opposite of water. So if water is clear and clean and pristine, the exact opposite of that -- those brown, murky, hyper-caffeinated, turbo-charged energy drinks like Monster and Red Bull -- that is what is the fastest-growing beverage in America.

Or look at science: we have more scientific knowledge in the world today than ever. But according to the experts, there are two to three new religions being created in the world every day. Or look at technology: clearly, we have more technology available to us than ever. But, there is a growing group of people in America we call them the "New Luddites," who have been on the internet, and quit. Fifteen million people who say, "you know what? It was supposed to make my life easier, it just makes it more cluttered."

To get what's really going on and to understand how little passionate groups can make a big difference, there are two things that we recommend, that we did in writing the book, and that we recommend for people who want to keep their eye on microtrends. The first is to be comfortable holding inconsistent ideas in your head, at the same time. When most people talk about trends, they want to know, what's everybody doing? What's the majority doing? And then anyone who doesn't fit in, they kind of write off. But our point is that trends are going in every direction, passionately, furiously, at the same time. So, for example, there are more people in America than ever who are what

we call in the book, "Extreme Commuters," people who travel 90 minutes or more, each way, to get to work. But at the same time, there are more people in America than ever who work from home. There are more people in America than ever who are morbidly obese. And you can barely open a newspaper these days without being told how fat America is getting. But at the same time, there are more people in America than ever who are, what we call in the book, "starving for life." And these are people who deliberately eat at starvation levels, not because they want to be skinny and not because they think it makes them look sexy, but because they believe, based on some very compelling evidence, among many species of animals (although it's not yet been proved for human beings), they believe that cutting calories by thirty percent will lengthen their life by forty percent. Now, I'm not suggesting that this trend is about to sweep the nation. Ok, these people are very intense, very disciplined and very skinny people -- [laughter] -- who have that kind of passion about, you know, how they're going to live, but they're a small group that could have outsized influence. They are beginning to shift the thinking around dieting from instead of being about waistbands to being about lifespan.

Now, the second thing is to open your mind to the general proposition that most stereotypes are wrong. For every bit of conventional, reductionist wisdom out there about who people are and what they want, there is a counterintuitive group proving that people are infinitely more interesting and complex than most marketers and most institutions give them credit for. Now you know this, you explore this, you explore the nuance of human character every day in theatre. But it may be that the rest of the world -- the marketing world, the political world -- is starting to catch up.

Now let's talk a little bit about a couple microtrends that are -- that may be particularly interesting in your field. There are seventy-five trends in the book but I've just picked a few for you this morning that I thought might resonate. So, the first one is called "long attention spanners." Now, it is standard orthodox wisdom in America that our attention-span is shrinking, right? Our commercials used to be sixty seconds, now they're thirty seconds, and internet ads are now supposed to be fifteen seconds. We speed-date. We can't even spell out whole words when we text message each other. Like, LOL. We -- it seems that we can't manage attention. But a growing group of people in America are in it for the long haul and they will listen for as long as you can effectively engage them. And you see it in all parts, in all parts of life. Almost two hundred thousand Americans do triathalons, half a million Americans run marathons -- and, I mean, this is not about gas prices, these are not people who don't know how to take the bus. These are people who want to wrap their heads and their bodies around long-term engagements. Magazines like Atlantic Monthly have increased their readership by almost half since 1980. Foreign Affairs, which is really a publication of all words and no pictures went up thirteen percent in the last few years. In 2005, best-selling books were on average a hundred pages longer than they had been ten years before. So there is a serious group of people who are committed to wrapping their heads around concentration that takes dedication and this ought to be good and provocative news for theatres. There are people who want to engage serious drama and serious productions for as long as and as intensely as theatre companies want to produce them.

