>> Thank you all so much for coming to the first ever
Walden University Changemakers talk, the Minneapolis
dition.
I know that it is a lot to ask to come down for a whole
entire hour, and your days are anything like mine, that
really is taking a big chunk out of your day.
So thank you very much for your support of your
colleagues and this event.
So this event is actually kind of an amalgamation of
many ideas that came up in the Community Building
Committee.
And we came up with this idea, and we approached Career
Services because of their recent success in some of their virtual social change events.

So thank you to the Career Services for their partnership with the CBC.

Otherwise known as Community Building Committee, right?

So stories have a way of connecting us to people and opening our hearts.

Right?

Statistics and facts have a way of sort of opening our eyes to startling issues in a way that formerly was abstract.

And finally, ideas have a way of opening our minds, right?

Deepening and broadening our understanding of your world.

So we've asked eight -- well, we've asked many people, but eight final people have been chosen to talk about their stories and the facts and ideas in an extraordinary way that they have touched themselves or have been touched in many ways, right?

So I just want to say thank you all, because a series of actions sorts of have this snowball effect of making us all think a little bit deeper about how our actions impact the people around us.
So I just want to say thank you to our talkers or our presenters for having the courage to come up here and share their compassion with you today.

So let's give them all a very, very warm and encouraging welcome and thank you for your compassion.

[ Applause ]

Great.

So we're actually gonna start off with Pam Glenn.

And just so I get this right.

Pam Glenn is a Field Education Supervisor for the School of Nursing.

And she's gonna talk to us about domestic violence and abuse.

So one more round of applause for Pam.

[ Applause ]

>> There we go.

Can you hear me okay?

Perfect.

Okay.

Thank you so much for having me.

So abuse.

For 30 years, as a certified nurse midwife, I've routinely screened my patients for abuse.

My patients have taught me many lessons, and some of
those lessons and stories I’m gonna be sharing with you
today.

So what is abuse?

Who gets abused?

Who are the abusers?

It’s common to hold stereotypes about this topic in our
brains.

The problem with stereotypes, though, is, it’s like
having the blinders on.

It keeps us from seeing the reality of a situation that
might be right in front of us.

So I hope this talk helps you to think about the
stereotypes that you may be holing in your brains about
this topic and other topics talked about today and see
this issue with new eyes.

Okay.

There we go.

All righty.

So just like a rock in water, abuse has rippling
effects on a person's life and their health, as well
as the lives of their friends, families, and our
communities.

Emotional abuse, even without any physical violence is
abuse and also has rippling, devastating effects on
people's lives.

So how have I asked about abuse?

As a new midwife years ago, I asked it probably the wrong way.

I'd say to my patients, are you in an abusive relationship?

But most people hear the word abuse, and they automatically think physical violence, right?

So they're sitting there thinking, no, not me, I'm not getting hit or shoved or pushed down the steps.

But then I started to ask it in a new way.

The word "abuse" got completely eliminated from my questions.

Instead, my questions focused only on emotional abuse behavior.

So it sounded something like this.

Does your partner ever keep you from being with your friends and family?

Are they constantly checking up on you when you're not together?

Do they put you down, call you names, threaten you?

That's when my patients began to answer much more frequently, yeah, this is happening in my life.

So the list of emotional abuse behaviors is long.
It begins oftentimes with isolation, where the abuser isolates their partner from family and friends and thus ends up having more control over them. It can lead to degrading name-calling and all the others on that list.

I learned a lesson, though, about the degrading behavior, from a 20-year-old who sat in my office one day. She listened to my questions about abuse, and she was very hesitant to answer me. I don't know where this came from, but the words sort of flew out of my mouth before I realized it, and I asked her, does he call you "bitch" or "whore"? She was stunned. I was actually stunned with myself. And then she answered, "How did you know?"

So the rest of those emotional abuse behaviors are something that we need to learn to define and talk about openly.

One evening, I ditched my planned health talk for the residents of a battered women's shelter, and instead, I defined these behaviors for the eight women who sat around the table who were residents there. The more I offered definitions, their eyes got wider.
These women were empowered simply by hearing the definitions of emotional abuse and understanding this is a real thing, these behaviors that they lived with all these years.

So why do people abuse?

There's a multitude of complex reasons and not one clear answer, but one basic concept that can help us understand is this.

Abusers act not because they're out of control but out of a need to control.

Sometimes abuse is done openly in front of others, but more often than not, it's done behind closed doors when no one can witness it.

The abuser might have even charmed their partner's family and friends so when the partner finally shares that this is happening in their life, they're often less likely to be believed.

So who do I screen?

I learned another lesson one day in a clinic when a well-dressed professional woman arrived for her annual exam.

I was running behind that day, and I thought, you know, she doesn't look like somebody who's getting abused.

I think I'll just skip my questions.
But you know what?
I asked her anyways.
And she shared, you know, that despite her very
professional look, her confident manner, her perfect
hair and her perfect makeup and perfect life, she
shared that she had a horrendously abusive relationship
going on with her boyfriend.
So in that moment, I learned that all my patients need
to be screened.
I can't look at somebody and try to figure out if
they're in an abusive situation or not.
As I'm sure you're aware, abuse crosses all lines, all
ages, cultures, all religious backgrounds, all
socioeconomic backgrounds, all types of relationships.
And both women and men experience abuse.
Where physical abuse is more often males towards their
female partners, emotional abuse typically goes both
ways, and for many reasons.
Men are often hesitant to talk about this as well, but
it's also just as devastating.
So for both men and women, abuse is often hidden.
One young woman at a shelter shared with me that when
she was 19, she moved to a new city with her boyfriend,
and over the next eight years, the relationship became
severely abusive.

