

Masters of Scale: Rapid Response transcript – Baratunde Thurston, writer and media entrepreneur

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BARATUNDE THURSTON: It's a thin line between desperation and inspiration.

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To have a successful business right now is to have built it on a foundation of systemic racism. It doesn't mean your business is super actively racist. It means it has thrived in a system that was designed to be super actively racist.

America is in a very deep hole. And we don't get out of the hole by just stopping the digging. Now you're just stuck in the hole. You have to climb out. You have to generate that positive freedom, which means anti-racism, which means an active effort to undo the things that put us in the hole in the first place.

BOB SAFIAN: That's [Baratunde Thurston](#), writer, media entrepreneur, [TED](#), and South by Southwest speaker, and host of the podcast "[How To Citizen with Baratunde](#)."

For many of us, 2020 has been a year of upended business plans alongside unexpected – and sometimes uncomfortable – opportunities. Baratunde has not only experienced that journey, he's been a counselor and advisor to many other business leaders navigating these uncharted times.

I'm Bob Safian, former editor of *Fast Company*, founder of The Flux Group, and host of Masters of Scale: Rapid Response.

I wanted to talk with Baratunde because he's a passionate advocate for embracing change in business – but doing so responsibly and intentionally.

From a love-hate assessment of tech platforms like Facebook to blunt words about addressing race and diversity in corporate environments, Baratunde offers clear, honest advice about the need for what he calls "citizenizing" from companies and all of us.

Let's listen in.

[THEME MUSIC]

SAFIAN: I'm Bob Safian, and I'm here with Baratunde Thurston, writer, comedian, and entrepreneur; author of the bestseller *How to Be Black*; and host of the podcast, "How To Citizen with Baratunde." He's joining us from his home in California as I ask my questions from my home in Brooklyn. Baratunde, thanks for joining us.

THURSTON: Bob, it's good to be here. Thank you so much for having me. It's good to be with you again.

SAFIAN: Oh, you too. A lot has gone down in 2020. And I wanted to start by asking you, as an entrepreneur, what has it been like for you?

THURSTON: 2020 has been so intense. As an entrepreneur, I have learned things about QuickBooks I never knew. I have chased down, attempted, PPP loans. I have taught myself darn near the full Adobe Creative Suite as I've fashioned myself into my own producer and editor to shift gears quickly and make a new type of presentation show because I couldn't get on planes anymore and that was a big part of my business. It's been stressful. It's been high-paced. It's been nerve-wracking. It's been scary at times to consider opportunities and then think, is that safe? I'd never really had to think about that in my day-to-day.

SAFIAN: Your home sort of became the HQ for [Last Mile](#), right? For getting PPE to people.

THURSTON: So Elizabeth is my fiancée, and she got roped in to a volunteer effort that started to look a lot like a small business, which is coordinating the distribution of personal protective equipment to frontline health workers here in Los Angeles. It was really interesting to feel the ebb and flow of having two entrepreneurs in the household. And there were some weeks where I did all the cooking and the housework and everything, and she was just in Slacks, Zoom, WhatsApp. And then there were other weeks when it was reversed, because I'm locked in my little shared home studio Zooming into five different time zones.

SAFIAN: So you started this weekly show, "[Live on Lockdown](#)," which is kind of an audience participation call-in. It's not a usual format. Was that sort of desperation? Like, "I don't know what I can do from home."

THURSTON: Bob, it's a thin line between desperation and inspiration. Okay? So I'm going to lean into the inspiration and say, this was an inspired choice. We returned from New York City, from where you are, where we lived for a very long time, and I in particular did, on March 11th of 2020. And we, on the flight back, listened to this epidemiologist, [Dr. Michael Osterholm](#), who's a hero and is just such a straight shooter

when it comes to this pandemic. And we were not the same people when we landed as when we took off, because we had two hours-plus of him [on Joe Rogan](#), breaking it down and freaking us out in a very scientifically sound way.

