



Episode 644: How Not to Help the World's Poor

Guest: Michael Matheson Miller

WOODS: I can't believe it's been since Episode 61. That was the last time —

MILLER: What episode is this now for you?

WOODS: This is 644.

MILLER: Wow.

WOODS: So it's been quite a while. Plus, there's just something about that name, Michael Matheson Miller. I just like saying it, and I've been deprived of that for almost 600 episodes. But here you are.

MILLER: (laughing)

WOODS: So glad to be able to do this.

MILLER: It's good to be back.

WOODS: Of course I want to talk about *Poverty, Inc.* I watched it the other day in preparation for this. Very, very well done. And then I went to PovertyInc.org — right? It's .org?

MILLER: Yes, sir.

WOODS: And I started looking at some of the reactions you've been getting, some of the very, very high profile places where you've screened it, the prizes it's won. This thing is like, if you — I don't want to say if you dropped dead tomorrow. That's pretty morbid. But if you did nothing else, let's say, this would be a great achievement you could look back on. Tell me something about the response you've been getting to it.

MILLER: Well, thanks for your kind words. I'm glad you enjoyed it. We've been really delighted with the response. As you kind of noted, we've been able to play in a lot of different places. So we've played it at over 40 different film festivals. We've played at I think over 100 universities now. I think next week is our 10th screening at Harvard. Isn't that your alma mater? Didn't you go to Harvard?

WOODS: Yeah, it is my alma mater. I didn't realize it was — because I was going to say, I saw a picture in I guess the education school of a whole bunch of people watching it, but you're saying this is the 10th time?

MILLER: Yeah, I think we've played 8 or 9 times so far. We've played at the law school, the business school, the education school, public policy Kennedy School. And a lot of these are actually student-led. They're student-organized.

WOODS: Yeah.

MILLER: Sometimes we have 2 to 300 people there. And we've played at MIT five times, I think, or something, and Cornell —

WOODS: I was just going to say, it's so beautifully and elegantly done, the kids wouldn't even need safe spaces for a movie like this. They could just sit and watch.

MILLER: (laughing)

WOODS: They're not going to be traumatized by *Poverty, Inc.*

MILLER: Well, I think one of the reasons I bring those schools up is, well, obviously they're well known, but they're also development centers. I mean, a lot of people who study there, you know, MIT has development labs, so we're really happy that in these places that kind of are the feeders for what we'd call the establishment development organizations, students and others are watching the film. So yeah, we're really happy about that. And then we had a review in *Variety* magazine, a really positive one, which was positive both for the content and also as the film. I was able to work with really talented people, so we're just delighted to have that response.

And then but I think the thing we're most happy about is we wanted to make a documentary film that engaged this issue of poverty that hopefully helps people reframe the way we think about poverty, and we can talk about some of those kind of things in a minute. But it's really hard to make a film that's neither left wing nor right wing. So it was hard, it was difficult, and we were kind of, you know, not perfect, but we tried as much as we can, okay, how do we express this in a way that doesn't just become right-wing boilerplate or left-wing boilerplate.

WOODS: Yeah.

MILLER: How do we do this? And so we had this moment early on where we actually showed a work in progress of the film at a film festival; it was a libertarian film festival. And we won. We won like three prizes, including the grand prize. And we were shocked, right, and part of — we were happy. Like, oh my goodness. I mean, we had just kind of played it. But at the same time, I was almost a little disappointed, like, oh, great, it's going to be — you know, because it won at the libertarian place, it's going to be, oh, it's a libertarian film, oh, you know —

WOODS: Right, right.

MILLER: — and then we don't have to engage with it. So about 10 days later, we played at a very progressive, kind of Left festival in Southern California, and I was there. It was actually the first time I'd ever seen anybody watch it. You know, Tom, sometimes when you give a lecture — like, I get nervous before I give a lecture, and you get up, and you're like, okay, I'm ready, and you start kind of, your body, you know you're nervous because you're about to do something. Well, I was in the theater, and it was a small theater, like 75 people, just a small screening. And all of a sudden, like, my heart was beating. I was so nervous.

WOODS: I would have been petrified, yeah.

MILLER: I thought, why am I nervous. I realized, because I've been watching this film on my Mac computer 500 times, and all of a sudden people are watching this film, and it was like this, like, nervous moment. But anyway, we actually won Best Documentary there, so within 10 days, we'd won at a progressive Left place and a libertarian place.

