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Founder of Skating Panda  
'Access all areas: collaborative positive change'

Hello, I'm very proud to be here today though was quite baffled to find the lodge had moved sides, the quad seems a little smaller and I almost started searching for green tokens in my handbag to pay for our coffee and lunch earlier – we had to pay with those in my day, but I am delighted to see that Kenny is still here. How awesome that one of the friendliest faces of my undergraduate years is still here and still as friendly.

One of the main things that appealed to me both before I applied to Hertford, and when I arrived here, was the diversity of intake because it reflected real life. I mean that there was diversity in gender, in schools and types of school and proper regional diversity with a bit of international thrown in.

That diversity is also partly why, no doubt, I ended up doing what I do now. Because even within the “exclusivity” of Oxford I learnt socially and academically about the importance of fair access. And I want to talk a bit about that. I am also going to talk a bit about the

how – how I go about creating access – and about challenging the status quo and working collaboratively.

I grew up in series of very drafty, chaotic vicarages in all corners of the UK - I was the local vicar's daughter with extremely committed parents who made massive compromises to do the work they did. If tramps knocked on our door, as they frequently did, and asked for cash "for food", my parents would invite them in. My brothers and I would frequently come downstairs and find ourselves sitting next to these random strangers, who were sharing the marmalade jar and the bread knife.

It was an unconventional childhood.

So perhaps unsurprisingly, for a number of years after studying here I travelled the world on business trips, built up my airmiles, bought nice shoes and learnt about supply chains, logistics and doing global business. I made those firms much richer. I then went and worked on the Olympic bid campaign and had a touch point with how to make change happen, and it was then that I had a moment of epiphany. I realised that my life had to change.

I re-found that sense of purpose, of commitment and of social responsibility.

I had built up a set of skills and it dawned on me that I could use them to transform the way the world works. I realised that there was an opportunity to help organisations behave themselves a little better. To reach further. To make governments adjust their policy. To create positive change.

I set up a consulting firm called Skating Panda. When I describe Skating Panda as a campaigning collective people can look a bit bemused. We're really like a dating agency. On one hand there's a cause, such as poverty - call that the single man. On the other hand you've got a single woman - call that an asset; so say it's a celebrity, a campaign, a business, who clearly has power to collaborate and help with a cause. Skating Panda ensures that those two people go on the best date ever to absolutely maximise impact, and nine times out of ten that involves opening up access.

The outcomes of campaigns are not always direct access – often cash, a media story, a policy change – but how does this translate to

something more. I'm going to give you a look behind the scenes at the workings of world changing stuff be it health, equal rights, through to basics needs in disasters.

I want to talk you through three examples

#### EXAMPLE ONE:

A few years ago I was involved in the making of a programme called *Idol Gives Back*. *Idol Gives Back* was part of *American Idol* which at the time was being watched by 30 million viewers and was the largest TV show in the US. We took over the show for two nights and engaged musicians, celebrities, all sorts of people from all walks of life and importantly also, corporate brands.

I remember leaving the studio on the night of the event and I kind of thought, 'okay, well we've done alright here'. We haven't had any major disasters on air but I had absolutely no idea what impact the show had had, because it was a new thing. We've got it here, we've got red nose day, we've got children in need, we've got amazing shows here, but America didn't really have this, and it turned out amazingly that we had made 70 million dollars from that event. The

show then won an Emmy and actually most importantly to me, the show itself and now Red Nose Day exist in America.

I'm going to play you just a small clip of the show and show you a little bit about what the evening was about and about the collaboration behind that.

**(Plays clip)**

So what made this work?

I strongly believe there are two common themes at play here:

First the positive change that occurred opened up a very basic kind of access – access to food for America's hungry. 1 in 6 people currently struggle to get enough to eat. Access to basic healthcare for America's most under-served children. Access to malaria nets for those in SSA most at risk of dying of malaria. The list goes on.

And second, really importantly none of this would have happened without extraordinary collaboration and gifting from people that don't normally collaborate, they normally compete, and we tried to get people in a room to do that for the sake of the children that we

were trying to help. Getting all three presidential candidates to go on a reality TV show, getting competing artists to sing together, bringing a collective of charities together.