Here's another one, another counter-intuitive trend among young people. Now, when you think about knitting, you think about grandmothers. And when you think about teenagers, you think: all-tech, all the time. But the truth is, there are 20 million people in America who knit and the fastest-growing group of them are teens and twenty-somethings. Young people -- despite all the clichés and all the conventional wisdom -- young people want old-fashioned entertainment. They want something that's real for them, that's tangible, that's not just hyper-quick and virtual and all the things that we associate with teenagers. So again, it's not the cliché, but if you -- but it's a serious, growing, passionate group of people who may produce some pretty surprising choices and preferences in the coming generation.

Now here's one that affects many of you in the non-profit space. There are twelve and a half million people -- the number's probably bigger by now -- in the non-profit sector, up from just six million in 1977. The non-profit sector is growing far faster than either the private sector or the public sector. And the reason, as you know, is because there are so many rich and fulfilling opportunities in the non-profit sector. I spent seven years in the non-profit sector before trying, you know, to do politics again and write this book, uhm, and it was the most fun I ever had. More and more people are finding that and the private sector and the public sector are starting to look to lessons of the non-profit sector. You know, we used to be kind of the "backwater" in their perception, but now, they're starting to say, "well, what are all those social entrepreneurs and talented, creative people running to and how can we be more like the non-profit sector so that we can attract the kind of talent that we used to get?"

Now here's one of my favorites about the growth of left-handed people in America.

[Applause]

See there's something with the whole theatre thing and the left. I'll tell you -- we used to think of left-handedness as being about one in ten people. It is actually closer to about one in six. Now this has real implications. First of all, it has business implications: it didn't used to be worth it for businesses to make left-handed products, cuz there were so few consumers that it just wasn't cost-effective. But now, finally, they might get around to making, you know, binders and can openers and grapefruit knives and everything else that left-handed people have never been able to comfortably use. You've already seen the change. Do you guys have Blackberries? So you know, the old version -- the track wheel used to be on the right? And they've moved it to the middle, which works much more easily for left-handed people.

Now, I think this trend could mean good things for the arts, too. Now there may be the direct correlation, that left-handed people tend to be more interested in and better at artistic things. There are studies that say that, but there are studies that say the opposite, too. Nobody really understands left-handedness. But -- so, it could be a direct correlation in terms of more lefties, more dedication to the arts. But I think what's really going on here is that this says something very significant about American

parenting. It used to be that if your child was left-handed, that caused you some concern. It didn't -- you worried, that maybe he would be left out -- left out -- that there would be some disadvantage to being left-handed and the tendency in American parenting was to go for conformity. Today, the tendency is to go for individuality. Today, you see your kid has a left-handed tendency and you think, "oh, maybe she'll be an extra good tennis player." Or maybe she'll have that extra special advantage in sports, or be a creative genius, or all the kinds of things where left-handers are over-represented. So whereas we used to press for conformity, now we press for individuality. And that, too, says to me something very good for the future of the arts. It's really about a generation growing up focused on being distinct, not mainstream, and really pushing the boundaries of identity and belonging and imagination. So, maybe, it's good news for theatre.

Alright, on the last one, I just want to touch a little bit on arts in the rest of the world. In China, we know, for all its competitive performance in science and engineering -- we know they are outstripping us in producing, you know, scientists and engineers, but it is increasingly a leader in the arts, too -- both visual arts and performing arts. And this is not only potentially significant contribution to the arts world, but it may herald something about political freedom too. The more -- it has been shown in other countries -- the more artistic freedom there is, the more political freedom there can potentially be. So maybe this is good news for arts and politics all around the world.

Now let me just sum up with a couple of things and then I'm happy to take questions as Susan said. In a microtrending world, we are fragmenting. We are splitting apart into our passionate, personal niches. But, at the same time, because of that, there is pressure to find common values. There is pressure to find what binds us and bonds us, that if it's not going to be common heritage and common ethnicity, and things that America used to come together around, then what are the values that we can, that do draw us together? And theatre plays an incredibly important role in helping people ask these questions and push these boundaries. What is it that makes us essentially human? That makes us essentially American? That's going to hold our society together?

