

WES MOORE STOOD SECOND FROM left, smiling, alongside four US military veterans. His head obscured the lower-half of the I on the Time magazine cover. The headline read: “The New Greatest Generation.”

The issue came out in August 2011, when Mr. Moore was 32 years old. A Rhodes Scholar and White House Fellow who’d spent time working on Wall Street, Mr. Moore was then best-known for the best-selling book he’d published a year earlier: *The Other Wes Moore*, a true story about a man who shared Mr. Moore’s name and had been born in the same impoverished Baltimore neighborhood. While the author had gone on to distinguished career that included serving as a paratrooper in US Army’s 82nd Airborne Division, the other Wes Moore had killed an off-duty police officer and was serving a life sentence.

How could two African-American men born into such similar situations have wound up on vastly different paths? The answer Mr. Moore arrived at was neither simple nor comfortable: a mixture of luck and personal responsibility, a difference in small decisions and family support. “The chilling truth is that his story could have been mine,” Mr. Moore wrote. “The tragedy is that my story could have been his.”

After appearing on the Time cover, Mr. Moore wrote another best-selling book, worked to combat veteran homelessness – his TED talk “How to talk to veterans about war” has been viewed nearly 1 million times – and became a host on the Oprah Winfrey Network. In 2014, he founded BridgeEdu, an education platform to help disadvantaged students at every stage of college, from admission to graduation.

In April 2017, Mr. Moore was announced as the new CEO of Robin Hood, the largest poverty-fighting organization in New York City. By the organization’s estimates, there are 1.8 million low-income New Yorkers in need of the charity’s help – a population that would be the fifth-largest in the US if it were a standalone city.

Robin Hood’s annual donations approach \$130 million, with a majority of the funds going to provide education, basic needs and economic security. The efficacy of each program the charity invests in is evaluated by one of the organization’s 160-plus “metric formulas,” all of which are available on Robin Hood’s website.

Such a numbers-driven approach seems fitting considering the makeup of Robin Hood’s board,

which includes some of Wall Street’s biggest names: Paul Tudor Jones, the organization’s founder, David Solomon, David Tepper, Laurence Fink, Stan Druckenmiller. These legendary investors, along with other directors – who include Jeff Immelt, Katie Couric, and Tom Brokaw – cover 100 percent of Robin Hood’s administrative costs.

Mr. Moore is committed to accelerating Robin Hood’s fight against poverty, and he’s also looking to expand it. “Poverty’s nowhere near beaten in New York,” Mr. Moore told Brunswick recently. “But poverty’s also nowhere near a New York problem – there are more homeless veterans in Baltimore than there are in New York City, for instance. And the truth is the victories here

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won’t mean enough unless they can inspire victories elsewhere.”

In a wide-ranging conversation, Mr. Moore shared what he’s reading at the moment – *The War on Normal People* by Andrew Yang, and *How Democracies Die* by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt – and also spoke about what guides him as a leader. “You’re only going to get people so far by telling them what to do,” Mr. Moore says. “You’ll get people to move mountains if you show them what to do.”

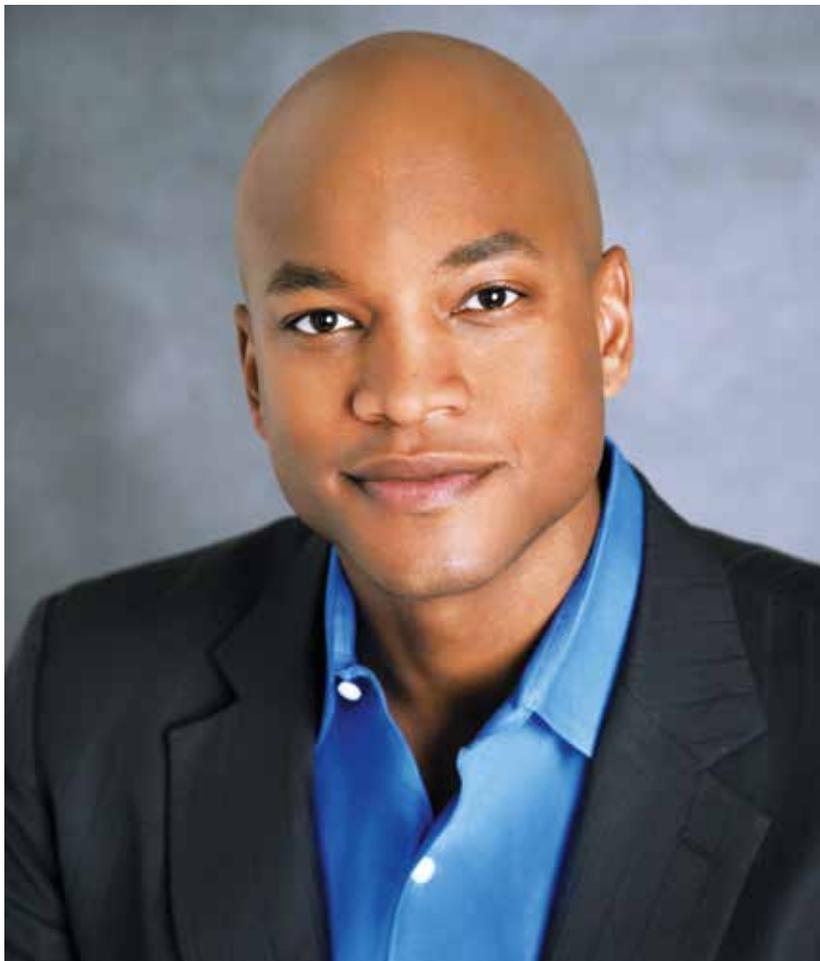
What would you tell a young person who wants to know what it takes to lead others?