WOODS: That's one of the most interesting stories I've ever heard. That's amazing.

MILLER: Oh, we were so — so I texted the director of photography, who's the editor, Simon Scionka, who's fantastic, and I texted him. And you know, I live on east coast time, but here I was texting him because I was in California, and he's like, why are you awake, and I was like, we just won Best Documentary, like, no way, and we were both really kind of excited, because what we had hoped for was to make a film that you could discuss and that wasn't just going to get relegated one way or the other. And so we played at all these different places, and I'm happy to say that Tom Woods likes the film, Russ Roberts of *EconTalk* likes the film, and Michael Moore also endorsed the film. And you know, he said it's going to change the way you think about poverty, so sometimes when I talk to conservative audiences or whatever, I'll note that Michael Moore liked the film, and people say, well, if Michael Moore liked the film, I'm not going to watch it. To which I reply in very kind of capitalist mentality, I don't care if you watch it, just buy it. So anyway, it works out.

WOODS: (laughing)

MILLER: And so just to have — I mean, obviously it's a bit of a joke, but to have, like, Russ Roberts and you talk about how you liked the film, how you thought it was thoughtful, and to have Michael Moore —

WOODS: Yeah, I'll tell you, I was shocked to see a blurb by Michael Moore. And of course, if it were me, I would tell people about the Michael Moore blurb after the screening. I would say, by the way, just to show you the cross-ideological appeal this film has, right? Now, that's a hard thing to do, as you know. That is a hard, hard — I mean, you cannot think of many documentaries that can say that.

MILLER: Well, we're really happy, but I think it kind of comes to — I mean, these are big discussions, so you'll have to have me back on like the 700th and 800th so we can keep talking about these things. But you know, I think part of the appeal, and I mean, what you think too, is that people realize there's something wrong. There's something wrong with crony capitalism, broadly. There's something wrong with all these institutions, which have kind of turned in to themselves and seeking benefit from themselves. And the poverty industry in many ways is a microcosm of a larger kind of what I call managerial capitalism, where these institutions are kind of benefitting themselves.

And when you're able to see the questions of poverty outside of the context of, like, right wing or left wing, pro-aid or anti-aid, and just kind of address them, I think — I was happy to see people on the Right and Left say, yeah, this is messed up. I mean, why is it that we've done trillions of dollars of foreign aid and that we've given all these good-hearted missionaries and development people have gone over for so many years, and it's not really affecting things the way we had hoped.

And I think, what's the problem? And I think our film tries to get to that point, that we don't need another social engineering economic policy. What we have to do is ask a deeper question, and that is what do people need to be able to create prosperity in their own families and communities, and then how do they create prosperity for themselves, and why is that lacking? And what they seem to need — and obviously poverty is complex, you know that. What they seem to need is they need clear title to land, access to justice and the courts, ability to register and then build a business, and ability to have free exchange, access to the pond. And I can talk about that.

Some people say, "Give a man a fish, he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime." One guy explained it to me really well. He said, "They know how to fish. They don't have access to the pond." And that's what free exchange is. And I think people are excluded, and the poverty industry, despite benevolent intentions of 99% of the people who are involved, nevertheless creates incentives to keep people excluded, instead of keeping people included and being able to participate in the market.

MILLER: One of the most memorable of the animations in the film for me was the image of the ladder, in which the rungs are the different ingredients you just mentioned, and this is the ladder out of poverty. And then you see the ladder gets cut. It gets chopped down, and the ladder falls, and then where the ladder was, instead you see this flow of activity to and from the Western countries that really bypasses all the local people. And I thought that was very well done. Now, I want to ask you, I do want to talk about the assumptions behind development aid and all that, but why "Poverty, Inc."? I think that is a fantastic title. How'd you come up with that? By the way, I think that's also one of the reasons that the Left would be intrigued by this movie, because they're thinking that somehow people are profiting here off the poverty of others is part of their worldview anyway, so you tapped into that. But what are you trying to get at with that title?

MILLER: I think this is one of the insights, though, that you have of, we can call it the progressive left — there are so many variations and things — that they're kind of right. Like, something's messed up. It doesn't seem fair. It doesn't seem like we're in fairness. And I think sometimes, say, people who tend to support market economies, like you and I, we hear a left-wing critique of business, and sometimes, I have to admit, my reaction is, no, business is fine. But actually, sometimes business isn't fine. Adam Smith said, "Rarely do business people get together that they don't collude to hurt the general public."

