CLAUDE GRUNITZKY:

Hello, everyone. My name is Claude Grunitzky, and it's a pleasure to welcome you to our third webinar as part of our MIT and True Africa University webinar series. As you might have seen when you registered, this whole entire series is about sustainable development in Africa. And we have different ways of defining the sustainable development. The way we're looking at it is really more from the perspective of the various industries, the various services, that can really help Africa to leapfrog and really fulfill its potential as potentially a next and very important powerhouse in the global economy.

And today we have a very, very, very, very special speaker, who, I was just saying just a few minutes ago, is a bit of an overachiever. But before I get to him, I wanted to share my screen and actually tell you what we're doing, why we're so excited about this series, which is lasting 11 weeks. This is an 11-week series. And what I was saying about sustainable development in Africa is really about identifying specific industries, and finding the people, the movements, and the possibilities around growing industries in Africa.

And so today, our topic is what are the initiatives and investments transforming Africa. And our speaker is Iyinoluwa Aboyeji. And we'll talk about the name later. But some people call him Iyin, some people call him Iyi But in any event, he is an entrepreneur in the public interest. He made news. A lot of people have been talking about his latest company over the past week because he helped to co-found and lead Flutterwave, which is Africa's latest unicorn. The company raised another $170 million last week out of Nigeria, at a valuation of $1 billion. And then there's been talk that they might go public potentially on the New York Stock Exchange and become one of Africa's fastest growing and most successful startups.

But prior to that, Iyi, as I call him, had co-founded Andela, which is Africa's largest engineering organization, that has received investment from Mark Zuckerberg and Google Venture amongst others. He now leads future Africa, which is really what we're going to be talking about today because he's been spending his time as a successful serial entrepreneur and investor helping other founders, as well as philanthropists and other investors from around the world-- not just Silicon Valley,

not just Nigeria, but really around the world-- understand how to build fast-growing and impactful technology business in Africa. So the world fast is important, and the word impact is really important.

So I'm Claude Grunitzky, the founder of two media companies, TRACE and TRUE Africa. And my entire career has been dedicated to championing the creativity and the innovation of young Africans. And now, when I say Africans, I define Africans very broadly. I say Africans from the African continent, but also Africans from the diaspora and also Afro descendants. That could be African-Americans, that could be Afro-Brazilians. That could be Afro-Caribbeans. So that is what I've been doing. I am a product of the MIT environment. I received an MBA as a Sloan Fellow. And the reason I launched TRUE Africa University is because I'm one of those people who want to help to find actionable ways to nurture Africa's talent.

And I want to say, Iyin is exactly on this same vibe. And this series would not have been possible without the support of our partners. And those partners are the MIT Center for International Studies. I'm actually a research affiliate at the MIT Center for International Studies. I've been a research affiliate there for about 10 years. And we aim to support and promote international research and education at MIT. We produce research that creatively addresses global issues while helping to educate the next generation of global citizens. The website is CIS.MIT.edu.

Our other sponsoring partner is the MIT Africa Program, which is based at the MIT Center for International Studies. And the MIT Africa program empowers MIT students and faculty to advance knowledge and solve the world's great challenges by connecting them with leading researchers, companies and other partners in African countries. The website is M-I-S-T-I, MISTI.MIT.edu. Again, it's MISTI.MIT.edu.

And finally, this introduction is going to summarize what TRUE Africa University is all about. So created by Africans for Africa, TRUE Africa University-- which hopefully one day will be known as TAU, just like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is known as MIT. TAU aims to become the Pan-African learning community that is committed to accelerating Africa's sustainable development by mobilizing a global network of academic, industrial and institutional partners. Our website is TRUEAfricaUniversity.com. And all the videos for the webinars, as well as the supporting materials that are presented during the webinars, are available on

TRUEAfricaUniversity.com.

So now I get to stop sharing my screen, if I can, and I get to get off the stage and really turn it over to my friend, Iyi Aboyeji, who again is one of the most successful entrepreneurs on the African continent. And he's built two very successful companies-- actually now three, and he hasn't even turned 30 yet. So Iyi, please, the floor is yours, and I'm very much looking forward to seeing your presentation before we get into our fireside chat.