So we got ready, and I got inspired/desperate as everything disappeared from my calendar. I had very well-laid plans for this year, and it did not involve the erasure of money, and events, and community, and people so quickly. So I woke up a few days after we returned from New York with a show in my head. Truly it was like, "Live on Lockdown", 3 or 4 in the morning, LOL, it'll be kind of cute. And I knew that I needed to just do it.

In part, I felt a service calling to do it. In part, I felt like "I'll show you, Hollywood," like a little bit of a competitive streak because I have been seeking permission from various gatekeepers for many years to get my show. And in this environment, none of them had power anymore.

And it actually helped preserve my sanity. And it did not generate a dollar, not really, but it generated some other opportunities and it made me sharper and it's opened doors. And so in that sense, it was indirectly responsible for some of my own business resurrection.

SAFIAN: In real-life meetings and now virtually, you spend a lot of time talking to other businesses and organizations. I know people tap you for your advice about all kinds of things as a consultant. How has that piece of the portfolio played out?

THURSTON: It's very connected. The businesses that ask me for advice and my being trapped in my home with an increasingly high-quality studio, one thing I've learned is when you have great sound, you dominate Zoom. You just crush it. It doesn't even matter what you say. It's just like, my mic is better than yours. And so you're going to subconsciously give my words more weight because they digitally have more weight. There's like a higher definition audio signal that I'm sending through and same with the lighting and the camera. So these things that I, in my advising capacity, I would show up and work the room.

So because of the racialized moment that we're in in the summer of 2020, a lot of these businesses were calling on me to talk about race and to talk about diversity, and equity, and inclusion. And I think I've had that part of me for a while. I did a very big [TED Talk about racism and white supremacy](#).

And I worked in business for so long that I kind of understand some of their complexities from the inside as well. But in this moment, there was an intensity to how I showed up because there is such an intensity to where we've been as a country. It's not a normal time and it's not a normal moment. And to have the largest sustained set of protests in

the streets of the country ever has also happened in 2020. It's been a busy year. We had the greatest protest ever, and Quibi launched. It's a huge year, Bob. It's huge.

And so I've shown up a little more intensely and a little more, I can only think of it as like acapella or acoustic version of me. It's just straight to camera, it's straight from the heart. And it's like, it's a more honest version.

SAFIAN: There's a rawness, and with that, a sort of intimacy that can come from this time. I loved your podcast about "[We're Having a Moment](#)." And that rawness, that's an honesty that was part of that and also is part of your new podcast, "How to Citizen." And I wanted to ask you about that podcast a little bit, the new one.

It's focused largely on individuals. Citizen, I know you talk about as a verb. "To citizen": to do something. But I wanted to ask you about organizations, about companies. Is a business a company? Is it a citizen? And how does an organization citizen?

THURSTON: I so love that you asked this question, Bob. We live in a country where companies are considered persons, and so in a technical, legalistic sense a company can citizen. It is a member of society. It is a party. And in our most recent episode, I actually asked the question you just asked of me of our guests: How should a company citizen? So to answer that for you, I'll first lay out the four principles of what it means to citizen, according to us.

To citizen is to show up and to participate. It's an active thing, not a passive thing. To citizen is to invest in relationships, to acknowledge our interconnection, and our interdependence. This is not a solo sport. It's a team sport. To citizen is to understand power, where it comes from, and the different ways we can use it. We can show up in physical numbers, we can spend money, we can generate and share ideas, we can, of course, vote in a technical political expression of power in a democracy. And the fourth piece is we do this on behalf of the many, not just the few. Not just ourselves as individuals, but ourselves as members of a collective. Those principles can apply to any party, including a collection of humans and ideas known as an incorporated entity.