And business is a wonderful thing. It's a moral enterprise. I've written about it; I think it's a valuable thing. But when businesses collude with power structures to take unfair advantages for themselves, that's messed up, and I think that's partially what the Left is frustrated about. The problem is they somehow think that the government is altruistic and can solve the problem, when in fact involving the government and regulation just institutionalizes this type of thing. It doesn't free up the economy and give poor people a chance.

But back to your question of "Inc.," it was kind of a working title for us, "Poverty, Inc." I had always thought of it as a poverty industry, and like every other industry it wants to stay in business, and that the poverty industry wasn't totally focused on actually asking the questions of what do people need to create prosperity; it was always doing social engineering policy things, and it was all kind of like this technocratic, top-down thing that was somewhat enclosed in itself in all of these broken assumptions. And so it just appeared to be a big industry. And then there's the film *Food, Inc.*, and then there's the book *Creativity, Inc.*, and all this stuff, this "Inc." kind of theme, and so the working title was "Poverty, Inc." And then we did some tests, actually thought what works well, and that resonated, so we ended up staying with it, because it had been one of the themes, that there is a poverty industry. Some of the insights from public choice school, right, that it's not just kind of altruistic government agencies trying to do their best or altruistic and non-governmental agencies, but actually an industry had developed that was self-enclosed, as it were.

WOODS: Tell me about the reigning assumptions, or at least, maybe they're not reigning as much anymore, but the working assumptions for decades about development aid, and in what way does *Poverty, Inc.* challenge them?

MILLER: Well, I would say there are kind of two layers of assumptions, and I think one of them is absolutely completely the case; it may even be getting stronger, and then I think the other second layer is somewhat changing a bit.

So the first layer, and this is really the driving force of the film, is what I call the subjective dimension of the human person. Human beings are not objects to be moved around. We are subjects. And by subjects, I don't mean subjects of the king. I mean like in grammar class; we're subjects. But we tend to treat poor people like objects, like objects of our charity, objects of our pity, objects of our compassion. And then we combine this objectification with humanitarianism and social engineering, and we end up using the developing world as a lab for experiments by Western technocrats.

And you know, this is kind of part of the dominant theme of the way we think about the economy today, right. And you do a lot of work on this, Tom, so I'm obviously not telling you anything you don't know, but so you have this deep, kind of philosophical underlying problem of the objectification of persons.

Then you have humanitarianism, which really only focuses on comfort, right, and so it's like, okay, how can we provide comfort. So you objectify plus humanitarianism. Instead of saying, well, how do people actually flourish in the long run, what do they need to create prosperity in the long run to be independent, we're not thinking about that. We're always using this kind of emergency model of just providing comfort. And then we combine that, like I said, with social engineering, and this idea that somehow we can plan economic growth, we can create industrial policies, if you want to use an anachronistic term, we can create all these policies that somehow create growth.

So for example, at the end of World War – and we talk about this in the film. At the end of World War II, you had this dominant idea that we've won the war, now let's win the peace. And social engineering was the fashion at the time. You know, the Soviet Union and their five-year plans, and later Khrushchev talked about how they're going to crush us, you know, this kind of worry that you could plan, and then this idea right after – we'd won the war, as I said, let's win the peace, let's come up with plans. Well, out of this type of planning economy is what the – the development economics system or group way of thinking kind of develops out of this.

So almost everybody who's in development economics is a planner, thinks that policy can take the place of entrepreneurship. And so what happens is we look at the developing world, and we see things like, okay, what do we need. If you look around at any of these development schools or any of these international organizations, like, what do people need to create prosperity? Well, we need infrastructure, healthcare, and education, electricity, and sanitation and all of these things. And that's all true, right? But those things are a result of wealth before they become the cause of wealth. And so what happens is we do, like, false correlations. Well, in the United States and Europe, we have good healthcare and good infrastructure, so therefore if we put it there in the developing world we can make these leaps to industrialism.

But what we're missing are these intangible things, these institutions that we talk about in the ladder: clear title to land, access to justice and the courts. I think it's the Center for Research in India did a study. It takes an average of 20 years to get your court case heard, so if you're poor you are excluded. Enforcement of contracts, ability to register a business, and ability to kind of engage in exchange. If these things aren't there and then you just put infrastructure, education, and healthcare, you end up creating crony capitalism, politicizing development, and further excluding the poor.

