

Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 337: GAIL MILLER

Welcome back to the Disrupt Yourself podcast. I'm your host, Whitney Johnson, CEO of Disruption Advisors, where we help you grow your people to grow your organization because organizations don't Disrupt people do. The building block of that growth. It's you. To give to another is to give up something you have. It's the basis of the word philanthropy. Phila meaning love for one another. Two episodes ago, we talked with Alan Mulally about how that kind of love for strangers especially isn't wired anywhere in our brains.

We're not that far from our hunter gatherer ancestors. Why would we ever give up our juicy elk and medicinal berries to another tribe just because they're hungry? Aren't we hungry too? And isn't that the point? We know what it's like to be hungry. We know what it's like to feel our guts twist. We know how much it hurts to watch everyone else eat. And we know how badly. In that moment, we wanted someone to offer us a bite to eat or somewhere to sleep or whatever it was that we needed, how badly we wanted that love.

Our guest today is a philanthropist, to no surprise. Gail Miller is the wealthiest person in the state of Utah, having taken on leadership of her late husband's foundation after he passed in 2009. In the time since, Gail has reorganized almost all of the company's assets, selling off the Utah Jazz, moving money and effort into real estate, health care, homelessness services. Gail is a philanthropist. Yes, but does that clinical sanitized word really reflect that intense love? Gail's love of giving when you know acutely what it's like to be hungry. I hope you enjoy.

Whitney Johnson: First of all, Gail, it is wonderful to be with you.

Gail Miller: Well, thank you. Whitney It's fun to be with you. These are always an adventure.

Whitney Johnson: Yes, they are. So we do start with a foundational story. And since we're talking about philanthropy, I wanted to talk about a moment that someone gave something to you out of the kindness of their heart. That was there was there were no strings attached. Is there a moment in your life that stands out?

Gail Miller: Yes. And it stands out very strongly because I was eight years old. I was born in a very humble circumstance, but I was getting ready to be baptized. And I had a brother who was ten years older than me. And I guess he had a job, I don't know. But he bought me a new dress. I had never had a new store bought dress and it was the most beautiful dress. It was green with gold filigree all over it. And it had ruffles. It looked like a pinafore, but it was all one piece. And I still have that dress today, this many years later, because it meant so much to me and the way I wore it till I grew out of it and playing on the monkey bars, I tore it up the front. You know, you put your arms around and I would keep sewing it together. I did that myself by hand because it just meant so much. But it was the idea that he would buy me a new dress and that I loved it so much. It has impacted me all these years.

Whitney Johnson: What a beautiful gift to feel so loved by your brother.

Gail Miller: Yeah. And we're still close today.

Whitney Johnson: So where is the dress?

Gail Miller: It's in my closet. I have wondered what. What can I do to preserve it? Adequately. Appropriately. And I finally decided that the gold is all gone. There's just a line where the gold was, but I can just cut out a little square and put it in my scrapbook and write the story. So that's what I'll do eventually when I get to it. Yeah.

Whitney Johnson: So today you are on a lot of boards of directors and a lot of where you've decided to devote your time and money is on the topic of insecurity, food insecurity, housing insecurity. As you just said, you grew up very poor in the 40s and

50s. Can you talk about, as you think about philanthropy, how were those formative years? How has that shaped your view of philanthropy?

Gail Miller: I think I was very, very lucky in the parents that I had who never put value on money or the lack of money. It was who you were that meant the most. And so I learned that it wasn't what you had, it was what you did that was important. And that allowed me to have empathy, sympathy and compassion for those later on that I could see were going through similar experiences. So I feel like I can understand and connect with people in circumstances that are hard to live through. And so I think that shaped my desire and my ability to be of service, be service oriented.

Whitney Johnson: It's interesting. I actually have two follow up questions. One is I think sometimes there is. A tendency or a view of if someone has less, they are somehow going to be more noble in some way. But sometimes they're not. They look up and they say, Oh, well, if I only had this or there's a sense of of feeling jealousy, I guess, if you will, and it sounds like your parents, they didn't they didn't view people or the world that way.

Gail Miller: No, they didn't. They they really looked inward and taught that they you know, from a young age, we were taught that we could do anything. We were smart and we were capable. And that allowed us to develop talents and to be of service and to. Develop ourselves. I learned to be very. Solution oriented. I'm a fixer. Yeah, because I see something and I want to fix it. My husband says, don't give Gail a project. Don't even mention it because she'll go right to work on it. But that's just what happened, you know?