The second thing is that a microtrending world helps us honor the true breadth of human experience, and not just box people anymore into the same old traditional demographic categories that marketers and politicians have been using for decades. They used to think they knew everything about us just because what we looked like or where we come from but increasingly, there is an ability and now an appetite to really understand people and really respect who they truly are, not just who we think they are.

And then, finally, a microtrending world means a smarter way of doing business. Because the better we understand people the better we can serve them, the better we can reach out to them with what they need. And the better the whole world can do what theatre has always been doing, which is explore the complexity of people and challenge people to be their best and really, to bring our society to new levels of success.

So that's my sense of microtrends and the theatre. I think Susan's going to come back out to moderate some Q&A and I'm, again, thank you very much for having me here.

[Applause]

Q & A

Q: You mentioned interracial marriage, but I'm wondering what else *microtrends* says about how people are conceptualizing and responding to diversity, particularly ethnic and cultural diversity.

A: So what does *microtrends* say about ethnic and cultural diversity? I think -- I think we're going in a couple of different directions. I think on the one hand, since individuality is now at a premium, I think there is a resurgence of ethnic pride and it's easier to find each other. You know, you can be part of an ethnic minority or a religious minority and living in some obscure place in America and you can now, they have dating websites now for every kind of minority group. So it's easier to find people like you if you want to, if you want to, you know, connect to your own ethnic heritage. Easier to create community, even if it's not geographic, is what I'm saying. Now at the same time, I think there is the opposite trend going on as well. Since it's easier to find like-minded people, there are some close-minded people who find like-minded people also. And they can find each other, they can find news channels that reinforce their own sense of how the world is and ought to be and they can find entire communities and you know, kind of hunker down in their own space, be their own microtrend, and not reach out across and get to know the full complexity of human beings. So I think it's going in both directions and I think the real challenge of leadership and of educators going forward, is to help us find those common values. To reach out across all the different niche groups and the intense, passionate trend groups that are finding each other and help people find what is common to them and what they share and what together is gonna motivate us and drive us forward, hanging together as one -- as one country.

Q: [inaudible]

A: Right. So are there microtrends all over the world and in developing countries, third world countries? Yes, is the answer. And so next question, thank you? [Laughter] Microtrends are clearly a function of choice; the more choice there is in a society, the better you can spot what people want and how, and the subtle lines along which they divide themselves. So the more -- so there's no question that the more money you have, the more choice you have. So in richer countries, in more developed countries, you can spot trends and patterns more easily, because there is more preference being expressed, and so you can see the smaller groups dividing, but it is happening everywhere. So everywhere there is growing choice, there are growing microtrends. It's my position that there is that much diversity -- that much diversity and nuance of

character everywhere in the world, but the more political freedom they have to express it and the more resources they have to make consumer choices, the easier it is to see. So, but yes, we're seeing them all over the world and especially as the internet seeps into every society and more and more people get exposed to the way others are living, they are beginning to express different preferences about how they want their own lives to be and then you can start to see the patterns and trends and the passions and preferences.

Q: It seems as though this, the, what you talk of as a polarization, that there are fewer people staying in the middle, they're being forced to make a choice, or at least not being forced to but are making choices, I'm wondering if you can talk about some of the examples of those common values, those microtrends where you have seen people find the common ground and find common values and if there are any significant examples that might resonate with us here in the arts?