So I think we're asking the wrong questions, and part of it is just the technocratic, managerial approach that we take to economics, both here in the United States and in Europe – what is it? 39, 40% of GDP is controlled by the state. When you apply that in the developing world, the economy and the politics become so connected to each other that it just becomes what Acemoglu and Robinson rightly call extractive. Just

the elite are extracting the value, and entrepreneurs who, if they came here, would be able to create value are, as Herman Chinery-Hesse says, locked out. He said you're stuck in a hole with all your skills and talents, and that's just unfortunately the way it is. And I think those are the underlying assumptions, and it's not easy to change those.

WOODS: I've got a really juicy one, the juiciest question of the whole conversation, coming up in just a second. Let's first pause for a note from our sponsor.

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All right, here's the juicy question that I promised: When you have a title like *Poverty, Inc.*, you do give the impression that somebody, not the poor in these developing countries, of course, but somebody is doing very well as a result of this. Now, it's not to say necessarily that the whole thing is just deliberately intended to be a racket, but I saw case after case in this film of struggling companies that found that some European company was somehow getting rich and they weren't. What's really going on here? And who's getting rich out of this? Somebody is.

MILLER: I think, you know, in some ways this is one of the things that we tried to show, and if you remember, at a couple points in the film, there's this guy, Timothy Schwartz, he says, look, everybody knows the system's messed up — I don't know if you remember this.

WOODS: I do remember that. Yeah, he said everybody privately will tell you that.

MILLER: Yeah, you have beers with people, he's like, look, everybody knows it's wrong. And so I think it's, first of all — and you already alluded to this, but I think it's worth saying. In the film, we're not accusing people of malevolence. I think, obviously there are people go into the "poverty industry" just to make cash, and they don't care, but that's very minor. I mean, it's just a minor amount of people. Most people who go in, go in with benevolent intentions to do something good, and so I think that's the first thing that's just very important. But your question about what's happening, we talk about this a bit in the film. So Herman Chinery-Hesse, who's a Ghanaian entrepreneur, told me a story. He said five companies in Ghana got together, were bidding for this project, and everything was going really well —

WOODS: Yeah, this is a very good one. This is exactly what I had in mind. Yeah, go ahead.

MILLER: Yeah, and so Herman runs a company called SOFTtribe, which does tropically tolerant software, meaning, he's like, you know, the electricity's always going out, there's always problems, and the software that you get from the states or Europe just doesn't work as well, so he mixed it up so it would be a little more tolerant to a tropical climate. So he was doing this stuff, and he was going for a deal, and he said five companies got together. He said, we're about to get the business, and our competitor was a European company, and they got their country to make a soft loan to Ghana on the condition that that company, that European company would get the

deal, the contract. And so Herman said the Ghanaians' government said, look, we love you guys, but nothing beats free money. And he said we lost our money. He said that's not aid, that's not assistance, that's thuggery. And I told Theodore Dalrymple that story, who follows in the movie. Theodore Dalrymple's an English psychiatrist —

WOODS: I was so glad to see him there. Yeah, he's been on the show. I love that guy.

MILLER: Oh, yeah, he's a superstar. And he's so funny, too, and so kind, also. And I told him, and he said, oh, yes, I've worked on projects like that. And he has this line that's very interesting. He said, you know, I bought my first home on the proceeds of aid. Aid's been very good to me. It's allowed me to lead a good life —

WOODS: Yeah, that shocked me. I couldn't believe he said that.

MILLER: Well, I'll tell you this. This is interesting. He's like, you know, to travel, etc., when we show this to American audiences, people are either shocked or, like, you can feel the tension in the room. And even when we were making it, some people were watching it; they're like, ooh, do you think you should take that out? I said, no, absolutely not.

WOODS: Well, especially his delivery, though. He delivers it almost like it's a joke.