I asked, is there one lesson from your experience that I can share with others?

She was soft-spoken, but she didn't hesitate and said one word to me: Shame.

She explained that shame kept her in this relationship for eight long years.

On another clinic day, a middle-aged woman returned for a visit, and I noticed four oval bruises on her forearm.

She did not want to talk about it when I asked her about it.

So I presented information in a general way to her.

So she knew that I knew.

I knew that she knew that I knew.

But her integrity was maintained, and the resources were provided, and then I had to let go.

It can be a balancing act.

We'd love to pluck people out of these horrendous situations.

But it can't be forced.

Their process needs to be respected.

And it's important to always keep the door open.

So whether asking about abuse or finding out that
somebody just disclosed to you, it's vital that communication be nonjudgmental, gentle and caring, authentic and honest.

It's helpful to say, no matter how long it's been, I hope you know that you can always come to me. The door is always open.

And I think about the many drives home that I've had after a clinic day and think about my day, and did I ask the question the right way and handle it well? I hope that, as I've been nudged over the years, that you've been nudged by this today and that you're seeing this issue with some new eyes.

Thank you very much.

[ Applause ]

>> Okay.

So let's give another round of applause to Pam.

[ Applause ]

Next up, we have Lisa Cook, Senior Director of Career Services, who's gonna be talking to us about "Living Alone, Living Connected."

>> Okay.

Hi, everyone.

Kind of an interesting thing that we're going from domestic abuse to living alone, because the thing that
people who live alone are always told is, better to 
live alone than be in a bad relationship.

So it's kind of funny that I'm going after Pam's 
talk.

But anyway, so my story is that I moved to Minnesota 
back in 2007 to start my position as director of Career 
Services with Walden.

I had lived in California, Colorado, Ohio, D.C., 
Maryland, Virginia, and I actually was born in 
Minnesota, but my parents moved to D.C. when I was one, 
so for all practical purposes, I'm an East Coaster. 
That's where I grew up, and I went to college from 
there.

And -- but anyway, I had this romantic notion I wanted 
to return to my birthplace and see what it was like to 
live in the land of 10,000 lakes and see how it went. 
So -- so I moved.

And I had moved to Ohio in my early 30s about ten 
years before then, and I've had really good luck. 
I ended up moving into a townhouse development and 
meeting a best friend that lived two doors down. 
I was dating a great guy.

I was in a terrific five-year relationship. 
I had really an easy time of it my early 30s moving
to Ohio and making friends and building social connections.

But when I moved to Minnesota ten years later, early 40s, whole different ball game.

And so this is the story that I'm gonna tell you about what my experience was like and what -- as Pam mentioned, the whole point of doing a T.E.D. talk is to raise empathy, so I just want you to think in terms of people living alone at all ages because I think so often we just think in terms of seniors who are living alone, and that's the stereotype.

When we talk about social isolation and loneliness, we think of seniors, but actually, the demographics show that people living alone, it's more people in their middle age than people who are elderly now, so I want to raise your awareness of this.

So did you know?

So there's a lot of articles in the media.

Salon just came out with one on Saturday about the challenges of making friends in adulthood.

The three necessary ingredients for making friends are geographic proximity, repeated unplanned interactions, okay?

And also that level of comfort that you can be your
real self with someone.

So where do you think the easiest place to make friends is?

College.

Exactly.

Okay?

So grade school, high school, college, it's very easy, but once you get out of being in lockstep with your peers, you get out into the work world, if you move to a new location, it's really more challenging to make friends, and so a lot of articles have been featured about this.

And so now according to the most recent U.S. census, 28% of Americans live alone.

That's more than one in four.

Eric Klinenberg, a sociologist, wrote a well-known book on this called "Going Solo."

He talks a lot about these statistics.

50% of American adults are single.

So when I learned about these statistics, I didn't feel so alone in my aloneness.

Okay?

So that was kind of comforting.

And then a 2010 AARP study showed that 35% of those
adults surveyed between the ages of 45 and 55 reported that they were lonely.

That to me, is, you know, one in three, that's a lot higher than I thought it would be.

Okay, so I have done research on this.

I saw a fantastic psychiatrist named Dr. Jacqueline Olds, who wrote a book.

She's from Harvard.

It's called "The Lonely American."

She presented at the University of Minnesota, and I had read her book, and I had her sign my copy, and went up to her.

I said, you know, I've had such a hard time making social connections in Minnesota.

Is it me?

Is it Minnesota?

She said, no, wherever you'd move, you would find this is a nationwide problem.

This is endemic.

This is -- people are on social media.

They're busy commuting.

You know, they're taking care of their families.

People are just too busy to spend a lot of time making new social connections throughout their entire lives.
So that was very illuminating.
So I started researching.
I wanted to become an expert.
I read everything I could get my hands on, on social isolation and loneliness.
And so I found there was a meta-analytic research study that showed that, in over 300 research studies, they found that the strength of our social connections is as important to our health as keeping a healthy weight, not drinking too much, not smoking.
So social wellness is key to our health.
It's really, really important to us.
So that was an interesting thing to find out.
So what I decided to do is, I'm a proactive person.
I like that Gandhi quote, "Be the change you wish to see in the world."
So if I can identify a problem, if I can do something about it, I want to share what I've learned and do something about it.
So in 2010, I launched a website, so when your life doesn't go according to plan A, you go to plan B, and you make plan B connections.
Okay?
And so that site's gotten about 5,600 visitors since
it was launched.