A: Well, I think that this idea of finding common values that supersede ethnic background or, you know, social status, I think it is quintessentially American, and I think it's at the heart, really, of what our founders wanted for us. I mean, if you look at our founding documents, they don't say we're bonding together around, "you know, we all came from England." And they don't say that we're -- and they clearly don't say that we come together around sharing a religion. In fact, they expressly say, we're not gonna mandate that. What they really did say is we gotta come together around what we believe in, around life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and around some principles about how we ought to live together, even though we're very different. Even though we have a different sense of how to worship and what's important to us. So I guess, so it is quintessentially American and I have huge hope that we will rise to this challenge. That even as we split apart, because of, you know, what we like to drink and what we like to watch on TV, that we will have a sense of ourselves as one country committed to, you know, democratic ideals and moving forward to make a better life for everyone. So, as I said, I think it's the challenge of leaders and educators going forward. I think -- I think Barack Obama has tapped into this. I think this is what he is trying to express and motivate and inspire, is the things that bring us all together, that despite all our differences and despite the, you know, diversity of places we come from, even within individual people, that there's still something very common we share and that's what he's trying to move forward on, so, I think that's our big challenge. And I think that -- but it's not just a political challenge, it's a challenge for educators and leaders at every level. So I think that when teachers and parents and other kinds of inspiring forces in a community are pushing those lessons and pushing young people to ask those kinds of questions, and think about who they are in terms of their preferences but also who they are in terms of their larger connections to people who are very different from them, I think that's the kind of thing that helps us stay strong going forward.

Q: First of all, I want to thank you for that first slide, where you say that being comfortable with holding inconsistent ideas and then also being able to accept the complexity of human -- the human condition. You know, there was something

heartening about having you say that, because of course many of us feel that that -- those are two principle needs for anybody that's gonna love the theatre. And, so I just want to thank you for that. But I'm curious, with this expansion of the non-profit field, and the notion that there's this huge explosion in the number of non-profits, what do you see or do you see trends in philanthropy that correspond to that?

A: Yeah, I do. Trends, I mean, the biggest trend in philanthropy that I see going is that donors today want to be more involved in the organizations they give to than they used to. I mean, the traditional model, it was sort of "noblesse oblige" no matter what the cause was, whether it was diseases or the arts and you would just sort of give and step away. And today, funders and donors tend to want to be more involved and part of it is because of -- especially among younger donors and people who made their money in the 90's and they did it by being very hands-on in business and being very attuned to return on investment and now they want to do that in their, in this next phase of their lives and they want to be involved in non-profit causes but they want to feel like they're the ones who made the difference. Now, I think there's good and bad news to this. I mean, from the perspective of people who run non-profits. The good news is -- well, let's do the bad news first. The bad news is that, you know, sometimes they can interfere. I mean, it can feel like interference, right, cuz you're the professional and they're the dabbler, right? I mean, it can feel that way sometimes and so that's a whole new dynamic that needs to be worked out. On the other hand, in my experience, we had some ama -- when I was president of College Summit, which helps low-income kids go to college -- we had some incredible investors who came on board as investors, you know, not as just givers but people who really wanted to get involved hands-on. And they taught us some tremendous things about how to make our work in the non-profit space much more competitive and much more disciplined and much more results-oriented. And that's the way a lot of the non-profit sector is moving. Now, I don't know the arts sector as well, but certainly in the social justice, you know, anti-poverty kinds of non-profit work, it's very important to be able to point to metrics and point to business practices that are as competitive and disciplined as what goes on in the private sector. And the best organizations are adapting to that and sometimes under the tutelage of some really talented business people. So, it depends on the people, it depends on the ripeness and appetite for change among the non-profits too, but it can be very powerful if both people have the right attitude toward that kind of change and are ready to move at the right pace and have tremendous respect for what both of them bring to the table.

Q: Under the shameless commerce division of the artistic discussion, it seems to me that the macrotrend of choice, giving rise to the microtrends, also raises significant implications for how one reaches or communicates in authoritative ways to these different groups. Does your research show any way that we could use as a methodology in trying to deal with this diversity?