Whitney Johnson: So where did you grow up?

Gail Miller: I grew up in Salt Lake City, right in the downtown area, about four blocks north of Temple Square.

Whitney Johnson: All right. So I'm now finding myself very intrigued by what you described, how you described your parents. Does an experience stand out? Is there a vignette, a moment where you observed how they treated other people? Does any story or moment come to mind?

Gail Miller: Well, I observed how my father treated my mother. I mean, they were so totally in love. They got married in 1928. They had five children during the Depression. I was the sixth and I was born in the 40s right after the war. I remember him, them standing in a doorway with him, brushing her hair to the back of her ears and kissing her on the cheek. And he just loved her. And that was what counted, was not what they had. I think they made up in affection what they didn't have in material, although they worked hard and they would have liked to have nice things. I think my mother grew up in a fairly affluent family. My dad struggled. His mother died when he was 12, and he left home, I think about 1415 because his dad remarried and had six more. She had six kids, so it ended up being like 11 kids in the family. And he just there was no place for him. So he struggled. But together they they made a really nice home.

Whitney Johnson: And it was the middle of the Depression.

Gail Miller: Yeah.

Whitney Johnson: That image of your father brushing your mother's hair off her cheek. That's so tender. What did you love to do as a child? Well, we'll talk about being so you said you were resourceful. It sounds like you liked to sew. You liked to climb trees. What else did you love?

Gail Miller: I started making my own clothes when I was in fourth grade. In sixth grade, I was sewing for my girlfriend, her clothes. She was an immigrant from Denmark. I loved to roller skate. I loved to play. We had a swing in our back yard. I don't know if my dad put it in or not, but it was just a metal pole swing with a chain hanging from the top crossbar and my girlfriend across the back fence and I used to put on shows for the neighborhood kids. We would do acrobatics in the swing and she would get up on that top bar and sit there with her arms and legs out while I would swing and do somersaults in the swing. And we would charge a penny a piece to come and watch us.

Whitney Johnson: The acrobatics show circus.

Gail Miller: Yeah, we were a little daredevils.

Whitney Johnson: So now you have grandchildren and.

Gail Miller: Lots of them.

Whitney Johnson: Yes. And you have given them this wonderful opportunity of deciding on the nonprofits that your foundation will support. What does that look like?

Gail Miller: It's pretty exciting. I think they're coming around to it in the beginning. Well, actually, after Larry passed away and I became responsible for all of the foundation work, I thought, this is a family foundation. How are they going to get interested in it? Because even my kids were saying, Mom, it's your money. You do what you want with it. It was a little hard to get them to accept the idea that they could have a voice. So then I started thinking about the next generation. I thought, someday they're going to be running this. How are they going to know how it works or what it feels like, or even have compassion for people with this resource? So we talked it over and decided to give each grandchild a certain amount of money that they were responsible for to go out and find a cause, a charitable cause, explore what it meant, what it was about, whether it was worthy, and then come back and tell us about it so that we could approve the money. Then they could go out and give the money. So they had the whole experience and some were very reticent to do it. Some were too shy, too awkward. But it's evolved to the point now where we have a council in the third generation who oversees it, and then they have created a mentorship. So those that give help, those that are having trouble give, and then if they give their money away, they get an additional amount. So it grows every year and they're doing really good things and they're able to find causes that affect their lives, which is what charity is all about. You find something that you're passionate about and then you can have compassion.

Whitney Johnson: What are the age ranges of that third generation.

Gail Miller: 12 on up. My oldest grandchild will be 36 or 7 this month.

Whitney Johnson: So you sold the Jazz a few years ago and that involved some very big numbers around \$2 Million once all the Dust cleared. And at the time you said you were going to, quote, take time to survey the land, see what's out there. Can you tell us a bit about how you navigated the launch point of this new curve of all this capital

coming in at once? What are some of the decisions that you had to make or how were you thinking about this process?

Gail Miller: Yeah, it was kind of a delicate process because you can't get the business revenue to serve your philanthropic revenue. But there was so much there that the hard decision was how much do you redirect to philanthropy? Because it was a really nice opportunity to increase our ability to do things on a bigger scale and to grow our philanthropy in a way that we hadn't been able to before. And we knew the money was there because it's in the in the asset but not accessible. So now it's sitting out there and you can take it and say, What could we do with this and how much should we take, How much should we put in the foundation? That was probably the hardest. I worked with advisors in the company and with the family and we settled on an amount. And it kind of catapulted us into a whole different realm of giving. Huh. Because we have so much more now to give. And the process whereby we decide what to give to has developed in a different way, where now, instead of reacting to requests, we're in a position where we can determine where we want to have an impact.