I also launched a nextdoor.com community in my neighborhood, which is a combination of Facebook meets Angie's List.

Is anyone familiar with NextDoor?

Great.

So we have about 150 neighbors now in my neighborhood. And they're connecting over, you know, items to sell or give away, community news, so it's a great way to connect with neighbors you might not otherwise meet.

I also started a resilient circle of neighbors helping neighbors, so when someone's husband died, we got together and made a week's worth of dinners for the family.

So that was a great way.

I've been actively engaged in ways to build community in my neighborhood.

In 2013, I actually did a T.E.D. talk.

Mahtomedi launched its first T.E.D. forum, so I delivered a talk similar to this.

I've launched two Meetup groups, "Connections Through Conversation" and "Twin Cities Icebreakers."

That's my latest undertaking.

I've done workshops at the Basilica, community
education, Shift.

I've served as a parks and rec commissioner, and last fall, I did a webinar for AARP called "Using Tech to Connect."

So this is what I'm doing now.

So I'm in a Meetup called "Out and About," and I decided I was gonna launch a new series of social outings called "Friendship Over 40 Dinners," to talk about how hard it is to make friends over the age of 40, and I had 26 people at the first dinner.

So I know that I'm not the only one who is interested in talking about this topic.

So we all had nametags, and we talked about the challenges.

And so the next thing is, I've asked them to take a friendship challenge for September.

So anyone who signs up for our September dinner, they actually have to ask someone they don't know out for coffee or a walk or some sort of social outing, and we're gonna debrief about how that went, because it's harder to break the ice with people than you think it is over a certain age to take that next step and to take it outside the Meetup and ask them for coffee.

And so my message to you is, please keep your social
ties strong and flexible, and keep growing them
throughout your lifetime, and if there is a person who
lives alone or is not as socially connected as they
could be, please have the empathy to make a move and
ask them for coffee.
They'd probably love it.
Thank you.

[ Applause ]

>> So let's have another round of applause for Lisa.

[ Applause ]

All right.

So next up, we have Dr. Ken Gossett, who is a
contributing faculty member.
And he is going to tell us the story of Robert.
So let's give him a warm welcome.

[ Applause ]

>> Can you hear me?

All right.

Fantastic.

Well, thank you very much for the opportunity to be
here today.

A change-making event can have an incredible impact on
your life when you least expect it.

And I'm gonna share with you an event, an experience
that I had that actually totally and completely changed
my life when I was a young man.

A couple of years ago, at the Walden graduation, the
primary speaker had some of his comments published in
the Walden Alumni Magazine.

He said, "I believe in the power of words.
I believe by standing up, talking about what is going
on, and being the voice for the voiceless, we raise
awareness, and by raising awareness, we can change the
world.

Words can be the most powerful weapons.
Your words can make people survive."

Now, that's an example of somebody who's capable of
speaking.

When I graduated from college, I was -- in 1968, I was
in a situation where I really didn't know what I was
gonna do next in my life.

I thought I was gonna go to medical school.

But my draft board, the system was changed to a lottery
system.

And based on your number, you didn't know if you were
gonna get drafted from one day to the next.

And so I started working in an institution of 5,000
people, the second largest institution in the world,
located in Dixon, Illinois.

Now, Dixon is about 90 miles from Chicago, and it's the hometown of the Ronald Reagan.

And if you went there today, you would find that Dixon State School is actually the Dixon Correctional Facility.

Most of the 300-plus institutions that we had back in the early '70s, state hospitals that we had, are now correctional facilities today.

So institutions had a long history of growing pains, followed by a short history of shrinking pains.

And one of the ways that I tried to maintain my sanity at this place, because it was such a horrible place to actually walk into, I was on a cottage that had 70 profoundly, severely retarded boys.

And I got interested in the causes of mental retardation.

At that time, there were about 233 known causes of mental retardation.

But most of the people that we had living there, we had no idea why they were disabled the way they were.

On the cottage that I had, I happened to have two boys.

There were only three individuals at Dixon out of 5,000 people that had Apert's syndactylism.
Now, if you ever meet somebody with Apert’s syndactylism, you’d never forget them right off the bat because they have large conical-shaped heads. They have protruding eyes, and they have webbed fingers.

And on this cottage that I worked on, I had two boys, Tommy and Robert. And Tommy was about six foot tall, and his hands were fused with a single nail that went across both hands, and his nail was so hard that he could actually use his hands like a screwdriver to unscrew things like chairs, and then he would stand around and laugh as people sat on the chair and fell on the floor.

The other little boy, Robert, and of course this is not Robert, but it kind of looked like him, he was 14 years old.

And he followed me around all the time, even though he was diagnosed as a idiot. He had an I.Q. below 20, and he was nonverbal. He could not speak. And he would grab my hands, and he would show me his hands, and he would point to his hands. And this went on all the time.

And I can’t tell you how this began to affect me,
because, you know, I was trying to understand, was he really intelligent enough that he knew there was a difference between his hands and mine?

And one night, I woke up in the middle of the night, having kind of like a nightmare or dream, thinking about Robert, and I had been an anatomy lab assistant when I was in college.

And I knew it really wouldn't take that much work here to do some surgery on his hands to open his hands up so that he could have fingers again.

I went down to the -- my unit director who sent me to the director of nursing who basically told me that this can't be done here.

We have 5,000 people living here, and Medicaid does not pay for cosmetic surgery.