There's also a different kind of access going on here which is through the viewers. They are watching it on prime time TV on their couches in the evening. By making sure the money was directed to local causes as well as international ones we could help engage the audience.

#### EXAMPLE TWO:

In a very different vein we have worked on syphilis – yes, syphilis – and who knew it was still an important problem in today's world. Well it is, and here's why. It is estimated that two million pregnant women are infected with syphilis every year and that over half of these pass it on to their unborn child during pregnancy, which, if untreated, is associated with spontaneous abortion, stillbirth, premature delivery, low birth weight, and perinatal death. We worked with LSTHM to communicate about and advocate for policy change in six countries around the world in order to provide access

to women for important diagnostics that we all take for granted here. In my antenatal screenings, here I was tested for syphilis and many other things besides as a basic provision on the NHS. A lot of women are not that lucky.

These are simple, rapid diagnostic tests can screen patients in just 15 minutes allowing on the spot treatment with a single shot of penicillin if needed. And every single country of the six did adopt and enshrine the new policy about syphilis testing and now their neighbours are using the tests. The access piece here is obvious – women and unborn children now can access kits they couldn't access previously and this has a major impact on their and their families' health.

The collaboration here is more complex. We worked with health ministers, policy makers and health workers, donors and change agents at every level and there is still work to be done. And while collaboration in these unusual ways isn't always easy, it is very important.

### EXAMPLE THREE

Last but not least, a few months back we had a general election and some felt that there was only a choice between three men who looked pretty much of the same age and background, wearing pretty much the same suits but different coloured ties. Out of this observation, and perhaps a more general frustration with and fragmentation of the political scene, was born the Women's Equality Party. And we're working with them now. It is the fastest growing political party in the UK with thousands of members already signed up. This is about providing a different kind of access- helping the fabric of our society change for the better by changing things in six key areas:

- equal representation in politics, business, industry and throughout working life.
- equal pay and an equal opportunity to thrive.



- equal parenting and caregiving and shared responsibilities at home to give everyone equal opportunities both in family life and in the work place.
- equal treatment of women by and in the media.
- an end to violence against women.
- And last but not least an education system that creates opportunities for all children and an understanding of why this matters.

As a mum of three boys, I'm interested in how those boys behave in a gender equal way when they grow up. Although at school, girls outperform boys in every mainstream GCSE subject except Maths and young women make up 57% of first degree university graduates - somewhere along their career path women fall behind. At the same time an average woman working full-time from 18 to 59 will earn £361,000 less over her working life than an equivalent man. The access at this juncture isn't fair access.

The access here is that many people, yes many women but there are men as well, who previously didn't vote or enjoy voting now have access to a democratic party they want to vote for.

And the collaboration is massive – there are groups all over the country at the moment working on the policies that will be announced in detail in October.

Unlike with American Idol and syphilis diagnostic kits where the access is more literal, the work of the Women's Equality Party is work not yet done. It strives to gain equal access for all genders through its sharp focus and unusual approach as a party founded just a few months ago, in a way that changes the fabric of our society and the organisations we bump into each day.

I think us Hertford lot are a bit unusual – in a good way by the way! I looked up my peers and wanted to do them a bit of homage. My peer Kate Wilson Hargreaves is working tirelessly on resilience and access for minority ethnic populations in Scotland. Ben Knowles is campaigning to end institutional care of children within 30 years and give them access to loving families.

We're all at very different stages of our lives and we're constantly faced with new challenges – professional, financial and personal.

These are – in the main – first world problems.

At the end of the day, and whatever one's route to Hertford, it is a big privilege to be here - and I believe that with that comes responsibility.

One big thing I've learnt is to try to work out where you come from and what you personally can contribute – in whatever shape or form - and be brave in pursuing that. I'd love you all to have a thought about what you can do best in the collaborative opening up of access. We've hugely benefitted from Hertford. What change can you personally now make happen? Happy to chat to you about this afterwards. Let's talk but also let's not forget to keep doing.

Thank you.