Whitney Johnson: Interesting. So it really was a new a new learning curve because you were giving it sort of it's almost like, I guess the idea we'll go we'll stay with the basketball metaphor, right. It's like the difference between playing maybe high school basketball and now going to professional basketball. And there's different decisions to be made in different arenas. And you have to the calculus changed. You have.

Gail Miller: To develop. You have to become a star player.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah exactly. Yeah, exactly. And so and you also had more resources to think about what do we want to do? And the sense that you could have a much grander impact if you were thoughtful and deliberate about how to direct your resources.

Gail Miller: That's exactly right. You summarized it well. Mm hmm.

Whitney Johnson: Any detail that you want to share around that?

Gail Miller: Well, one thing that's happened since we did that is we've also determined that it would be great to create a fraternity of philanthropy. So other foundations we've invited other foundations and we've engaged other foundations to help us learn to give in a compatible way with other people who are doing similar things that are interested in things we're in. If we join together, we have a greater impact. We've also become a role model for other philanthropies in the state of Utah who watch us and say, Will you teach me how to do that? Especially with the young people and how they're learning? That's been a big one that people have been interested in. So we we've kind of taken a leadership role. Yeah. In philanthropy in that way. Not that we're better at it, it's just that we're, we're stepping into a different place where we want to join with others and we want to I don't know, I guess if we do that, we'll have a bigger impact together.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah, it's interesting. So a federation of philanthropists, if you will, and also, you know, oftentimes you hear people saying, oh, there's this challenge thing I want to solve, and then there's that. I'm going to solve it myself. And you're saying, no, let's work together to solve this because it doesn't have to be I don't have to get the credit. We just want to solve it.

Gail Miller: Exactly.

Whitney Johnson: And I love what you're saying. The image that came to my mind is like this school of philanthropy, that you've got these this younger generation of people who are creating wealth now and you're saying they're coming to you and saying, all right, you've already navigated this just like they needed mentors when they were building their business. Now they're saying, I need mentors and figuring out how to be a good philanthropist, how to be a good steward, and they're coming to you to help school them.

Gail Miller: And they're even if they don't come to us, they're seeing what we do. They're observing and they're feeling like, Yeah, there's a place for me there, there's something I should be doing. And sometimes you don't get this new generation thinking that way. But when they see it in operation, it makes a difference. For instance, we when I served well, I still serve on this committee, but I serve on the primary promise campaign, which is for the new Intermountain Primary Children's Hospital in Lehigh. And we were the lead gift on that, which was a big number, and that was a catalyst for

some of the younger techie people to say, wow, you know, that's in my backyard, maybe I should be giving to it. And they stepped up big time. So it's nice to have that kind of influence and yeah, connection.

Whitney Johnson: I think a lot about moral authority of when we are willing to walk our talk we have moral authority and yeah.

Gail Miller: That's a good way to put it. Yeah. All right.

Whitney Johnson: So a lot of our listeners have never been to the state of Utah. And we're having this conversation live in the state of Utah. What does this state mean to you? What does it look like? What does it taste like for people who have never been here before?

Gail Miller: Oh, I think Utah is the most beautiful state in the nation.

Whitney Johnson: Of course you do.

Gail Miller: And I think that because there is a little bit of every state in Utah, if you start at the top, you've got the forests and the huge mountains and wonderful scenery, huge canyons, skiing, hiking, trail bike riding, everything you could think of. And as you move south, you get into red rocks and desert and beautiful formations. Bryce Canyon, Zions Canyon, Moab is a wonderful area. So if you go from top to bottom or bottom to top, you can experience a variation of things you wouldn't find anywhere else. And I love the mountains. I love the simplicity of living here. Anybody that hasn't been here should come and stay a little while and then go home. But it is beautiful and we are welcoming and it's growing. It's probably the fastest growing state and it's the best economically run state. We have a lot of development here. We have a wonderful business climate. But the thing that's really unique about Utah is the collaboration of the people, and I think that comes from a pioneer spirit. Utah was settled by Mormon pioneers who traveled over a thousand miles to get here. If you don't think that takes determination. And then when they got here, they worked together. And that is still evident today of how we work together to accomplish good things for everybody.