And so to make a long story short, I called the dean of a medical school in Chicago and asked if there was any way they would consider bringing this little boy in so that he could have some surgery done on his hands as a demonstration surgery.

And he said he couldn't promise me anything, but he would get back in touch and let me know.

Several weeks later, he did call back, and I'm not sure what that noise is.
Anyway, he said, "We will take Robert in and do the surgery, but you have to have a consent form signed."

So I went down to the superintendent and explained the situation to him, and he said he was willing to sign it as long as I was willing to volunteer to take Robert to Chicago to have the surgery done on my off day, and as long as I didn't apply for any mileage reimbursement.

Well, I was really happy to do that.

And so I took Robert in there and dropped him off.

And a couple of weeks later, I started wondering how he was doing.

I'm almost done.

And so I went into work, and I was thinking that I was gonna call them to find out, and all of a sudden, when I got in the door, somebody grabbed my hand, and I looked down, and it was Robert.

I couldn't believe that he was back.

And so I was really happy to see him.

He grabbed me, and he pulled me over to the corner of the building where we had an old beat-up piano.

And he sat down on that piano, and I swear to God to you, this is the truth, with his new fingers, he began to play a song on this piano.

And I was absolutely stunned.
I was speechless, because how could this little kid who's never gone to school his entire life, who's never had a music lesson, know how to play a song? And then he reached down, and he pulled his shoes and his socks off, and he pointed to his feet. He now wanted his feet to be done too. And so with that, I learned that no matter how much you do, there is still so much more that needs to be done.

Thank you.

[ Applause ]

>> All right.

One more round of applause for Ken.

[ Applause ]

Next up, we have Dr. Magdeline Aagard, who's a core faculty member, talking to us about "Empowering the Maasai in Northern Tanzania to Improve their Health."

Another round of applause, please.

[ Applause ]

>> Good afternoon.

This is Aisha, one of our community health workers.

One day when Aisha was out making home visits, she stepped on a stick, and it flew up and hit her in her left eye.

She knew because of her training that she needed to go
and seek medical attention.

However, it was located so far from her house, and she didn’t have any money.

But she called her supervisor, and her supervisor arranged a visit for her with a local eye doctor.

She went back to her village.

They were able to collect enough money for her to rent a motorbike.

And they were able to get her to the eye doctor.

She was able to get the stick removed from her eye and save some of her sight.

Two years ago, before our program started, this would not have been possible.

The Maasai are very traditional tribal group that lives out in the middle of nowhere in northern Tanzania.

As you can see by this picture here, they have no roads to get them to their homes, and they walk everywhere.

They are located nowhere near any other people, much less any healthcare services.

However, they really wanted to improve the health of their community.

And so they reached out to a nonprofit group that I work with, and we were very interested in helping them to figure out how to improve their health.
And so we designed a community health worker project.

So we reached out to them, and with their villages, we were able to choose 30 community health workers.

We chose one young woman from each village, which was no small feat.

So we were looking for young woman who were married, who could speak fluent Swahili, and could leave their village for 15 days.

Sounds easy.

Well, most Maasai don't go to school, much less young women.

And that's where they learn to speak Swahili.

And they had to get permission from their husband to actually leave the village for 15 days.

But we managed to identify 30 of these young women, and they came for their training.

Well, as you can see by the picture here on the bottom, those young women had children.

They brought their children with them.

So we had a great group of young women with their children under five who were attending the training, which made for some very interesting but very chaotic days.

We taught them skills about teaching the people in
their village about health education topics such as how
to wash your hands, things we take for granted, but
things that will improve their health significantly.
How to purify water.
How to build latrines.
We also taught them how to take care of simple
injuries, burns, simple illnesses.
But we also taught them how to feel for a fetus’s
head and feet to tell the position of the infant or the
fetus before birth, how to listen for fetal heart
tones.
We also had them give demonstrations so they could show
each other what they had learned.
We also created our own health education materials.
The materials that are out there didn't look anything
like the Maasai.
And we wanted something that looked like them.
So we distributed drawing supplies to the people in the
villages, and we said, you draw what you look like.
And we had a contest.
Well, the two brothers that won the contest -- it isn't
the best picture, but here you can see one of the
brothers.
He has a drawing of a lion inside of his hut.
And they drew all of the pictures that we used for the health education flip charts.

Here’s one that they drew.

It’s a Maasai woman who’s boiling water to purify the water for drinking.

And then we created the flip charts, and that’s what they used for health education.

Well, it was a great start, but we decided we could do even better.

And with a donation, we were able to provide iPads.

So imagine this.

Here, all of a sudden, we have donated 30 iPads, and here is this group of women who live in the middle of nowhere and have clearly never seen this kind of technology who are now using iPads, learning how to use them.

They were preloaded with videos that show handwashing, how to build a latrine, purify water, all of this stuff, and we’re teaching them how to use them.

Well, what do you think was the thing they were most fascinated with?

Taking pictures.

Of course.

So they learned how to take pictures of each other, of
their kids, of us.

But it has proven to be the best way of actually creating health education seminars for people in the villages.

And so they take them out, and they were able to show everybody how to do all of these things.

And it's a great way of improving health.

So here you can see one of the ways that they purify water.

They take bottles, and they simply put them in the sun.

And after a long time in the sun, 12 hours, 24 hours, and there's a lot of sunshine in Tanzania, the water becomes purified.

A community health worker taking a blood pressure.

Of course a lot of onlookers.

And they know when the blood pressure is high, that they need to refer them to the health center.

So what kind of a difference has this made?