IYINOLUWA ABOYEJI: Absolutely. Thank you so much, Claude, for being so generous. I do want to apologize before I start to speak because we had a small scheduling snafu because of the way time is done in America. So I was hoping I would be seated in a lounge ready to talk to you in an hour, and then all of a sudden realized that time moved forward one hour because of the time-zone shift over the weekend. So please, apologies. I have informed my friendly driver here to just keep me parked. So forgive the lack of a scenic background. I'll find a way to make up for it.

I guess the best way to begin would be again to thank MIT, and in particular Claude, for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am deeply grateful to have an opportunity to share the little I know with your community. And I hope that some of what I say today resonates well enough that a couple of you are looking into Africa as a focus for your work and for your endeavors going forward. I imagine now is a good time to put up the slides I have prepared. Is that possible?

CLAUDE GRUNITZKY: Absolutely. Michelle will put them up now.

IYINOLUWA ABOYEJI: Amazing. So I was asked to talk about initiatives and investments that are transforming Africa. And I'm just going to try to speak to things more or less at a super, super high level, just thinking about things from a frameworks perspective and slightly less from super specific perspective, because I find that oftentimes talking about initiatives and investments that are required to transform Africa, it's very easy to get caught in the weeds.

And the weeds are important because really that's how things get done over here. But at the same time I think it's usually helpful to put things in a framework perspective so people understand what the role, in particular, of technology

investments is playing in transforming the continent. Please, next slide. Hello, Michelle. Awesome. I like to show folks this slide because I think that it really does sum up the reason why, quite frankly, there should be a lot more attention being paid to what's going on in Africa. I mean, that's not to say the attention being paid right now is insufficient. Then we should perform.

But, definitely, we should be thinking if we're thinking far enough into the future about more things, right. I like to tell people, if you just look at the population demographics, it's very easy to figure out that Africa is at the heart of our shared global future. You can see that straight line for Africa, and that line for Asia, which is rapidly coming down in terms of population. And what you quickly recognize is that you've got a bunch of energetic 20-year-olds in Africa, who are hopeful for a better future for themselves, regardless of how bleak the present circumstance may seem.

And the real danger is that if you don't find a way to engage these 20-year-olds who are over the next 15 years going to be the largest workforce in the world, you really end up in a scenario where you're basically struggling to keep the world peaceful and productive because, if you have a bunch of despairing young people across Africa, and everybody imagines they're going to be able to move on to a better and more progressive world without them, well, I got a bridge to nowhere to sell you. It just simply will be impossible because that's just not how human beings work.

Human beings will do whatever it takes to give themselves a better life, even if it means making life slightly worse for other people. And I think that's why the whole world has to pay a lot more attention to what's happening in Africa because it's never a good idea to have a ton of young people without a future and opportunities and, most importantly, hope. Next slide. Well, it goes without saying that, despite how amazing the African continent is, and all the promise that it holds as a result of all the young people, you quickly realize also that Africa is home to some of the world's most difficult challenges.

You've got, for example, kids out of school, right. Highest proportion of kids out of school reside in Africa. It's almost as many as 300 million kids by 2035. You have unemployment. People need jobs, right. You have over 300 million people who need

jobs by 2035. You've got a really bad malnutrition problem. More than a third of all children under five in Africa are stunted because they simply don't have good food with good nutrients. And that means that their mental capacity is likely to be challenged for a long time. And this is very concerning because when people don't have mental capacity, then they become extremely violent. And when you become extremely violent there are real consequences and behaviors that follow that.

And I say this to just simply say that these are real challenges that confront Africa. I'm not here, really, to sell you an Africa rising story. There are real challenges in Africa. But again, as you see on my next slide-- Michelle, you can go onto the next slide-- the big challenge, really, with these problems is normally we would be able to throw a bit of dollars at it. We'll be able to raise hundreds of millions of dollars, maybe, or billions of dollars, to tackle these problems. That's how other continents got a shot at doing it. In Europe you had the Marshall Plan. In America you had the Reconstruction.

Government, typically, is expected to step into it and solve it. But I think what's different, now, is that governments can't step in because they don't have the money, especially post corona, to actually do this. Everyone all over the world is struggling with providing the basics for their people. They are unlikely to prioritize Africa over their own local populations. And most African governments are just cash strapped, right. This is a very fanciful graph that kind of illustrates and gives some level of quantum to the challenge when it comes to finances.