MILLER: Oh, I know, yeah. So if you see it by yourself and you just see that — we actually showed that as a clip to some people years ago, they'd be like, this guy's a jerk. And we had to explain, no, he's explaining to you what the problem is like. But anyway, very interestingly, some people were saying, you know, calling for us to, hey, maybe you should take that out, it's just too rough. Well, I didn't want to take it out, because as a film — even despite the argument, right — I mean, I used to be a philosophy professor and political science, so I like arguments. But the film element to it, it's unsettling. When you watch that it's totally unsettling. And so that's why it's actually a good part of the film. But what's very interesting, Tom, we played that — we played at the African Business Conference at Harvard and we played other places where a lot of Africans are there, and they're like, oh yes, yes, absolutely. Like, to the American audiences it's really disconcerting, but to the African audiences they're like, of course, that's exactly what happens.

And I think one of the things that we wanted to show in the film that, again, is part of just going beyond the Right and the Left, the Right tends to not like foreign aid, because they think it's not effective, because they think it subsidizes dictators, etc., etc. And they're generally right.

WOODS: Yep.

MILLER: The Left tends to like foreign aid, because they think, look, it's an emergency situation and we have to help, and they tend to think it's an altruistic way of doing it and that corporations can be a problem. And in some ways, corporations can be a problem, and in a very short-term emergency situation, foreign aid can be helpful. Let

me pause. That's actually one of the big problems that Magatte Wade points out, and others. We've used an emergency model or emergency response as the model for development. So when you have an emergency, when you have an earthquake, typhoon, some kind of natural disaster, either in another country or even in someone's own personal life, it's an emergency. People need to come in and do things that you wouldn't normally do. The problem is we keep doing that for years and decades. As one guy in the film says, three years after the Haitian earthquake, they were still giving free rides away. It's not an emergency anymore.

So what happens is I think people on the Left — again, this is totally unnuanced, but we don't have time to go nuanced. So people on the Left tend to think, well, yeah, foreign aid is helpful and you've got to help these people in emergencies. But what they don't see and I think what people on the Right who tend to like businesses and think businesses are solutions, what we wanted to show is actually in the poverty industry, big businesses and foreign aid are working together in a type of crony capitalism. So when Dalrymple says, of course that foreign aid goes back to the corporations and the shareholders, I myself have benefitted, that's like a shocking moment across the board. And then when we show that, for example, \$1 billion in agricultural aid, *The Guardian* newspaper reported that 70% of that aid money went to three companies in the United States. So we begin to see, like, wait a minute, foreign aid and big business are working together, and a lot of people are making a lot of money. And so we show, like, Catholic Relief Services, 70% of their budget comes from foreign aid, from government money.

WOODS: Yeah.

MILLER: Chemonics made I think about \$500 million in government contracts. I mean, there's a lot of money to be made in the foreign aid industry, and I think what we were hoping to do is realize, oh, it's not corporations or government. It's actually kind of an elite collusion that's keeping poor people locked out by not building that ladder, as we discussed earlier. And again, it's not malevolent. I think a lot of it goes into just mistaken assumptions about the economy. I mean, this is what your show is about, right? Kind of teaching people to think clearly about economic issues. I think people tend to go in with lots of assumptions and values and beliefs and a lot of misunderstanding about how the economy works, about economic growth, about how entrepreneurs develop.

And part of what we wanted to do was in this one little area kind of create some dissonance so that people would be able to wrestle with these questions and say, huh, I never thought of it that way. And, like, one lady who we talked with about the film — I think she worked at the United Nations, this lady — she said, I've known there was something wrong, but I wasn't able to articulate it, and that's what this film helped me do. And so that's kind of what we're trying to do, and we've been delighted with the response.

WOODS: I want to mention a point in the film that really shocked me, and I want you to tie it in to the overall theme. Like, how is it related to your argument? And that

involves the couple who went to Haiti. This must have been I guess after the earthquake. And they said that they wanted to adopt a child there, and they wanted to adopt an orphan, so they went to an orphanage, and they were in the process of adopting a child. And they were asked, would you like to meet the child's mother, and they were surprised, because by definition, if you're an orphan, doesn't that mean that you don't have a mother. And so they wound up meeting the child's mother, and this is a mother who wanted the child, but she was in circumstances where the housing was inadequate, the food was inadequate, violence was everywhere. She felt like the orphanage was the best hope for the child, and here now this Western couple is able to come in, spend a little money, and take a child that the mother herself actually wants.

MILLER: Yeah, which they didn't know. That was the point, that they didn't know.

WOODS: Of course, yeah, they were as shocked as anyone. So talk about that. What does that have to do with the whole story of the film?