I’d tell them to lead by example.

Why that in particular?

There’s a lot of lessons about things like focus, direction, transparency, and so on. All of those

Robin Hood CEO **WES MOORE** is a decorated veteran, best-selling author, White House Fellow, social entrepreneur, Rhodes Scholar, former investment banker – and approaching his 40th birthday. He talks with Brunswick’s **MUSTAFA RIFFAT**



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things are incredibly important, of course, and you need them to be successful. But it's easy to get mired in long lists of leadership do's and don'ts.

It's amazing what people will do if they know that you've done it already, or that you're going to be right there with them. It sounds simple, but it's not easy.

People need to feel inspired by the work that they do. They need to be driven by the work they do; they need to believe in it.

By leading the way, you're showing people that even though it might be hard, it won't be impossible. That you'll never ask them to do something you're not willing to do yourself.

With the emphasis you place on action, how important are words? Are there any you deliberately try and use more as a CEO?

Words matter immensely; they can support action and inspire it. One of the key words I'm stressing now is partnership. Partnership in everything that we do. The problem of poverty is too big for any person, any organization, to tackle by themselves. The team that partners best, will win.

WES MOORE

Wes Moore is CEO of Robin Hood Foundation, New York's largest poverty-fighting organization. He is a best-selling author and former White House Fellow and Rhodes Scholar. He served in the 82nd Airborne Division in the US Army.

There's been talk of "ending poverty" for decades. Is it a reasonable goal?

I think the idea of waking up one day and poverty being gone isn't a realistic expectation. I think part of the problem is, at best, we have moved as a society toward simply making poverty more tolerable. We can do better; we have the tools to do better. Now we just need the will.

What's the biggest myth people have about poverty in the US?

One of the biggest is that people are poor by choice. Another is that poverty is a lifestyle decision – that if people just work hard they can get out of poverty.

Those are myths because they're simply not backed up by facts. The fastest-growing population of people in poverty are the working poor. And the challenges and obstacles they're facing are becoming more complicated, not less, so we have to be more innovative with our solutions and not retreat to simple explanations like "work harder."

What would you say to people who feel powerless to affect change in their lives, let alone societal change?

I'd tell them to simply focus on what they can do. To try to solve a big problem by yourself can feel so intimidating and overwhelming that it leaves you wondering where to start. But if you do your part, if you push yourself a little bit harder – that change, whether personal or societal, could be tremendous.

You've accomplished a great deal in a relatively short career. What drives you?

My sister said her definition of hell would be God showing you everything you could have accomplished had you only tried. I heard that and ... damn.

When we think about what it is that we can do, what we should do – if we're not pushing, and if we're not moving beyond the fear of failure, trying to stretch, then what's the point? If you're not running across the tape and collapsing after you finish, then you didn't run your hardest race.

Whenever that conversation happens for me, whenever that day comes, the only thing I want God to say to me is: "Job well done."

MUSTAFA RIFFAT is a Director specializing in cross-border M&A transactions, crisis, and capital markets. A member of Brunswick's global financial institutions group, he is based in New York.