So you have the state of New York's budget. This is the annual infrastructure requirement. And you can see New York can meet theirs adequately. But Nigeria's cap infrastructure budget is just $9 billion. Kenya's infrastructure budget is just $5 billion. And the state of New York, which is perhaps like a tenth in size, at least from a size of government perspective, just the state in the much larger behemoth of the United States, is able to get over three times the infrastructure funding. So the whole idea of spending your way out of these challenges just doesn't work because the solutions really can't scale fast enough.

And I think what makes these challenges particularly tricky is they are wicked problems. So wicked problems are problems that get more complex as time goes on. So think about it. How are you going to put 300 million kids into jobs if, in Nigeria

alone, over 10 million of them can't even go to school? What kind of jobs would you have in 2035 that wouldn't at the very least require a sound understanding of literacy, a sound understanding of math? I think it's almost impossible. So they can't get the kind of [INAUDIBLE]

Hello. Hello, can you hear me?

CLAUDE
GRUNITZKY:

Yes. We can hear you. You went in and out but you're back now.

IYINOLUWA
ABOYEJI:

OK. OK, fantastic. Sorry. So yeah, they don't have an education to be able to get any kind of decent job. And this is unfortunately the challenge. Without the education to get a decent job, the spiral continues. And that's the definition of a wicked problem. And then, even when you think about an early-childhood education if you're malnourished between the ages of one to five, when you should be developing your brain-- And so you get into standard one at five years old and you have a malnourished brain, it's going to be really, really hard for you to learn, right. So these are examples of some of the challenges. They get far more complex, far more dangerous, as time goes on.

And the governments don't have the money to fix all these problems. Next slide. So I think my own theory, really, and it's culled from the last book that somebody who many people in this room would know very well, wrote before he died-- the great Christensen, who is the father of disruption theory. He wrote an excellent book with a friend of mine, called Efosa Ojomo. And the book basically talked about these market-creating innovations, right. And the big idea with market-creating innovations was that things that basically look pretty innocent, things that look like toys, could basically scale to become these effective solutions to these huge society-wide wicked problems.

And it differentiates between sustaining innovation, efficiency innovation, and market-creating innovation. Sustaining innovation is what government tends to do with these large grants, like they gave when we were rebuilding Europe and all that, wire up the city and make sure there was infrastructure. And that was a lot of what was happening, right, that kind of sustaining innovation. It just comes in from somewhere else to improve performance at incredible costs. Then you have

efficiency innovation, right, which is really about doing more with less. Private equity is right up this alley, where they're going to cut jobs and they're going to use a lot more technology and so on and so forth, target existing customers with lower prices and all that.

But you see, market-creating innovation is a completely different kettle of fish because what you have with market-creating innovation is that they're very simple. They start out very simple and affordable. You don't need $100 billion to start, as you see with some of the companies, whose examples I use in the course of this course. And they serve the underserved or the unserved. So they target new customers, not all customers but new customers. They tend to create tons of jobs because they're just brand new stuff.

And typically they require some level of labor effect to work. Think about something like an Uber, and the kind of impact that it's had on the society in terms of creating gig work for lots of young people that doesn't have a high barrier to learning. That's creating tons of jobs. If you didn't have an Uber, you wouldn't be able to create those jobs. And, most importantly, they enable development. So our belief, and my belief in particular, is that Africa just needs to be thinking more about market-creating innovations.

I think, for me, I normally ask new analysts that come to work with us these questions. Like, what's the most successful venture-capital investment of all time? And people have a lot of very interesting answers. But the one I appreciate the most, and my own answer to that question, is a mobile phone. The mobile phone is by far the most successful venture-capital investment of all time because it's not just the return capital. And folks like Mo Ibrahim can tell you all of that stuff.

But I think that, more importantly, it's actually spawned an industry. If you look at every single institution that has come out of this telephony revolution in Africa, it's just absolutely astonishing. Almost every country in Africa, the number one and number two company is a mobile telephony company. And even more interestingly, if you really take a deep look at what's really going on, you see all these multibillion-dollar industries that were built on the back of the mobile phone, whether it's ring-back tunes, whether it's mobile money. And that's the power of market-creating innovation.

What people used to do before the mobile phone was a reality in Africa was-- People imagine that, just like in the UK or the US, we would have fixed phone lines. And there were a few fixed phone lines. I remember having a fixed phone line in my house when I was growing up. And we would have long lines of people queue to come to our home so they could speak to their family abroad with fixed phone lines. But now, everybody, every single person-- over 900 million phones across the continent. So that's the power of the market- creating innovation.