MILLER: Okay, well, there's I think three or four things. First of all, one of the reasons we talk about nongovernmental organizations – we talked about, you know, the solar panel company, ENERSA, and we give examples of celebrities, and we give this example of adoption – is because oftentimes we can make aid the debate. And now you and I are talking about aid, because it's the 500-pound gorilla in the room, but it's really not a film that critiques aid. Aid is a symptom of a larger underlying problem of the way we view economic development, which I've already talked about, and so because it's the 500-pound gorilla in the room, it creates a lot of distortion. But aid is not the problem; aid is a symptom of the larger problem.

And so what we're seeing is the larger problem is manifesting itself in social entrepreneurship, in nongovernmental organizations, and even in Christian charity, where we tend to turn people, as I said, into objects of our charity and problems that we need to solve. And Corrigan Clay and his wife, Shelley, who are the characters there, I think one of the things that's very interesting, and all of your listeners can watch the film, but they realized something's wrong here. And so they ended up starting a business.

And they have some wonderful insights, and I think one of the things that's so interesting about it is there's a certain wisdom and heroism, like moral fortitude, but there's also something really non-ideological about what they did. They went in, they had a vision, they were going to do something. They realized it wasn't working. And they didn't make – you know, it's not the bed of Procrustes. They didn't make their situation fit into their theory. They said, oh, wait a minute, what's going on here. And they began to ask around, and they discovered, as we talked about in the film, that about 80% of orphans in Haiti have at least one living parent. And they said, well, why are the parents giving the children away? Well, it's as you said; they're poor, it's violent, all these things. What should we do? What if we started trying to create company that creates jobs?

And you know, Peter Thiel in his book *Zero to One*, he says he likes the term "founder" — I don't know if you've read it, but he says an entrepreneur is really somebody who sees a problem and then tries to create a solution to that problem. In some ways, they just saw this problem, which is obvious. Like, if the parents had jobs, they wouldn't need to give their children away. So what if we started trying to create a company? And so that's what they ended up trying to do, and I think part of the reason we show that in the film is that, one, it shows that this is not a problem limited just to government-to-government transfers. It's a problem that the way of thinking impacts charities and Christian organizations.

The book in the New Testament, the Letter of James says that pure religion is to care for the widow and the orphan in their distress. So that's what they're doing, and that's what so many people who are going out to care for people are following this kind of gospel command. But we're also not supposed to merely — in the Christian understanding, we're not supposed to just practice random acts of kindness but exercise charity and justice ordered by reason. And that requires us to kind of pause and think, and so one of the reasons we showed this example is that you see here people looking at a problem, running in to something and saying, oh, let's come up with a solution that makes sense, that's congruent with the problem we're facing.

And I think it's an interesting model of what I would say is non-ideological. That is, they have beliefs and they operate on them, but they're not ideologues. They are in this kind of classical term, they're philosophers. They are seeking wisdom and making changes, and I think that's one of the empowering and I think also inspirational parts of that story, is just their willingness to "make a mistake" and learn from that and then create a better solution.

WOODS: Michael, a lot of times I like to ask people questions that are different from the standard boilerplate questions they get in every single interview, but once in a while you do have to ask the standard question, and I bet you get this one a lot. A lot of people do want to help. They do want to do something. They can't pack up and move to another country and work firsthand, but they can find a reputable organization and donate to it. But what we get from this film is, as you say, it's not just a problem that governments are having. That's a symptom of the larger problem of looking at the whole question the wrong way, so that we have charitable organizations that are operating according to a flawed model, and we have these NGOs and everything else.

So if that's the case, it — on the one hand, there's an optimistic message here, which is that we do know what's necessary for human flourishing and for prosperity. But there's something that's kind of pessimistic, in the sense that it's not so clear what I at this point as an individual can do, because I don't know what organization I should donate to, if any. So what should the average person do?

MILLER: Well, that, Tom, I mean, it's a really hard question, and one can understand a bit why celebrity campaigns are so inspirational, because people want to do something, and it gives them an easy way to help, or you know, TOMS shoes or

something. And I have the most unsatisfactory answer you could ever get, which is I don't know. I don't know what the best thing to do is. But what I can say is this: there are groups that are doing some very interesting things, and to try and do some due diligence and figure out, are groups, are they creating prosperity for others, what's their long-term plan, what's their exit strategy? One guy said if you've been here 40 years, it's a problem. If you're doing the same thing for 40 years, it means you're not helping to create solutions.

