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So I am here ... to recruit you ... to the liberation movement. Now don't worry, this is not the uniform that you have to wear.

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(Laughter)

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You can come as yourself.

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So you're probably wondering, "Well, what are we being liberated from?" We are being liberated from the endless weight of data. It keeps us bound ... so that we can't move into the future, because we're so busy being tied to the past.

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So how do we get free? The freedom comes from our intuition. The thing that's right here, you know, that you can't really quite quantify. Sometimes, you can't even really describe it. That intuition, that's the thing.

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Now I'm fortunate to have had a career in marketing, where data and intuition and creative ideas are sort of intertwined. But at the beginning of my career, I had a boss who told me that the data was going to be extraordinarily important to the success of my ideas. Right? Anchor the idea in the data, you can predict whether or not it's going to work, and then you can see if it actually did work, and vice versa. Well, I mean, look, I took that advice. I baked a lot my ideas right there in the data. I was inspired, sometimes. I'd see a pattern of something moving, and I would say, "Look, I can follow that! Maybe it'll work."

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But the challenge was that my ideas stopped right there. They didn't really take flight. Because, you know, the ideas are based off of electricity, you know? Ideas, like, come sharp. They sprint here, and they go here, and they move there. They're nonlinear. I kind of feel like they're like

daydreams. You know? Intuition gets you there. It feels like something that is just on the horizon. And then, sometimes, it comes into sharp focus. You wake up and you remember exactly what it was. That's what ideas feel like. And your intuition is actually what helps you get there. It takes it from something that is so practical to something that is magical.

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Now, I'm also very, very, very grateful for a boss I had early on, who affirmed my intuition. I worked for Spike Lee at his advertising agency. This was in the early 2000s. And at the time, Pepsi had commissioned him to create a commercial for a campaign that they were trying to run on the main brand. Spike asked everybody in the office to come up with some thoughts on what the talent could be that would star in the commercial. And at the time, I was an assistant account executive. There were people who were much more senior than I, who knew exactly what they were doing, who had come up with a bunch of great ideas. They went to the data. They went to the Billboard charts to look at who was at the top. They went to album sales to see who was selling, who the public really loved. They looked at lists that experts had put together. Who's at the top? Who's really going to win? Who has longevity? Well, I didn't really understand any of that data.

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(Laughs)

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I could look at it, but I didn't really trust myself to interpret it. So I went to the thing I did know, which is MTV.

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(Laughs)

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There had been a made-for-TV movie called "Carmen: A Hip Hopera," on MTV. I loved it. It starred Beyoncé. Now I thought it was magical, because, I mean, who the hell puts hip-hop and opera together? It's fascinating. So, I put my vote on Beyoncé.

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Now of course, today, everybody would be like, "Well, of course, that makes so much sense, why wouldn't you? Bet on her. Yeah, she's a winner." But at the time, the data would tell us differently. No, there are not a lot of solo artists that come out of girl groups and are successful. In my opinion, there is only one.

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(Laughs)

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Diana Ross. Yeah, the one.

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(Laughter)

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Beyoncé is another. So at the time, nobody was betting on her. But I'm so grateful that Spike ... affirmed my intuition and also followed his. And I would say, today, that we're pretty successful.

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(Laughter)

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Now, 20 years later, I still use my intuition, daily. I'm the chief marketing officer at Netflix. You'd probably say that maybe the stakes weren't as high when I was an assistant account executive, so I could use my intuition, and who cared. And maybe today, that's different. It's not. Every day, I am charged with looking at campaigns that are 15 seconds long, 60 seconds long, 90 seconds long, that will encourage you to watch something that's much longer. Every day. And so I have to use my intuition to understand whether or not something is going to make you cry immediately, is it going to make you laugh immediately, is it going to scare you? Is it going to inspire you? And I feel like if I feel that ... then perhaps you do too.

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Now I'm not the only one. There are other people who do this. One is over 100 years ago, Henry Ford. He's attributed with saying that if he had asked people, at the time when he was inventing the Model T, if they wanted something like that,

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(Laughs)

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they would have said they wanted faster horses ... instead of this new invention. I think that's pretty powerful. Or you can look at today. A more recent example, Ed Bastian and the team at Delta, you know, based on intuition, I believe, decided that after the restrictions of leaving that middle seat open so that those who are flying would feel safer, with some distance in-between them, that after those restrictions were lifted, they still kept that middle seat open. Now I'm sure they were losing millions of dollars every day with that decision, but the intuition was right. Do you feel safer? Do I feel safer? What would make us feel safer? I think that's the right thing.

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Now look, we can all look at 2020 and 2021 and understand that, oof, we can't really predict what happens.

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(Laughs)

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We don't really know. But what we do know is right here. What are the things that make us feel good, the things that scare us, the things that make us feel more connected to each other?

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You know, today ... is a gift. That's why they call it the present.

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(Laughter)

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I didn't make that up, but it's so corny and I love it.

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(Laughter)

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But my addition to it is the question: "Why would we give the present back?" Oh, your intuition is a gift. So we have to use it.

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So then let's talk about you. You have your intuition. And we'll use some science in here too. We're not totally against data.

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(Laughs)

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That if you are a set up of molecules, OK? Every one of us has a unique pattern, a unique set. How remarkable is that -- no two of us are the same. So one molecule changes, and we have a whole other being. Now if you consider that we take ourselves as a whole -- let's pretend we're one big molecule, and that over there, the matter over there, is life and the experiences, the services, the communities that we serve, and we enter that matter -- it changes. You step out of the matter, it changes.

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So of course you're powerful. So why wouldn't your intuition, your own thing that you have, be powerful? I think about that all the time.

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And perhaps you don't want to take the big, big swing just yet. You know, you can take the little steps. You can practice. I've practiced for a long time. I want to encourage you to practice too. So maybe you don't want to, you know, bet on Beyoncé.

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(Laughs)

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Or maybe you don't want to create the Model T. Maybe you don't want to make the call about the middle seat. So let's take it to something that may be a little bit easier, a little closer to home. Let's pretend you're curating a dinner party. Going to be safe about it -- we have six people over. And you're considering all the data around who likes what. Right? There's some people who, you know, maybe somebody is a pescatarian, another person doesn't eat dairy, another hates spicy food, somebody only likes their food really, really hot, with heat, and you have to consider all of this. Put it all together, think about what to make. I think you'd come up with a really bland fish dish, ugh. Something terrible. But if you used yourself as the curator, as one with intuition -- think about it, yes, put in all the data, you know? Pescatarian, the spices, all of that. I think you would come up with something you wanted to eat too. You know? Taking all of that into consideration. It might be a catfish stew. Something really delicious, something memorable. Now there's probably going to be one person in there who hates it.

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(Laughs)

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Guaranteed, there's always one. But that's OK. Everybody else will remember that moment, remember that experience. It will be something exciting. So consider that.

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As I think about data and how we want to live and change our world, I'm reminded that sometimes, data is the pill that we take to calm our insecurity about what we intuitively know. So I'm advocating that we decrease the dosage of our data. And that we increase the implementation of our intuition. You'll feel great, you really will ... when you're able to prove to yourself that the power of your intuition is actually accurate.

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Thank you so much.

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(Applause)