Next slide. So what I try to do with the Fund for Africa's future, because that's kind of what we work as, we try to work with the best companies that can deliver these innovative solutions and really unlock these new markets. That's kind of our own secret sauce. It's really, how do you work with companies that are so revolutionary, they not only make a ton of money but they make you make a ton of impact because they just create these brand new categories that no one ever saw coming in Africa.

Next slide. And what we try to do as we do that is, we find these companies, we provide them with capital at the very earliest stages, provide them with coaching, provide them with community, and work very closely with these mission-driven innovators, who just want to change the world to build these companies that turn Africa's biggest challenges into global business opportunities. And by so doing create economic opportunity and development. And we work together with so many amazing people, from founders, to governments, to investors to large companies that want to change the game. These are the people we work with to make these opportunities possible.

Next slide. So every time we start a company, we like to say we start companies to answer questions. We don't just start a company. We have a question we want to answer. And we think the right answer is to build a company that answers the question. And I remember when we were starting Flutterwave, the question on our mind was, Africa has suffered because it's a very insular economy. It's not very connected to the global economy. I think Africa is about 4% of global trade, which is pretty interesting. So when we were starting Flutterwave, we started to ask the question, how do you connect Africans to the global economy?

And the first step was, well, how do you get all the different 200 payment methods that African business people and merchants have to use to send and receive money, how do you make that one platform? And then, how do you make it easy for them to accept and disburse money however they choose, right, to move money across mediums? And that's what we've been able to achieve with Flutterwave. And the journey's just beginning, even with the unicorn valuations, just the valuation.

But, really, the mission remains to connect all Africans to the global economy by enabling them to be able to leverage digital payments to participate in the global economy. The market woman who sells corn doesn't have to wait for somebody to drive by her farm and buy her corn at an unnaturally low price when she can sell her corn on Monday on global commodity exchanges and get paid via Flutterwave. And that's the kind of global economy we want to create, one that's fairer and that provides more access.

Next slide. Forgive me. Next slide. So again, another big question we're answering. Sorry. Can we go one slide behind? Hello? Hello, can we go back to the Andela slide?

CLAUDE GRUNITZKY: Yeah, I think the Andela slide, it was on just now. Yeah. I think there might be a delay on your end.

IYINOLUWA ABOYEJI: Fantastic. Thank you so much. So the question we asked when we were building Andela was how do you create 450 million jobs for young Africans, right, because you have over the next 15, 20 years, about 450 million young people who you need to create jobs for. And you don't have enough of those jobs. And for the longest time, jobs in Africa were tied in many ways to the local geography. And no matter how fast you can grow as an economy, there's just so many jobs you can create growing 8% a year.

And being a [INAUDIBLE] trillion-dollar economy, it's just physics. It doesn't work. And what we were able to do with Andela was really kind of fashion out a path to just-in-time education-to-employment skills training where, essentially, you're able to identify job openings all over the world. You're able to find talented young people who are motivated to fill those jobs if they could get the right training. And then you basically bankrolled the training. And when the young people get into the jobs, you take a rake from their earnings, which then allows you to continue to deeply invest

in the next generation of talent and then continue to scale.

So that was the question we tried to answer at Andela, how do you market create. Now, we didn't exactly reach those heights, particularly. And we're still on that journey. But I think what's really exciting about Andela was that it created a global market for African technology talent. For the first time in the world, you could go on the internet and say, I work in Africa, and people will take you seriously and hire you to do jobs. In the last report I was reading from Google, I think it said there were about 77,000 senior developers working remotely from Nigeria alone. And I think about 150,000 across the continent. That's just an example of the kind of impact that a company like Andela has had, creating amazing middle-class jobs remotely from all over the world.

Next slide. Yeah, health care. How do you create affordable health care for people who are earning $2 a day? Right, a lot of health care is predicated on sunk cost of tons of huge facilities and buildings and so on and so forth. And these young folks at MDaaS, which is ironically an MIT-- the founders are MIT grads. What they've done is basically make diagnostics a fulcrum of healthcare delivery, which is amazing. When you have the diagnostics, [INAUDIBLE]

It makes it a lot easier for you to direct them to the right doctor who can, remotely, actually [INAUDIBLE] in order to treat their ailment. And this rapidly, particularly when you're using these diagnostic devices that are fairly cheap and are used. So this is just an example.

