



**Remarks by the
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United through Common Goals?
Minorities in Business and Professional Life
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Check Against Delivery

Introduction

- Let me thank Jurgen, and the organizers of this 12th Transatlantic Forum, for their kind invitation.
- I am pleased to join you in Cape Cod, which provides an ideal backdrop for a creative and stimulating discussion. And I commend the BMW Foundation for this impressive and valuable undertaking.
- Within the over arching theme of this gathering, I have been asked to provide some thoughts on how minorities fare in the business world, and whether the private sector marketplace is a good equalizer, from an ethnic and race perspective.
- The forum program also poses additional questions, namely; why do so many migrants work in low status jobs, and who succeeds in advancing to the middle class and beyond?
- I am happy to respond to these issues. My thoughts will be based exclusively on my personal, experiences in both the public and private sectors, as opposed to academic, or empirical research. In other words, straight from the gut!
- I am also hopeful that my remarks will provoke a lively exchange.

Let me essentially share three main thoughts with you:

1. **First**, in terms of setting a broader and what I believe to be an important context for this discussion, we all know that millions upon millions of people are on the move around the globe, for a wide variety of push and pull factors. And, unfortunately, many are finding closed doors. Others, who get through that initial door, are finding a less than welcoming environment.
 - It is therefore critical that migration concerns be urgently addressed and better managed by our political leaders and policy makers. Furthermore, since migration is a global phenomenon, the response must also be global. While helpful, a national or regional effort alone, will not suffice.
 - Migration is a powerful and emotional human phenomenon, which alters the destiny of both the individuals involved, and the countries they adopt. In this regard, I have long believed and actually lived the experience, that the quality of

the integration process will greatly determine whether the migrant's journey is a success or not.

- My philosophy is rather simple. If migration is a two-sided coin, one side would be a well defined and transparent migration policy, that offers people the opportunity of bettering their lives by moving to another country. The flip side would be a program of integrating migrants into the very heart of their adopted societies. In my opinion, without a genuine attempt to integrate the newcomers, the coin is bound to be a failing investment – for both the migrant and the host country.
- When you think about it, trying to facilitate a migrant's adjustment to a new environment is really a matter of common sense. Why keep individuals as permanent tenants, when they could be encouraged to become landlords of their new country? After all:
 - (a) Denying migrants their full rights and opportunities will only create tensions and frustrations, between them, the existing population and the prevailing institutions.
 - (b) Their marginalization as some ethnic underclass, will only undermine their place and contributions, while short-changing and costing the nation in different ways.
 - (c) And if this situation goes unaddressed, it can eventually lead to the stratification of society into different classes and categories of people, depending on where you were born and when you arrived.
- These are all potentially dangerous seeds. If planted, they can produce a harvest of social inequalities and divisions that can destabilize the society and create untold costs in later years.
- Naturally, my views on migration and the integration of newcomers has been influenced by my country's and family's own experience. In Canada, we spend as much time and effort, if not more, on worrying about settling the migrant once he/she is in the country, as we do on who we wish to attract to Canada in the first place.
- For example, we encourage cultural and language retention; since 1971, we have embraced an official, national policy of multiculturalism; we have in place a Charter of Rights and Freedoms which equally applies to all citizens and non-citizens alike; we offer relatively easy and quick access to citizenship; and we

have established over the years a host of municipal, provincial and federal programs focused on assisting the new residents.

- These are all investments that we, as a Canadian society, make to integrate and settle our newcomers. Without it, our migration policy would be much weaker and poorer for it; our migrants would only face more obstacles; and tensions between newcomers and the other citizens would be exacerbated.
 - Therefore, as the forum deliberates the topics before it, I believe it needs to keep present how important a policy of integration is in ultimately shaping the lives of migrants, and in finding the appropriate accommodation between them and their fellow citizens.
2. **Secondly**, I believe that the only element that truly eliminates the so-called “race/ethnic” issue is time;
- time for a society to integrate migrants.
 - time for migrants to insert and assert themselves in all facet’s of the nation’s life.
 - time for a country to become colour and culture blind, to the make-up of its people.
- In the meantime, I do believe that the business and professional world has gone a considerable distance in softening or down playing the race/ethnic divides. I do believe there is more unity as a result of the common goals.
 - And that is largely because the corporate world is so driven by and focused on, the bottom line. Profits. Shareholder value. Growth.
 - If you, as a President or CEO of a company, are responsible for growing these measureables, then the sound of your employee’s name, or their skin colour, or the God they worship, is a secondary factor. Not always, and not everywhere, of course, but the pursuit of dollars as the end-game, can often be a great equalizer. And the issues of competence, ability and integrity – as means to that end – are highly prized, sought after, and richly compensated.