This little boy burned his forearm on hot porridge, and the community health worker was able to treat it, but it still didn't heal.

So she referred him to the health center.

These three little children, during the recent cholera outbreak were getting dehydrated, and the community
health worker was able to rehydrate them so they didn't suffer and potentially die.

This pregnant woman also has epilepsy, and she knew that she couldn't deliver in her home, which most people do, with epilepsy.

And the community health worker was able to get her referred to the local hospital.

And the community health workers themselves, they receive a very small stipend for their work.

Tessarea was able to provide medical care for her children.

Some of the other community health workers buy soap to wash their hands, and yet others are able to send their children to school.

Ava wanted to be a nurse, but being a community health worker was the next best thing.

It's wonderful to be able to do something to help people realize their dreams.

Thank you.

[ Applause ]

>> All right.

Excellent.

Isn't it exciting to hear all these different kinds of stories?
And there's so many different versions of what people see and experience in terms of social change.

So next up, we have Dr. Basil Considine, who's a dissertation editor and contributing faculty member, who's gonna talk to us about creating gender parity in opera.

I just realized I didn't change that.

Thanks.

Oh, I got to restate this title, because it's excellent.

"Creating Gender Parity in Opera: Really Spicy Opera's Three-Year Plan for Opera By Women, About Women, Featuring Women."

Round of applause for Basil, please.

[ Applause ]

>> We're a little bit of a change of pace.

So quick show of hands.

Who here has seen an opera live?

Great.

Now, opera is one of the most gender-segregated fields in music in terms of who goes on stage, who performs what on stage, and so forth.

This hasn't always been the case.

For the first 150 years or so of opera's history, it
was actually mostly gender-balanced.

And then around 1750, the cast sizes going -- started going up, and all the new jobs, very strangely enough, were going to men.

So today, almost all of the commonly performed operas have a lot more male roles.

Now, don't just take my word for it.

These are the four most performed operas in the world:

"La Traviata": Eight men, two women in the principals.

"La Boheme": Nine and three.

"Carmen": Eight and four.

And "Tosca": Seven and really one.

Now, these four operas all have another thing in common, which is the heroine dies in all of them.

And this is one of those things that when you have a systemic balance, you have something like this, well, if we only have one person, and only one woman, and someone's got to die, gosh, it will be so great to watch her sing that aria, and so she dies.

Now, I am the now regional governor emeritus for the National Opera Association's North Central Region, and I'm the artistic director of Really Spicy Opera, which is now celebrating its tenth anniversary season.

I get a lot of proposals for operas to do from
composers who write in.

And we have for a long time had a policy where we said, any opera that we do must have at least 50% women's parts, and those must be substantive rather than 12 maids and the rest of the opera is about four men. And we get a lot of composers who write in, and I write back saying, well, thank you, here's what we do, and here's what we don't do, and we get excuses like this.

Well, yes -- and this is from a very well-known composer who is active in this area.

Yes, there aren't many female characters, but the title character is such a great role.

It's like, yes, and 12 other principals are men, and the other woman with a name is her maid.

That doesn't really count.

And the rest you can see.

Now, I go to a lot of conferences, and I go to a lot of opera industry events.

And people keep telling me, gosh, what are we going to do?

We want to have people come to our operas, so we have to do those 19th-century operas where she dies, and she's the only one.
Well, Really Spicy Opera almost exclusively does world premiers.

We don't have this built-in audience expectation thing because we're doing something they haven't seen before.

So I looked at it, and said, gosh, we're not the only industry with this problem, but I'm not going to try and solve the whole music industry.

I'm going to start with what I'm doing.

I am going to say, all right, with Really Spicy Opera, we have two things we can change.

We can change the works that we produce and thereby encourage other people to do, and I'll say the last opera we did, the opera premier we did, after we did it, it got four new productions just because we'd signed up to do it.

So people who submit to us have an incentive to follow what we're doing.

We won't produce them otherwise.

We also have a long-standing imbalance in terms of gender roles.

Said, okay, well, let's do this one thing.

I'm going to have to hire a lot of people for what we're doing anyway.

Let's address this part too.
You notice that the positions involving money, development, and finance, there are a lot of more women.
Still not a ton, but anything that moves into artistic leadership and, you know, directing a show, almost entirely men.
That's about 10 -- less than 10% of opera companies are led by women.
I'm not giving up my job for that one, just to be clear.
But everything else is subject to negotiation.
So here's what we decided to do.
I said, all right, our next season is planned.
We've announced what we're doing already.
But let's take the three years after that, and let's go ahead.
We'll stick -- we'll only do world premiers.
This must be written wholly or partially by women, because I think your perspective does change the stories that you write and the kinds of stories that you want to tell.
And I'm interested in seeing more and also in having, you know, maybe at least half the heroines not being dead at the end of the show, just for variety.
And I decided, you know, let's -- we've been doing 50% already.

Let's push that.

Let's make it a minimum of 60%, ideally about 3/4 of the roles, because when I was in conservatory, that's what my classes were like was about three women for every men.

So let's do an opera that reflects that.

And bit parts don't count.

Just like a lot of African-American actresses are not interested in playing the maids, I don't think that my singers are either.

And also, please no nuns.

Been there; done that.

While we're at it, just some others things at the company.

Racially blind or racially diverse in nature, meaning race is the key component.

It should pass the Bechdel test.

It's not perfect.

But not everything needs to be about men.

I've got plenty of that already.

Pass the Mako Mori test.

If you don't know this one, this is based on the movie
"pacific Rim" where the woman must have a substantive character arc that doesn't involve supporting the man.