Next slide. Sorry. I'm starting to get messages. Next slide, STEM Cafe. I promise this is the last one. So with STEM Cafe, what we realized was, science, technology, engineering and math in Africa is severely challenged. And the reason for that is, our schools don't really have the technology facilities. And the way that our teachers tend to teach is not play based. It's very much, take this textbook and cram it into your head. Those of you who went to school in Africa can relate. And basically, we started this network of play-based spaces for young innovators, enabling them to make things with their hands, and to use modern tools to unlock in their minds the power of science and technology.

And so chemistry is not just a boring textbook to them. It's a bunch of experiments

they can do with household goods, or a lab experiment they can do from the comfort of their home, or something that can be curious about just like this young lady here is. And I have no doubt that spaces like STEM Cafe, as they proliferate across Africa, are going to inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers to come from Africa because it's in getting our young people comfortable with the physics and the science of the world that we live in that we're able to actually build new technology that increase productivity and further accelerate our economic growth.

Next slide. Yeah, so what we've developed, because of our time and the way we think about the world, is really a framework for building a future in Africa. And I'll just share with you the highlights of that model. I think there are three things a company must do, right. Number one, they have to prove that they have a big market that they're trying to pursue. Without a big market it's kind of silly. I see lots of people make really nice apps for the 1% of the 1% of Africa, people who want to book private jets through an app and stuff like that. But it's a very small market in Africa.

And you really want to back founders that are building transformational businesses. And you talk about mission, right. So mission is extremely important. You're going to have founders whose most important priority is not even being rich, it's just making change happen. And they're actually happy if somebody else figures it out before they do. And they're happy to collaborate with their colleagues because it's about the industry, and about the impact they can have on people's lives, not really about just making money.

And then most importantly, you've got to take a close look at the business model. This is a society where the vast majority of people live in extreme poverty, under $1 a day. So for the most part, if you're trying to build a mass-market product, you've got to be very careful to design the product in such a way that people can make money from using the product rather than the product costing them. And that's something that a lot of people still have to learn. When you think about-- Yeah, OK. OK, I was almost done.

When you think about what somebody must have, you have to think about talent. You think about data. You've got to think about design and, most importantly,

distribution. I've talked about some of those things. Think about talent. You are asking, is this a mission driven founder. Think about data, you're thinking is this market big enough. Think about design, thinking how is this product optimized to ensure the least possible friction. And then think about distribution, what allies do I need to have to get this business to scale.

And then, most importantly, we try to support these companies building the future in Africa with capital, with coaching, and with a huge community that can support them in reaching their business goals. Yeah, so I'm going to stop there. And then I'm sure we'll get to the rest of it, either during the fireside chat or much later. Thank you very much for your patience.

CLAUDE GRUNITZKY: Thank you so much, Iyi, for sharing these, I'll just call them words of wisdom even though you're a young man still in your 20s for a few more days. It's really great to be having this dialogue with you. We met almost 10 years ago. And I want to go back to an interview that I did right after you raised quite a lot of money from Mark Zuckerberg and a bunch of people for Andela. And one interview that I did for the TRUE Africa website, you said something to me that we printed on the TRUE Africa website in the interview.

And you said, from a very early age, I knew that my whole life would be about helping to build the future of the African continent. So I want to get deeper into that. But tell me, when you say from a very early age, how did that start? Because you are an exceptional entrepreneur, having built two and now three very successful companies while still in your 20s. So how did it all start for you? I want to get to the genesis.

IYINOLUWA ABOYEJI: Yeah, sure. I mean, I got into this whole building the future thing somewhat by accident, to be very honest. I mean, I definitely knew that I wanted my continent to be different. I would say I had my first experience with Africa-- because you know you, get to live a very sheltered childhood when you live in Nigeria at the time that I did. And I had my very first experience with the reality of the kind of country I lived in when I was 15. Myself and a bunch of my friends were supposed to be flying home. And I missed the flight, but my friends weren't so lucky. They didn't miss the flight, and they died in a plane crash.

So a plane crash, DC 10, December 5, 2005-- December 10, 2005, forgive me. And no one was called to account on that, and I think that radically changed the way I thought about the world because all of a sudden, it suddenly occurred to me that no amount of privilege was going to protect me from the harsh realities of the society that I was living in. And I figured, what I was going to have to do with the privilege that I had was to was to fix all of that.