And so a company can go through that and say, "Well, how are we showing up? How are we living in relationship with others? How are we understanding what our power is? And are we using all that to benefit the many, not just the few? Are we just maximizing a thin definition of shareholder value, or are we taking a holistic view of the stakeholders, of the employees, of the environment, of the families, of the communities that we're a part of?"

And there is a great way to citizen as a company. In fact, we're in the midst of so many challenges, but I listened to a report recently about the Paris Climate Accords, which the U.S. is scheduled to remove itself from in November of this year. And we were on a

trajectory to meet the goals that we had set, to reduce by 25% our emissions by 2024, 2025. We were only down 16%. It's not on pace to make it, but we're closer than if we just fully stopped.

And why is that? Why with an administration who clearly is not aligned with those goals and pulled us out, is the U.S. still managing to reduce emissions? One is the states stepped up, states and cities. Two is companies stepped up, and they said, "We're a member of a larger society, and we are stakeholders in this greater entity called planet earth, without which ain't nobody making money. So it's on us." And large and small companies have essentially signed on to this global treaty, to this global agreement, to reduce emissions and save our only livable planet that we have access to for billions of us, at least. So that's a good way to citizen.

I think there's one other piece of this and it came up in the episode, which is there is a short-term and long-term tension that happens with a lot of businesses, especially publicly traded businesses, especially those who, a term I recently learned from our guest, Michelle from coworker.org, businesses have been financialized. And so investors will harvest as much cash out of the business as quickly as possible versus creating long-term value.

And to citizen is to build long-term value, and it is to work. Of course, there's always tension with employers and employees. But without employees, employers don't have a business and vice versa. And without employees being compensated well and respected, they can't afford to buy the goods in a consumer-driven economy, which makes business possible. So a sane and rational market system is built on pillars of citizenship. We all got to show up. We all depend on one another. And so how does our whole society holistically provide for all of us?

And I think that there is a constructive role for businesses and business owners. In fact, I'd say a necessary role. We can't achieve some of our larger goals without businesses citizenizing too.

SAFIAN: Well, and they are platforms of power too.

THURSTON: Yea.

SAFIAN: One of your pillars is around that. I mean, I feel like it was not that long ago where, sort of, the job of a CEO or business leader, or even a business person, was just make money. That's the goal, and now there are all of these layers of social interaction, social issues, pressures that, do you make a statement about something? Do you not make a statement? Do you feel like the burden on business people is appropriate? Was that always there and we just didn't take that responsibility? We were having that impact, or something else changed?

THURSTON: I think both can be true. I think it's always been there. And I'm 42 years old so I have some sense of lived history, but not a ton. But I'm not a kid anymore either. And I seem to recall that there was an era where businesses were part of the community. Good corporate citizen, good small business member of society, Main Street business who knows everybody's name and supports the local Little League team and is supportive of the schools and is showing up at council meetings. Not owning the town, but participating in the functioning of the town and delaying those layoffs or those furloughs because you actually know the people who are affected by those decisions. Not moving the plant. So the idea that business is just about money I think is a recent and narrow phenomenon.

Certainly, my partner Elizabeth has spent a lot more time in the world of impact investing and social enterprise, and that's what she says to me, so I'm going to like trust her on that, that businesses as just money machines is something that is a result of a concentration of power, of a deregulatory environment over the past several decades, of an increase in the dependence on financial services in our economy.

And we might be forcing ourselves to return to a world where businesses are more active because in part we've divested so much from our political system. We've defunded our political system in certain ways, because the people who would normally show up to participate in their community are very busy working. The fastest growing jobs are actually the lower wage jobs. So people don't really have a lot of time.

And because we have worshiped business for the past several decades, in a way that's a celebritization of entrepreneurship, of business leaders. We need a good business person to run this city, county, country, what have you.

And so we've built up the brand of business for a while, and now we're expecting things, from in the same way that these studies say Gen Z and millennials expect brands to represent their values. We expect that, more of us expect that, from businesses too, and partly to backfill for the people who no longer do that and partly because I think there is something actually sound and natural about that.