Again, for variety.

And, you know, that death thing.

And here's the central thesis behind it.

What we put on stage and watch on stage matters.

It shapes what we expect and what we want next.

Producing an opera makes it easier to do another one, so if you want to work with us, you have to do what we say.

The last thing I'll say before I give this up is, change starts local with what you have in front of you.

This isn't going to solve everything in the industry, but this is what my company can do, so we're going to do it.

Thank you.

[ Applause ]

>> I don't know if you all were here for the United Way campaign a couple years ago when Basil sang the Star --

no, National Anthem.

So I say for the upcoming United Way campaign, bring back Basil.

Let's give him another round of applause.

[ Applause ]
All right.

Next up we have Lisa Stirratt, who is the Coordinator of Field Experiences for the College of Education -- or the Riley W. -- how -- there you go -- Richard W. Riley College of Education, who's going to talk to us about "Lifelong Learning: A Daily Practice."

Give her a round of applause.

[ Applause ]

>> All right.

Hi, everyone.

Lifelong learning, it's a trendy phrase.

We throw it around a lot, especially in higher education.

And as part of our mission here at Walden, of course, we want our students to be lifelong learners.

We want to meet their desires to be learners and expand themselves to increase their influence.

We also hold staff and faculty to this expectation as well.

But what qualities, practices, and habits go into being a lifelong learner?

Well, it's my belief that lifelong learning as a goal and practice in our daily lives will introduce change in the world.
Many of us want to go out and change the world in big and positive ways, but we often overlook the importance of inner growth, learning, and transformation that must occur along the way.

I would like to focus on the importance of prioritizing our own inner change. When we see ourselves as valuable and worthwhile presence in the world, then we can prioritize our own learning and inner growth. We can make ripples in this world. Our very presence does in fact, and so how big is it when we commit to growing as a ripple producing presence and agent in this world?

This is social change. It’s not always about doing something external for people or systems that need help. Yes, that is a big part of it. But it also needs to be internal, and I think in many cases needs to start internally.

I like the image of a book for this goal of lifelong learning. Not just because learning is about book smarts, although this can definitely play a role in our learning and growth obviously.
I like the book image more as a metaphor of our lives being stories.

Every good story has the protagonist growing in some way through some kind of challenge or problem.

I think the by taking a step back and seeing our one amazing, miraculous life as a thrilling adventure story, we can see each day, week, month, and year as a chapter.

Good books keep you reading.

They keep you curious.

How would our lives be different if we started each day with the thought, I can't wait to see what happens in this chapter of my story?

So let's look at some of the ways, and these are just my ideas that I've learned and come to appreciate in my own story so far, and how to develop an awareness and habit of every day putting ourselves in the way of learning and inner growth.

First, it's important to notice where you see contradictions in the world.

When you feel unsettled or uncomfortable.

This means you're encountering something new or seeing something in a new and different way.

But since we don't like to be uncomfortable, or since
at times we demand that something be either black or white, either this or that, we tend to avoid the gray, or the areas where we feel conflicted or feel tension.
Pay attention at these times, though.
Much learning and growth takes place in these very times when we pay attention to those things that unsettle us.
I love this quote from Rainer Maria Rilke.
He is an Austrian poet from the early 1900s.
He says about this, "Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue.
Do not seek the answers which cannot be given because you would not be able to live them.
And the point is to live everything.
Live the questions now.
Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer."
Next it's important to set aside time to reflect.
In education, we ask students to write papers and reflections.
This is because reflection is the very open space where learning takes place.
It's the process.

So why do we stop this practice in the rest of our lives?

Think.

Journal.

Meditate.

Discuss.

Separate yourself from the to-dos and the tasks so that you can find yourself in your own story.

It's up to you to create the space for learning.

The great philosopher Larry King says, "I remind myself every morning, nothing I say this day will teach me anything, so if I'm going to learn, I must do it by listening."

So seek to ask questions.

And then just listen.

Listen without trying to figure out your reply.

It's uncomfortable, isn't it?

Perhaps it will feel awkward, but it sounds like a good way to learn.

When we take a questioning, curious, and attentive posture, we can learn much.

Next, the things that we believe shape our lives in very profound ways.
Maybe something stops working in your life.

Explore what beliefs are guiding this practice or behavior.

Maybe there are alternative beliefs that could change your life for the better.

I believe that for many of us, fear can often run the show.

Or write our life chapters.

And it can take work to even realize if we're fearful of something.

Again, pay attention to the fear.

Name it.

Look it in the eyes and decide if you're going to let it be the driver or if you're going to make it take a back seat.

Maybe we can't always get rid of it, but we can become aware enough of it to say that it's not going to run the show.

And finally, seek out many adventures each day, or as often as you can.

Eleanor Roosevelt's advice is to do one thing every day that scares you.

Step into opportunities that are unfolding in your life story.
By making lifelong learning a daily practice of inner growth, you can make ripples of change in this world and have an amazing story at the end of the day.

Thank you.

[ Applause ]

>> That was exactly six minutes.

Like to the second.

[ Laughter ]

That was remarkable.

Great job.

Let's give her one more round of applause.

[ Applause ]

Okay, next up, we have Dr. Wally Swan.

I'm wondering if he would let me change my name to that because I think it's my favorite name ever.

He's a contributing faculty member, and he's talking to us today about "Broadening the Discussion of LGBT Homelessness."

Round of applause for Wally.

[ Applause ]

>> Well, we're kind of broadening the discussion of LGBT homelessness to include not only youth like we have traditionally, but also adults and seniors.