And I thought I would do that by going to work at the United Nations. And then I thought I was going to do that by becoming a journalist. And then I thought I was going to do that by becoming a lawyer. But the good thing was, I kind of ran into tech. I had a really good friend, his name was Pierre [INAUDIBLE] --Polish kid. And he basically introduced me to the world of technology, and I never found my way back out. And quite frankly, that was the genesis.

When I realized that there was a possibility of changing the world by just building products that other people use, and by doing so you could change the way they think, you could inspire them, and most importantly you could solve very big problems for them-- I mean, that power to be able to change things without anybody's permission kind of paled in comparison to all the other parts, to building the future of Africa that I had seen. And so I just stuck to it. I don't know if that answers your question, Claude.

CLAUDE GRUNITZKY: It does. It does. And I want to go, maybe fast forward a little bit, and I want to talk about, again in that same interview, you were saying-- And this was just a few months after you raised this money for Andela and launched this company, which instantly became the most talked about startup in the whole of the African continent. And then you said, I think if you do something and it turns out pretty good, then you should go do something else wonderful, not dwell on it for too long.

And then shortly after that, you left Andela and then you started Flutterwave, which became an even more successful company. And so when we talk about serial entrepreneurs, usually people stick to companies for five, ten years then they move on. But you were thinking in your 20s that every couple of years you move on to another challenge. You want to maybe share a little bit of insight behind that thinking?

IYINOLUWA ABOYEJI: Yeah, I mean, I think for me, really, I've always had a long road map for the continent. There's so much work to do, that I don't think that if you're capable and you're as determined as some of us can be, you have the luxury of settling on one idea for a very long time. It's kind of like you're always on the road. You're always trying to build stuff. And I think for me, when Andela was established and was, as I like to call it, when the companies are inevitable, then you then you start to look around and figure out, OK, what's the next big challenge to solve.

And for me, with Andela it was fairly accidental. I kind of lucked out because I had a long string of failures before Andela. And then I kind of lucked out on Andela. And there was a lot of pressure to not catch a break, just kind of stick to what was working. But I quickly realized that there was a lot of danger in that as well. The danger in that approach is that other things don't get built, and you're very comfortable. And when you're young, that's the best time to take risks and build things. So I started to look at that and I figured, the right approach to dealing with some of the challenges was just, go build something else. Go show people that other things need to be built in this space.

And that was what led me to Flutterwave. But then at Flutterwave, I then started to build a road map. For me it was very simple. It was we've built the Stanford. Then we need to build the PayPal. And now I like to say we're building the Founders Fund of Africa. And then, who knows what after that. Maybe I do, and we'll see. But I mean, the way I think about the world is really that, Africa, we have a long road map of things to build. We can't just dwell on one feature. We've got to kind of keep it moving. As soon as something we've built becomes inevitable.

CLAUDE GRUNITZKY: But then I really want to go back to what you said about a sheltered life, and the life of privilege, and those who have access to education. I met you in New York. We spent time together in Boston. We spent time together in San Francisco, on the campus of Stanford University, many other places. But the reality is, a lot of these companies that you've built, the funding has come from the US.

And you're also one of those Africans, like myself, who are able to navigate all these multiple worlds, and to be able to go to the US and convince a Mark Zuckerberg to invest in your company, and be at Stanford, and all of those things. My question is, really, those of our younger brothers and sisters who did not have that access to the

world of elite academic institutions, or Silicon Valley, or MIT, what advice would you give them?

IYINOLUWA ABOYEJI: I mean, for me, I think no matter what, it still begins with being able to take out the mental barriers. It's kind of like if you put a dog in chains, or in a cage, or you put a bird in a cage. Even when you let the cage out, if the bird doesn't have a mentality of freedom, they're going to just stay in the cage. And I like to say the first thing is, look, the world is becoming more and more the sort of place where you have a place. And you shouldn't let your mental barriers keep you from pursuing all the opportunities that are around you and before you.

And people like me have a responsibility, particularly because of the privilege that we enjoyed growing up, to make sure that people like you have opportunities. And that's what we work for every day. And so let go of the mental barriers. And don't outsource your outcomes to anybody. Don't make it anybody's fault that you're not able to be successful. Make that your responsibility instead. That would be my advice.