SAFIAN: I want to ask you about this in the context of some of the tech platforms, because they often talk about their mission and their purpose. You and I have talked about tech platforms for years, the good and the bad. You wrote a cover story when I was at *Fast Company* about unplugging, even though in many ways you're the most plugged-in person I know. What do you see the role of tech platforms as being right now?

THURSTON: Yeah, the big tech platforms are saving us and destroying us at the same time. At the beginning of 2020, friends of mine who have kids were managing their screen time and mandating device-free moments and outdoor time, and some of them

were sending kids to unplugged camps or detox camps. Some adults were doing that too. And we can't do that right now, not really.

It's our only connection to other humans and we need that connection psychologically, much less financially. So we depend on Google, Amazon, Facebook, et cetera, et cetera – and they're still platforms with major problems. They were built with narrow intention. Many of them were built to extract value from us at our own expense, sell us back to ourselves, build a huge surveillance network and then put a price tag on it, and then encourage one segment of the economy – marketers and advertisers – to drive all the innovation.

And we, the consumers, the users, the products, we're not really invited to determine how we would be used. And that's one of the greatest flaws. The internet visionaries in the beginning did not intend this, but when we pursued the narrow monetization strategy that we did, we made it almost inevitable. So I think we're in a tight spot because I, who am not a fan of Facebook, have found myself so grateful for it in this time. And I'm like, "Oh, dang, what I wouldn't give for a baby picture from a person I sort of knew from high school. This is great. Human! Human!" But also the trolls and the election interference and the, still, issues with privacy and abuse – it's so much.

SAFIAN: Yeah.

THURSTON: And so here's what I've always wanted, what my show, "How To Citizen with Baratunde," is about is collective power. I think, still, we set up this system where we've allowed so much of these choices and this power to be in a literal handful of entities.

And that's not small-d "democracy." I don't also think that's a healthy marketplace. As we get more digital, more HD, more screens, more immersive, we've got to redistribute some of the way we make these decisions. And it's not something I can do alone. One person just saying no, it doesn't add up anymore. The forces are too strong. We only have strength together. And so we need some sort of collective way to represent our will and to balance out and have an influence over the decisions that are being made about us and literally with our information.

SAFIAN: So, for your citizenizing, do you struggle with, "I'm not happy with some of the things that Facebook does, but I'm using it." What you're saying is, boycotting Facebook as one person is not going to do anything and you'll get more out of leveraging them?

THURSTON: So that's part of what I'm saying. I grew up in Washington, D.C., with a football team that bore a very offensive name to the Indigenous people of this country, many of them. And for years, they said, "You've got to change this name." And the team owner said no. "We will never change this team name. Mark my words."

They're changing the name. And it's not because I boycotted, which I started doing as a 16-year-old in high school in Washington, D.C., in the mid-'90s. It didn't change anything. They didn't even listen to the Indigenous people. They didn't have enough respect for them to value their voice. They listened to FedEx, a global, powerful business that decided to use its power and say, "Not in our name." It was instant. It moved at the speed of a FedEx package. Talk about delivery. Talk about express overnight delivery. Bravo. It shouldn't have come to that, but it did come to that, because money is power, and they possessed a lot of it.

I think where we've seen Facebook move isn't in response to individual consumers logging off of Facebook. The momentum on that machine is too big. But when the advertisers pulled their money, they started shifting their policies and acknowledged a little more, adjusting the thing a little more. They're used to being beat up in the press. They're not used to a company like Procter & Gamble saying, "We're just not spending money with you for the next month until you get this right." That's power. That's a company understanding its power with another company and using it to create a healthier environment for all of us to live in and buy soap and toothpaste, which is their goal.

SAFIAN: So I don't want to press you too hard, but I'm going to ask you this question. So you're working with iHeart, right? I look and iHeart's board has nobody Black on the board.