Now, why did I get interested in this?
My partner was thrown out of his father's home because he was gay at age 33.

I had to help work on reuniting him with his family.

He's in the Hmong community, and the male culture there was very difficult, dealing with being gay.

The other person that interested me was the assistant minister at our All God's Children Metropolitan Community Church, which is a gay church, LGBT church.

And our assistant minister lived in her car for six weeks here in the Twin Cities.

So that's what got me interested in this topic.

And within this book, which is the one that I had published in 2015, we had about 27 chapters.

One of them was about homelessness.

Now, the message of the book was about the current civil rights struggle that continues to go on.

We've had marriage in all of the states now.

The problem is, we don't have protection for education, employment, housing in about 30 or more of the states.

So if a person in, say, the state of Idaho, where I went to the University of Idaho, if that person gets married in Idaho, and they put it in in the Moscow Idahoan newspaper, they could be fired.

They could lose their educational benefits.
They could lose their housing.

Luckily Moscow's a pretty decent city.

It's a university city.

But if they live right outside of that city, they could lose all of those things.

So there are states, what I call disempowered states:

Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, the Rust Belt states,

Southern states, Plains states, North Dakota, all the way down to, surprisingly, Texas, and then the Mountain states, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, a couple of those are also what I call disempowered.

They have those lack of protections.

But here in the Twin Cities, of course, we're in one of the empowered states.

And we have those protections.

Now, what's different about those states, the states are demographically different.

There's more homeownership.

They're more religious.

They're more conservative.

They are more dependent on federal assistance from tax money essentially.

They are the poorer states, and the empowered states, essentially, give them money.
Now, the creative class, any of you read Richard Florida?

Urban theorist?

Well, he says the empowered create more wealth.

The empowered states draw talented people towards the mega-cities like the Twin Cities and Los Angeles and New York and San Francisco and so on.

The disempowered states lose their talented people because they drive them away.

They end up here instead.

Disempowered states create less wealth, depend more on federal assistance.

Now, what's the dark side of what he calls the great reset?

The change from agricultural to an industrial society, we've had that.

We'd had industrial to a service economy.

Well, those were major changes.

Now we're going through what he calls the major reset.

I live a block away in the towers here.

And I've been watching thousands of new units being built downtown, housing the creative class, the people who are able to pay for the condos and for studios that rent for $1,100 a month, one bedrooms for $1,800 a
month, and a new building right across the street here that will go for $5,100 a month for a three-bedroom.

Now, this is a having an effect on driving people out of the city, those who have high school degrees, who don't have the kind of education that it takes to compete in this great reset.

Now, everybody knows from the literature in my book essentially that somewhere between 20 and 40% of the homeless youth population in the country are LGBT.

So if you count the 4,000 homeless kids in the Twin Cities, about 30 to 40% of them, presumably, are LGBT.

It depends on what city you're in.

Now, what I'm doing is looking at two studies. Minnesota Student Survey, sent out to 77,000 students anonymously in 9th and 11th grades.

5.7% of them were homeless.

And the other day I was going through this data for, like, the 20th time, and I discovered the Rainbow Health Initiative Survey, administered at Pride Festivals around the state, showed that ages 25 through 61 were essentially LGBT homeless.

Look at that.

5% here.

5% there.
This is something I had not seen until I went through this data like three, maybe, well, ten times.

So essentially the LGBT community has dedicated an enormous amount of money and effort to youth.

My partner -- ex-partner and I started a LGBT youth scholarship with PFund.

We've raised $700,000 for scholarships.

Before he died three years ago, he founded a scholarship for seniors that's raised 9,000.

So far this year, we've raised 450, and we have a goal of 3500.

We have 59 applicants for this, but on that other end of the continuum, there's no attention to it.

So what I'm suggesting we do is start developing some standardized data collection for homeless people, specifically including that whole continuum of LGBT people, and it tracks them throughout their lives.

And we'll look for the reasons that LGBTQ people are getting -- becoming homeless: Gentrification, loss of a partner, insufficient income, loss of eligibility, student debt, medical debt, foreclosure, and bankruptcy.

We need a survey that's like that, and I hope there's a doctoral student out there someday who'd like to do
that, okay?

Thank you.

[ Applause ]

>> All right.

Another round of applause for Wally.

[ Applause ]

Next up we have our last presenter.

Thank you for bearing with us with time.

We did our best.

So Dr. Laurel Walsh is an Executive Director of the Center for Faculty Excellence.

She's gonna be talking to us about "Write" -- well, the title is "Write Now" -- wait for it.

"Write Now For Always."

Round of applause for Dr. Walsh, please.

>> Mic check.

Hi.

Can everybody hear me?

All righty.

Nothing like a nice pre-sweated-in mic to really get the fun started.

[ Laughter ]

So I don't like to call myself a writing teacher.

I like to call myself a writing encourager, because
it's so much more fun, and there's no creating involved with that.

So "Write Now For Always."

I would argue -- who in here is involved in recycling at home?

Look at this.

We're so good.

We're so Walden.

I would like you -- if you could recycle the pain, the suffering, the discomfort, the unhappiness, the loneliness, the bad nights, if you could recycle that and make it into something useful, how powerful is that?

I'm gonna argue that when you write it down, when you tell your story, you're doing just that.

And I would argue that anybody who writes is an artist, so we're all part of this major shared endeavor.

And art should disturb the comfortable.

This is not to make you feel better.

My birth story is not to make you cheer up or make men feel a little bit more at ease.