So I think, looking at that, we talk about one group, Partners Worldwide, in the film, and they go out and they try to help build businesses. So they had a project called the 1000K Jobs in Haiti. They operate in about 20 countries, and they're doing training and building for long-term economic development. So I think people like that – the other thing is I think being close to the problem, you know, maybe we can't help somebody in East Africa, but maybe in, I don't know, Oklahoma or Michigan or Kansas or New York, there are people who have problems who need help and who need our expertise, and I think that's one thing to do.

And I think just kind of – but the goal of the film, really, and this is why in some ways it's unsatisfactory, and I wish I had a better answer. I'd probably be richer. But the goal of the film in some ways is not to give people the solution, but to reframe the debate to say, okay, poverty's deeply complex, but I'm maybe operating, the way I think about poverty, in a flawed model. What if I got the model correct, or at least improved, and I began to think about kind of how you create these institutions of justice. What then could happen?

And in some ways, it's kind of like the entrepreneur, so I'm venturing here into a little bit of Austrian economics. But you have this entrepreneur, where when you have clear access to justice and the court, a clear title to land, etc., etc., people can create prosperity for themselves. And in the same way, if you're thinking about development, the question isn't really, "What can I do to help?" but, "What do people need to create prosperity in their own families and their own communities, and how can I come alongside them to partner with them?" And this requires relationships. It requires philosophically intersubjective relationships. Instead of subject-object relationships, if I'm in need, Tom, and you want to help me, what's the first thing you should come do? You should come ask me, what do I need, what are some of the problems I'm facing? I might not have a full articulation of all those things. I might not be able to say all of those things. I might be missing things. I might have a blindness that you can say, well, Michael, you're actually missing this point. But it's an intersubjective relationship, and that requires time and patience.

And I also think – the last thing I'll say here is that there are a lot of business people who almost turn off their business skills once they decide they're going to deal in the developing world. I actually talked to a lady in the film, Magatte Wade – this story is not in the film. But she told a story, she was talking to a very successful businessman, and he just made a lot of money and he wanted to help poor people, and she had a meeting with them. And he said, I want to do stuff, and she said, well, you can invest in these companies, you can have private equity, you can do that or that or this or

this. And he's like, no, no, no, I don't want to do business; I want to help poor people. It's like, well —

WOODS: Ugh.

MILLER: Right? And so here he was, a successful, American businessman who didn't see the fact that what actually creates the most prosperity for people is when they can take care of themselves. And so I think really kind of rethinking it — and again, that's a long and probably unsatisfactory answer, so probably I won't get invited back for the worst answer I gave, but nevertheless, I think the point of the film is to reframe the debate and the discussion and the approach so that people closest to the problems can come up with solutions to something that I could never give a solution to because I just don't know all the details.

WOODS: Yeah, and there's nothing wrong with that. And also, even if all you had was a catalogue of evidence that the current solutions, so-called, don't work, that's still a contribution. I mean, I may not know how to build a house, but I don't know that if I want it to stay standing I don't light it on fire. That's good advice. I'm glad I know that, so I won't do the wrong thing. I won't do things that have been destructive time and time again. How can people — I see you have a bunch of screenings. People can also view the film in their own homes, so what are the ways they can do that, and direct them — PovertyInc.org, I guess is the site?

MILLER: Yep, PovertyInc.org is the site, so if you have an organization or a school, like a university or a high school or a church or community group or private organization, etc., you can get a screening license, either an educational one or a community screening license. You can also do crowdsourcing at theaters. We've done a lot of those. But if you just want to watch it in your house, it is available on iTunes for rent or purchase and also on Amazon. So Amazon, iTunes, *Poverty, Inc.*, and if you like the movie, write a review. We'd love it. And tell your friends about it. We were in the Top 10 for two weeks at iTunes for documentary. So when people watch it — the way that algorithms work, when people watch it, more people see it and they watch it, so do tell your friends if you like it.

WOODS: I will also link to it on our show notes page for today, which is TomWoods.com/644. So I'll link to the film and to the site and to whatever other Michael Matheson Miller-related items I can come up with, including the episode we did 87 years ago or whenever it was, Episode 61, I'll link to that too. Michael, continued good luck with this, and I hope we can talk again soon.

MILLER: Thank you, Tom, for having me. It's good to talk to you and be on your show.