- That's why, when you Google some of the top paid CEO's in America, you come up with names like: IRANI, MOZILO, HORNANIAN, NARDELLI, KOVACOVICH and PAPA. Not exactly the kind of names that one would naturally associate with the "old boy's" network.
- In the U.S., for example, it is estimated that there are over 3 million "minority-owned firms", with sales of over \$600 billion, and they are growing at six times the rate of other firms.
- And organizations like the "Minority Business Roundtable", or the "National Organization of CEO's of African-Hispanic-Asian American origins", have been established to bring greater focus, clarity and advocacy on this evolving dynamic in business life.
- I also believe that the IT revolution has greatly accelerated the integration of ethnicity and race within the boardroom. New ways of doing business has turned the marketplace on its head.
- In other words, the high-tech bubble has helped burst the "old boy's" bubble.
- Relative youngsters, from all walks of life and backgrounds, have launched multi-million and billion dollar global businesses, from their basements and garages. And in the process, they have been catapulted to the big leagues of business and celebrity status.
- Instant success. Instant riches. Instant power.
- Not always translating into instant acceptance – but their impact and presence within their sectors has been undeniable. And again, in most cases, the issues of race/ethnicity are really secondary issues, if issues at all.
- Of course, there are still race/ethnic (as well as gender) glass ceilings in the corporate world, but they are in the process of being shattered, in part because of the nature and the fast changing dynamics of the market place.

- At the same time, it needs to be recognized that in the private sector, relative to the public sector, the complex issues relating to race and ethnicity tends to be more superficially addressed, since it is what you do that counts the most, as opposed to who you are and where you came from. The corporate boardroom, unlike the political cabinet room, is not nearly as politically correct, or sensitive. Therefore, in the business world, as long as one is successful, you're fine. The moment failure lurks, there are few safety nets.

3. **Finally**, why do so many migrants often accept the more menial jobs in a society?

- Frankly, it offers a new start and an opportunity. They view it as an elevator on the way up. You take it on the ground floor, with the hopeful understanding and confidence that it will move upwards. Granted, it might go slower than you had hoped for. Or faster. Or, it becomes an express elevator for their children, (the second generation), thanks to the accrued benefits and advantages built from the sacrifices of the first generation.
- But for migrants, at least its an elevator going the right way. In the country they just fled, there may have been no available elevators for them. Or, they were faulty. Or, because of societal pressures and fragilities, those elevators were as liable to take them downwards, where you would have to start your life again from ground zero.
- So, most migrants are grateful and driven by the new life opportunity, and they make full use of it. They live by one of Harry Truman's credo's:

“A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities, and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties”.

- As such, the menial job they take is ideally seen as “temporary”. A down payment for something better in the future – either for them or their children. A down payment for a life that at the worst, will be no worse than the one they abandoned and that as a minimum, will be better than they could have realistically dreamed for in their previous homeland.
- And that's why, despite the reality in which many Americans, Canadians, or Germans, don't even contemplate accepting certain jobs, others step forward and thrive in these professions. Professions that are still very much required by society; professions that often pay decent wages; professions which provide them with a foundation for nurturing and educating their families; and professions which ultimately act as a springboard for greater aspirations.

- This is very much part of the Canadian or American dream. The possibility of a life-transforming experience. And at the same time, a value-added contribution by the new resident to his/her new country.
- My family's own arrival and experiences in Canada reflected a very similar and hopeful script (elaborate with stories).

CONCLUSION

In closing, I do feel that through the very synergies of the business world, minorities and migrants do get a decent 'shake' over time. That a sense of common purpose and vertical mobility are indeed possible. And that what you do, often matters more than who you are.

However, as we contemplate the broader international reality, it is painfully obvious that migrants deserve a better, more humane deal. The world community desperately needs to better manage global migration, as a means of providing people with a more peaceful and higher standard of living.

A world that is unable or unwilling to do something about this will only face undesirable pressures from people on the move, whose human spirit to find a better life, will clash with poor policies, limiting rules and closed doors. The net result will be unruly arrivals, agitated citizens, and bad politics.

I remain hopeful. Hopeful, that nations will draw strength and inspiration from the many positive and dynamic faces of migration, rather than be intimidated by fear and extremism, into embracing rigid and darker ideologies. Hopeful, that nations will choose to fully accept and integrate them into the very fabric of their societies. And hopeful, that mankind will find a kinder, gentler, and better way for people to find a place to call home.

Thank you.