It's in fact hope to make you a little bit quivery, a little bit uncomfortable, a little nauseous, like I was.
It should also comfort the disturbed, the afraid, the people who have things that they're dreading.

I've been through it.

I survived it.

I came out on the other side.

You too can.

So I would argue that writing is really just recycling at its finest.

Language is supposed to complicate assumptions, and if humanly possible, delight.

So in this, we have the fabulous whippet, and then whippet good.

Now, nobody even needed to be walked through how absolutely fabulous that little play on words is, but just a little teeny shift in the choice that you were gonna make in a little bit better -- Mark Twain said the difference between a good choice of word and the best choice is like the difference between lightning and lightning bug.

So just one word can change absolutely everything.

So you're writing to discover about yourself, but you have to write every single day.

And I know that sounds really obnoxious, and sometimes I'll end up at the end of the day just writing down
something inane, just so I did it.

I'm a writer.

It's my job.

I did it.

I showed up.

I wrote.

The hint I would give you is that, to get started down your writing journey, to start saying, okay, you know,

I am a writer.

I'm gonna start writing.

At the end of every day, write down the rose and the thorn of your day.

Every day you have something happens that you're like, that's aromatically pleasant and relieving, like the rose, how wonderful.

And you also have something horrible and prickly like the thorn, how horrible.

But if you start to write those down, over the course of the month, you're basically harvesting that ickiness and the joy in a way that's portable.

So writing to discover.

Eventually you have kind of two paths with what you start to write about.

You can either write memoir, truth, or you can write
In memoir, basically, you get to tell a story where you’re kind of the hero, and you have obstacles that you want to overcome.

If you’ve been harvesting those fabulous daily writings, you’ll find there are obstacles where you wouldn’t even believe it.

A great Kurt Vonnegut’s advice about creating an obstacle is, it doesn’t have to be insurmountable. It doesn’t have to be cancer. It doesn’t have to be -- it could be something wedged between your two back teeth, and that character spends the whole day like, my kingdom for dental floss.

So what’s the obstacle you want to overcome?

And in fiction and in memoir, you want to make sure to give it fangs.

Describe your problem.

Make it fierce.

Make it robust.

Make it very interesting.

Writing is your first step to solving your secret complications.

If you don’t write it down, a lot of times, you don’t even know it about yourself.
And you start to look at those trends over the month, you'll be like, wow, this is literally the same thing in four different ways of using nouns and adjectives, so -- and if you don't tell you story, you're not gonna fully know your own story.

At the end of the day, you don't have anything to really reflect back on and say, hey, that was me. That's how I did it or failed to do it.

You're gonna write terrible stuff. When you start writing, you are gonna write -- you can like smell it from a distance. You're like, wow, I can't even revise that dookie, it's so absolutely horrifying.

That's the new good.

Have you read a blog recently?

People are writing terrible things and sending it all over the place for us unsuspecting readers.

Embrace it.

You're gonna write horrible stuff.

But writers write horrible stuff, and then we revise.

Your pencil is always gonna be -- your eraser is gonna go first, because you got to keep going back to that terrible stuff and getting rid of it.

There are ways to persuade.
If you decide to take your story in a fictional route, you have five simple ingredients.

How many recipes in the world that just need five little stinking things?

You have them at home. Passion, energy, excitement for when you tell it.

You have to care a whole lot to tell your story. You have to have a hero.

Either it's you in memoir, which can feel awkward, so sometimes people like to change the gender. We call that creative nonfiction.

But you basically have a point of view and that brings the audience into that story.

You have to have an obstacle. You have to have an antagonist, even if it's the measly little bit of meat in those back two teeth, that problem to be overcome hooks your reader, and that takes you with, you'll go on that journey.

Unfortunately for most of us, our obstacles are a lot more daunting than that. You need to have a moment of awareness that reveals itself and allows us to learn from the story.

I'm one of these people who doesn't -- it doesn't dawn on me until I'm nowhere near my computer what was the
real "aha."

I'm often shampooing.

And as I'm rinsing, I got soap in my eyes, I'm like,

oh, wait, that was the pint.

So when you come to that awareness about what you need
to do or how you need to unlock something or how you
need to move forward, that gives your reader the

purview into having that freedom themselves, and it

lets people avoid really bad problems.

If you had a terrible marriage, give it to a story.

I once wrote myself out of anxiety because I gave it to

a character, and I just had the worst things happen to

him, and, man, it cheered me up.

I was just --

[ Laughter ]

And transformation occurs because of what you, in this
case the hero, has done.

And if the story stinks, self-publish.

And be happy.

I mean it.

The one thing I want you to really kind of -- as you

begin to see yourself as an artist and as a writer, and

if all you do is even write index cards, you're on your

way.
>> Okay, so just to wrap up, I'm wondering which all --
and we won't have a conversation now, but maybe later,
which stories, ideas, facts, stuck with you, and what
will you take forth?

I know the one thing that's ringing in my head is Larry
King for some reason, but listening.

But this idea of listening, and how -- how important it
is to listen to ourselves and to our community members
as we're sort of moving forth and building this big
snowball that is our community, and when we're looking
out for one another, right?

So thank you, thank you again for coming today.

I look forward to having more conversations with the
presenters.

I would encourage you all to reach out to them
individually.

We're not gonna have Q&A at all, but we'll just have
you do that on your own time.

So one more final -- you guys are awesome for being so
brave and courageous and this very first time that
we've ever done this.

Thank you to all of you once again.

I can't say it enough.
[ Applause ]