CLAUDE GRUNITZKY: Yeah. I want to go back to what you said earlier in your presentation because I was so happy that you mentioned Clayton Christensen, may he rest in peace. And I was so happy that you mentioned his co-author and, really, mentee-- I would even call him a disciple-- Efosa Ojomo, who we love. So Efosa is a Nigerian author. He's a researcher, he's a thinker, speaker, and I actually interviewed him for the MIT Africa Innovate conference two years ago. And the book had just come out, the book that you mentioned. And for those in the audience, who don't know about it, it's called *The Prosperity Paradox: How Innovation can Lift Nations out of Poverty.*

And so he was talking, as you mentioned earlier, about market-creating innovations. And these are innovations that target new customers as you said, the underserved. Mo Ibrahim is the example they give at the beginning of chapter 1, in the chapter about market creating innovations. And they talk about how, in the late 1990s, Mo Ibrahim saw this opportunity with cell phones, and that the people never thought they would need cell phones. And all of a sudden, he created this company out of Sudan, CelTel, that became very, very, very popular.

But then, what we don't talk about is a lot of those companies that actually end up

failing. So in your short but successful life as an entrepreneur, what would be, for you, some of the reasons why companies have failed? Outside of just choosing a really narrow market, as you said earlier, and the mental barriers that Africans sometimes impose on themselves just because of the way we are treated, and lack of self-confidence and lack of resources and lack of infrastructure, what would you say would be the main reasons why people have failed?

IYINOLUWA ABOYEJI: I think there are multiple different reasons people fail, but I like to qualify "failure," quote unquote, because I feel like if you learned something, you didn't really fail, it was just an experiment. But I think sometimes when the experiments don't go very well, that typically happens because people tend to not be willing to build iteratively and organically as they go along, and build in a series of experiments that test the existence of a market that they can serve. I feel like a lot of people in Africa, particularly, our mentality tends to be to go bigger and go home. And that tends to be very expensive and very difficult for you to iterate.

It's like if you try to build the Ark, it's very different from building boats. And if you build the Ark, you better make sure that you have those male and female of all the species in the Ark with you. Otherwise you end up with a big, expensive and difficult to get rid of, project. But if you build a boat, and you need to perhaps build out more space, that tends to be a bit more easier. I don't know if folks connect with the analogy, [INAUDIBLE] but basically my point is we've got to learn, as Africans, to build more iteratively, build very lean as opposed to kind of go fat very quickly. And I think if we do that many times, we would be able to test, confirm the existence of a market, before we actually go all in.

CLAUDE GRUNITZKY: Wonderful. So, I want to get to the questions, now. There's a lot of questions. We can only get to a few of them. But this one is from [INAUDIBLE] Latifa Akinola. And she says, oh, I'm actually one of those people who went to the same school, the same secondary school, as Iyin. And my question is centered around, how do we create a system to provide resources, financial as well as otherwise, to fund innovators on the continent who are tackling challenging problems like this. I personally don't believe the governments are the reliable answer, but how can private players and external agencies engage with that innovative community?

IYINOLUWA Absolutely. I mean, you're absolutely right that government can't be the answer.

ABOYEJI: Like I said, they don't even have enough resources to do kind of their primary responsibilities, so funding innovation, which can be risky and uncertain, is a bit of a reach. And so that's why we set up the Fund for Africa's Future. And I'm super excited about all the different types of investment communities that are emerging.

With the Fund for Africa's Future, what we've designed is really an investment community, where essentially people pay a membership fee of $1,000 a year and then, in exchange for that, they get very detailed memos and data rooms for 20 companies a year that are African companies that are turning some of our biggest challenges into global business opportunities and are being led by amazing innovators. And then you get an opportunity to invest from $5,000 up into these companies by leveraging some of the infrastructure that we've been able to build around the world depending on where you are, licensed infrastructure across the world.

And just doing this has enabled us to raise over $2 million between last year and this year for African companies, and we're just in the first quarter of 2020. We've raised $2 million already and we're looking to raise even more. So I think these are examples of how private individuals, not to even talk about government, private agencies, or talk about corporates, can participate in giving innovators the capital, coaching and community that they need to be able to turn our biggest challenges into global business opportunities.

CLAUDE GRUNITZKY: Wow. So Romy Sumaria is asking a question. And her question is, what is your most successful failure? It's a very interesting question.