THURSTON: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. There's no perfectly aligned choice available. I went with iHeart because I knew they reached people that I wanted to reach with this message. It would have been simpler for me and more values-aligned in one direction to go with a more explicitly progressive media outlet or something that felt and sounded a little more like public radio. I know that listener knows me and agrees with me, and that's not growth for me as a business. It's not growth for me as a citizen. It's not the highest version of the idea that I'm trying to live, which is to citizen. Right? To connect with people who I don't always even agree with.

And I looked at a company like iHeart that reaches everybody, almost literally. 94% of the country connects to iHeart on a daily or at least weekly basis. I'm like, "Well, that's going to be a challenge. Let's go." I see it in the ratings of my show, right? There's people who have jumped from Rush Limbaugh over to me. I asked for that, and that's a challenge.

So yeah, I'm not happy that their board is as non-representative as it is. I'm also not surprised. I live in a country that has terrible representation in the Senate of women and people of color and Indigenous folks. I still try to operate in that environment and make it better. There's a bit more of a choice around iHeart than living in America, but there are some parallels for me. So yeah, thanks for the question. I definitely thought about it. I

was like, "Do I want to be on the same slate as Rush Limbaugh?" I think for this show in particular, that's kind of the point. So let's see what happens, and we're seeing what's happening. A lot of people are getting exposed.

SAFIAN: I will say, you have always had a capacity for being able to move between different communities, right, in ways that ... like sort of a translator in some ways.

THURSTON: Yes. Yeah.

SAFIAN: There's a lot of discussion among business leaders right now about the issue of diversity, about hiring more Black staff. Publicly, you hear a lot of interest. Privately, I know what I hear is a lot of frustration, like, "Yeah, I want to. I don't really know how to. I don't know what I do about it. How do I make progress right now?" I'm sure you're getting questions like this also. What do you say when you get those questions?

THURSTON: Yeah, I do get those questions a lot. In my now less varnished place of being, I say a few things. To have a successful business right now is to have built it on a foundation of systemic racism. That's kind of a historical fact. It doesn't mean your business is super actively racist. It means it has thrived in a system that was designed to be super actively racist. So if you have difficulty finding talented black people to fill position X, that's on purpose. And we live in a designed space with hundreds of years of intention and effort behind it. There's no instant fix to that.

One thing we need to do is to stop digging that hole. In fact, Bob, I'm thinking even more clearly about this, because I'm remembering who your listener is. I had a revelation when I was a strategy consultant doing a ton of discounted cashflow analysis on behalf of investor clients and telecoms, speculators, or operators.

What's this business worth? We would do this cashflow analysis. I learned what cashflow was, and I learned how to make waterfall charts, which is super fun, because they're called waterfall charts and I would have that song in my head. "Don't go" ... But I visually understood what it meant to build a business, especially if you're not making money in the early days. You're digging a hole. Year one: negative. Year two: negative. Year three: negative.

So you have this cumulative picture of a hole that's very deep. Then you start earning revenue, cool. Net revenue, better. So you're starting to climb out of that cumulative hole. One day, you make a profit on that day, and you're like, "Woo-hoo. We're profitable today." But you still have this cumulative hole. So you're not really sustainable until you pay back those loans or those investors or those markets or wherever you got that money from that you leveraged into this moment.

What I say to my business colleagues, fellow citizens, clients: the United States of America is in a very deep hole. We were built on a negative investment in freedom and justice for a really long time, and we don't get out of the hole by just stopping the digging. Now you're just stuck in the hole. It's great you're not digging a deeper one, but you're still really deep in the hole. You have to climb out. You have to generate that positive cashflow, that positive freedom, which means anti-racism, which means an active effort to undo the things that put us in the hole in the first place.