A: Yeah, ok, so what you said is exactly the next step of this. So once you know who these groups are, the more you can target your communications to them, the more you can customize not only the message, but the messenger and the venue and the timing;

the better you will reach people. And so this is all the rage in marketing and in politics, and it's called "microtargeting." And I didn't bring it today, but the slide I frequently show has -- shows you how we targeted Long Island voters for Hillary Clinton's senate reelection in 2006 and you can go down to the level of, to the point where you can live in an apartment building next door to someone and you will get different messages urging you to support Hillary Clinton, right? And one will be email and one will be brochure and one will be about support for military families, another one will be about health care, so the point is you use this skill and this -- these tactics, to very precisely target your message. And it works. And they're doing it to you all the time in your role as consumers and in your role as voters. Ok, they know a lot about you and they are guessing even more about you based on behaviors and attitudes and preferences and they are segmenting you and targeting communications to you. So how does the non-profit sector use this and how do theatre people use it in particular. I mean, I haven't done the studies of your audiences. You could do them. I mean, that would probably be a very worthwhile investment and I'm happy to talk to you further about that, but the idea is you could learn in greater detail, who are -- who's your base and who are you "persuadables," you know, and who are your "never gonna reach" and you could target your communications accordingly. And this can happen at all different levels. Well, first let me say, you probably think you know who those people are and to some degree you're gonna be right but to some degree you too are relying on old, outdated conventional wisdom and stereotypes and so you might be missing some of the trends in who really could be attracted to theatre that you don't expect. So, that's the first thing, is that you could segment the groups and target communication and it could happen on different levels. I mean, you have a lot of audiences, so to speak. You have theatre-goers and that's one group that you could segment and, you could, you know, be advertising and marketing to potential ticket-buyers. But you have whole other audiences too, including the government, including leaders who are in a position to influence what kind of dollars flow to the arts and who have their own outdated and clichéd understanding of whether theatre is, you know, on the margin or at the center, to bring home the theme of your conference. I mean, in some ways, what I want to say here today is that it can be pretty powerful, to be on the margins. That many powerful groups are small and on the margins. But there's lots of -- there are ways to move toward the center too, in terms of repositioning, rebranding, kind of, what role theatre plays in social progress, in education. And when influential people come to think of it differently, that can have a significant impact.

Q: So I'm a little confused about two things you just said and this is really a question about theatre, not about politics, but you used Obama as an example, the Obama campaign and you talked about the Clinton campaign in Long Island. I'm confused about what seems to me a contradiction between reaching for the common and targeting the narrow. And it feels -- so, as I'm listening, I'm thinking, isn't the success of the whole Obama campaign that it's actually blowing this thinking out of the water? And that has a lot to do with theatre because we are so much about what's common. So I'm just confused, if you could help.

A: Alright, I don't want to be overly simplistic about this but maybe -- politics is microtargeting, but governance is about unity. Something like that. So when I say that the candidates are microtargeting you, that is to help them drive your behavior in the same way that, you know, McDonald's tries to get you to buy their french fries and, you know, video game companies want you to buy their video games. Right, like, politicians want you to vote for them and so in that sense, marketing, it's really about moving people. It's about getting to them where they make their decisions and having them make the one you want them to make. Ok, so that's the political side of it and that is happening at every level of politics and consumer marketing. But it's because of that, that we are fragmenting or rather, it's because we're fragmenting that they're able to do this and so what I'm saying about leadership is that there is that there is more pressure on us, despite all that. And frankly, we like it, we like getting everything the way we want it, we like going to Starbucks and getting things just the way we want it. This is not some evil force that's coming in and making us have things our way. But I'm saying -- the concomitant pressure that goes with that -- that if we also want a sense of community in addition to a sense of personal satisfaction; if we also want what's great about the common, in addition to what's great about the personal; then we have to balance these things. And that leaders who understand, that can use the tools of marketing to get themselves elected, but use the wisdom and the inspiration of what we share to help us hang together as a society -- that's something powerful. So that's what I hope we have going forward, but I don't know. It depends on, it depends on, you know, how well we all step up to this challenge and how well we go into Starbucks and get what we want but we also see ourselves as serious communal players. And all of us have a leadership role to play in trying to moving those things forward in a healthy way.

[Applause.]