IYINOLUWA ABOYEJI: My most successful failure-- That's a very interesting question. I would say, my most successful failure was probably trying to run a presidential campaign. So after I left Flutterwave, I tried my hand at politics and I ran a presidential campaign for a mentor and friend of mine, Madame Oby Ezekwesili. She used to be a vice president at the World Bank. And it taught me a lot because I got to actually, for the first time, really think about policy at a national level.

We put out Project Rescue Nigeria, which is by far one of the most detailed policy documents that Nigeria has ever seen. And it actually is, funnily enough, being implemented even though we didn't even come close to running in the election,

actual election, talk less of winning. So I saw the other day that the government had put in place a $25 billion infrastructure fund. And that was one of our core recommendations, about the need for us to bring private sector in to come and help us build infrastructure, and concession a lot of assets. And to see all those ideas be implemented, even though you're not the one implementing them, is a bit of a success and I'm glad we were able to popularize some of those ideas with that campaign, even though we didn't even come close to winning.

CLAUDE GRUNITZKY: Well. So we always wrap up with the three books that you might recommend for our audience because we're all about learning, right, and improving and being--

IYINOLUWA ABOYEJI: Oh no.

CLAUDE GRUNITZKY: One of them is *The Prosperity Paradox,* right, so I'm going to put that in [CROSSTALK] so we need you to recommend two more books that could be helpful to our audience to understand Africa and innovation and transformation.

IYINOLUWA ABOYEJI: OK. I mean one of the books I recommend is not about Africa but is helpful frame for understanding innovation and transformation. And the book is *Zero to One* by Peter Thiel. I think it's definitely one of the most important books I've read about how to think about the world of technology and what is possible, especially for Africans, in the world of technology. The other book I would recommend, I'm thinking. I don't want to also recommend a book that's extremely Nigerian, yeah.

CLAUDE GRUNITZKY: You can. Why not? Why not?

IYINOLUWA ABOYEJI: Well, there probably isn't very much of a need to. But one thing I would say is, I would say getting into the founder mindset is important for anybody who's looking to get into technology. And one of the things that I've gotten a lot of inspiration from in my own journey as an entrepreneur, is really being present to see other people who've done it, or to read about other people who've done it. I actually think anybody who wants to be an entrepreneur should probably spend a whole year before they make that jump reading stories of other entrepreneurs who've made that jump, and that didn't actually die, because it's kind of like reading the word of God. It gives you a lot of faith because you suddenly realize that things are possible.

So one of those books I really like are *Founders at Work* by Jessica Livingston. I think it's the name of the book. It's a really, really cool book because it talks about the founding stories of companies that we all know and love, from Blackberry to Lotus to Bill Gates and so on and so forth. So, yeah, that's the third book. Sorry. I don't have many Africa-specific texts to share.

CLAUDE GRUNITZKY: Well your own story is a book in itself. So we can end there because we have your story and those three books, *The Prosperity Paradox, Zero to One,* and *Founders at Work.* And all those books, along with the full presentation that you gave us today, will be available on the TRUE Africa University website. So with that, I want to thank you for this session, which was enlightening as usual. I do want to say that your presentation dovetails really nicely with the one that we will be having next Thursday at the same time. Hopefully the time difference won't confuse too many people, and then they will come on at 12:00 Eastern Standard Time, Boston time, Cambridge time.

And that presentation, Michelle, if you could share it with us because I'm very excited to have a different perspective on transformation in Africa. And it's really, again, in a related topic, what types of new partnerships can lead to African Development. We will be welcoming Professor Jeffrey Sachs, who is one of the most famous economists in the world. He is the founder of the Earth Institute at Columbia University. And he is one of those people who wrote the Millennium Development Goals and the sustainable development goals for the United Nations. So he's going to be talking about transnational, trans-border partnerships, exactly like the ones that allowed our friend and actually acolyte, Iyi, to become this very, very successful entrepreneur while still in his 20s.

And so with that, I want to also, once again, thank our partners and sponsors, who again have made this series possible. It is the MIT Center for International Studies, which aims to support and promote international research and education at MIT, and the MIT Africa program, which empowers MIT students and faculty to advance knowledge and solve the world's greatest challenges. So again, I'm Claude Grunitzky. I'm the founder of TRUE Africa University, which we have created by Africans, for Africa, in order to accelerate Africa's development through sustainable solutions. So thank you very much for your time. And we look forward to seeing you

next Thursday at 12:00 PM Eastern time, Cambridge time, we'll see you there. Thank you.

IYINOLUWA ABOYEJI: Thank you.