For the business person, I hope that translates, because especially if you're a CFO, but if you're anyone who has any understanding of the numbers that power this, that is just true. You don't let yourself slide on it. Your investors would never let you slide. Would you just write off? Maybe you declare bankruptcy and you fold the whole thing. Maybe that's your way out. But otherwise, you've got to pay that back, and you've got to get out of that hole.

So that's the size of the moment. That's the size of the deficit. That's the size of the opportunity. Then I say two more things. When it comes to recruiting, I hear the frustration of people, especially in very quantitatively assessing fields, like law. "We look at GPA. We look at school. We look at LSAT scores."

My friend George Fatheree, he's a lawyer, and he shared this analogy with me: He shows a picture of people finishing a race, and they're right at the tape. Take a snapshot. He asks folks, "Who's the best runner?" People answer, "Whoever's closest to the tape. They're the best runner. They're clearly about to win the race." He says, "How do you know?" "Well, look at right here." He's like, "That's a snapshot. What if I told you that the runner in second position wasn't racing for the past 100 meters, but for the past 100 miles? Now who's the better runner?" Context matters.

There's a very simplistic attitude that I hear from my Libertarian-leaning and efficiency-minded, and talent-first business friends, which is, "Well, I just want the best person. I just want the most qualified person." What are these qualifications, and are you taking someone's life into account when you measure them? When you start asking that question, it can start to shift your whole talent assessment.

The last piece on that is a lot of people who run businesses see it as a privilege to let someone into it. "Well, I have this standard and you must meet it, because you're lucky to work for me." That's not an exchange. That's not interconnected. That's not citizenizing. You grow when you're open to the possibility that this person you're bringing in has something to teach you as well and may actually change your business for the better, because what you define as a standard is actually pretty small, because you've been missing a whole market. You've been missing a whole use case. You've been missing a whole type of talent, because you didn't grow up with it. You're seeing this other person as the impoverished one, as the one who's missed out on opportunities when you're

missing out on an opportunity right now to benefit from their genius. If you would loosen up and let go and be open-minded, right, all the things you're expecting them to do to adapt to you, maybe you should adapt to them some as well.

SAFIAN: As you're talking, I'm thinking of the other side of this equation, too, which is if you're one of the fewer Black employees, Black leaders in business, you're getting asked questions and have burdens put on you to represent in a way that's probably always been there, but becomes more and more heightened right now. Do you have advice or perspective for colleagues, friends, things you say to yourself about, "Why do I keep having to answer this question or be put in this spot?" And what do you say to white folks like me who may be posing those questions?

THURSTON: Yeah. To the people who are being burdened with answering this, I try to remind my fellow Black people and folks who are in similar situations to remember that we're more than our traumas and our vulnerabilities and to look at the bright side. There's a beautiful architectural metaphor in the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC. You start in the basement in the 1300s or 1400s, and you climb your way through the slave trade, through Jim Crow, through lynching, through mass incarceration, and you get to Obama, right? It's like, "Woo-hoo, we made it to Obama."

Then you keep going in the upper levels, which I didn't understand and didn't leave enough time to explore. It's all this beautiful culture that sits atop all this pain and trauma. It's just worth remembering to celebrate our existence and our resilience and our creativity in the face of all of this attempt to minimize us, putting it mildly.

I think to my white friends and occasional colleagues who have these questions, most of me is glad that people are asking. To live in a lie for one's whole life has got to be really hard. To be raised without having to think about race is a great privilege, but it's also a burden when someone finally shares with you that this exists, that there's this whole system that's been designed in your name to do things for you that you didn't explicitly ask for, but you also didn't explicitly reject, and now you have an opportunity to explicitly use for some good, if you choose to interpret the possibility that way.

As a man, I face it, too. I'm not just atop Woke Mountain alone, dispensing wisdom. It's like I think I'm pretty good at things, but also, I have a penis, and people take me more seriously than they would someone who doesn't. I didn't choose that, and it doesn't lessen me to acknowledge that, if I don't let it.

So I want us to get to a place where that burden, that educational explanatory burden becomes more distributed. We all have work to do in undoing and redesigning the imperfect system into which we were born. It's not all garbage, but there's a lot of garbage in it, and we need to clean it up. I've got my own versions of white supremacy

that I carry around, that burden, my sense of self-worth. A white person has a different journey. An Indian American person has a different journey. A Latinx person has a different journey. So we all have work to do, and I hope that we all find ways to do that.

SAFIAN: That's what friends do for each other, that's what communities do for each other. You always punctuate your podcast with specific actions, with the lessons, the takeaways, about what your listeners could put into action from the episode. Do you have suggestions for our listeners here, if you want to have impact and have your organization, your company, your business, be a better citizen or to citizen better, how you would frame that, how you would do that?

THURSTON: I think it's probably three steps, let's see if I can do this in three steps. Step one, I will quote my older sister, Belinda, who wrote a great piece during this time called "Tend Your Own Garden". It's very tempting to issue statements and press releases and turn your Instagram black and call out someone else for being wrong on a thing. But we all have our own work to do, and I think we're most powerful where we sit. So before you go marching out into the world, do an internal assessment. You say, "Black Lives Matter," check your board, check your hiring practices, check your compensation schemes and just understand yourself as a business. Where are you on this issue?

Then I think there's a process that I'm starting to call "a self-inventory of power." We have power in mostly where we are. I have power in the chair that I'm sitting in right now; in where I choose to put my attention, which is with you right now; in where I put my money, and how I spend it, but also what bank I give the privilege of doing shady things with it. A business has a long list of power, ways that it can use it.

A business is seen as like a civic leader by default because we live in America. And every business is already a more valued citizen than a human version, than a solely human version. We give a lot more breaks to businesses than we do to human people. So if a Black person shows up to city council and says, "I think we should maybe reallocate the funding from police to mental health services," that's expected. If a local business leader does that, though, well, that's a pillar of the community and we've got to take that under advisement, thank you so much.

Who's going to listen to you where they would ignore someone else saying the same thing? That's power. As you're doing your inventory, that's the sort of question you can ask yourself, and then choose to use it. And it's not a one-day thing, it's not a one-time initiative, it's not a Black History Month special, it's not Taco Tuesday. It becomes a part of how you exist, it becomes a part of how you citizen as a business.

So if you want to be a person-business, then be human and make mistakes too, and recover from them and learn from them. But choosing to use your power affirmatively to make our entire community better is exactly what's needed. And it will probably accrue to

you in measurable business long-term value, like customer loyalty, higher retention of your workers, like positive press and brand equity, and all of these things that you explicitly say you want but maybe can't do these things because they are a distraction, they actually could be the path to increasing the value of your enterprise.

The thing that I also say to my fellow business Americans is about this election. What we have before us is a choice, not between a Democrat and a Republican, I think we have a choice between an empathetic human being and a fully self-interested entity. We have a choice between right and wrong in a basic sense.

A president is more than your tax break, a president is more than some oversight rule that you can escape to get a few more points on your valuation. A president is a leader, sets a tone, helps create an environment. We're in a very toxic environment right now, and it's not just because of the president. He's an accelerant though, he's clearly detracting from our commons, and your business exists in the commons, not in a vacuum of a policy.

And as that commons gets ruined, so do the prospects for your business. So I encourage the business American voter to think about the environment that they want their business to be able to thrive in, and think about what a business likes, which is foresight, order, predictability, soundness and sanity, and think about the choices we have now. Who's going to provide more of that? Who's going to provide less of that? What's really good for your business? What's good for us?

SAFIAN: All right, well.

THURSTON: All right.

SAFIAN: Thank you again.

THURSTON: Thank you, I'm off my horse.

SAFIAN: No, that's great. That's great. And again, Baratunde, I always love talking to you. I learn things every time. Thank you so much for taking the time with us.

THURSTON: Thank you.