Whitney Johnson: Well, it's called the Beehive State for a reason, right? The industriousness and the collaboration.

Gail Miller: That's true. Yeah.

Whitney Johnson: So you have a book that you've written titled *The Courage to Be You*. Why did you title the book that?

Gail Miller: Well, it was hard to come up with a title. And it was published by Deseret Book. And they said, what do you want your book to be called? And I stayed up all night one-night writing down titles and thinking to sap fit as fit as that fit. And then I thought, you know, the whole reason I wrote this book was because I learned to be courageous. There was a time in my life where if I could just stay home in my own little cocoon and never step out into the world, which wasn't possible because of my husband's prominence in the state, but I would have been happy. So when he passed away and I stepped into not his role, but the responsibility of being the owner of a large company that took a lot of courage. And that was where the title came from. I had to learn to be a little more out there. I had always been right by his side, so it wasn't that I didn't know what it would take, but I think fear is one of those things that prevents women from doing what they want to do. And I know for me it was and I had to find my voice. I had to learn to feel confident in speaking up and saying things that I thought were right and and putting my imprint on the company. So that's where courage comes from. I think we all have to find our courage at some time.

Whitney Johnson: I, I agree. You know, it's interesting. I've been thinking a lot about. Self-suppression and how women and I think men and women do. But I think women in particular, we self-suppress. We don't say what we really think if we're frustrated or angry. We don't say that we're frustrated or angry or if we're joyful. We don't necessarily say that we're joyful. And I think that I've studied a lot of union psychology of this idea of how a woman, in order to be a complete and whole human being, she needs to have the feminine characteristics of nurturing and love and being able to be a harbor. She also has to learn how to be a ship. She needs to know how to navigate those waters and have an opinion and to wield power and to do it well. And it sounds like that when you're your first husband passed away and you needed to step into this responsibility, it was like, okay, I'm good at being a harbor, but now I have to set sail.

Gail Miller: That's true. That's a great way to put it.

Whitney Johnson: Whitney Is there a moment where you remember speaking up and saying, Here's what I think and how you felt of like, I just did it. Just spoke.

Gail Miller: I have a major moment like that. When Larry died, we did not have a board of directors or a direction to get to the future. He knew that it was a great company. He had set up his estate so that everything would continue in perpetuity for 80 to 100 years. But I realized that there needed to be a mechanism for that to happen that he didn't get to before he died. He probably would have, but it didn't happen. So I put in I organized a board of directors for the company, which was a major shift and a resistance. There was a resistance to it because we were a great company and we were running well and you know, things weren't broken. But this was a big change and I think everybody was afraid that I didn't know what I was doing and that I was coming in and changing things. How is it going to work? Does she not have confidence in us? And those are all suppositions because nobody said that. It's just the way I felt they were receiving it. But it's turned out to be a really wonderful step in the company's history. It's catapulted us into a different realm of business. I think we're recognized now as a well-run, well organized, well-governed company that can do what it needs to do and go on into the future with confidence. So that's a major shift where I had to say, look, this is right, it's right for the company, it's right for our people and it's right for the future. So get with it all right.

Whitney Johnson: So our listeners, we have a diversity of religious beliefs and you are part of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints, as am I. I would love for you to talk about briefly how your faith tradition has helped you navigate business, family, philanthropy. How does that operating system guide you?

Gail Miller: It's the foundation of everything I do. I did a podcast once with somebody and they said to me, who is the person you admire most? I said, Jesus Christ. And because that is. Everything I know is based on that philosophy. And if you follow the teachings, the example which my parents were very good at instilling in all of their children, how can you go wrong? He was the master teacher. So it specifically the things that my religion has taught me, there are so many programs for starting when you're three years old that you get to learn how to speak in front of other people. You

get to learn how to serve by doing projects. And you learn how to develop talents by learning canning and sewing and homemaking and. Then you get to learn associations with other people and how to get along in a group. You learn how to share what you have because there are always those less fortunate than you are. No matter how little you have, there's always someone that can use something that you can help them with. So I think all through my life, the foundation of what my religion offers gives me strength to do what I need to do.

Whitney Johnson: You know, it's interesting, Gayle, because I really appreciate your willingness and your openness to share. That you love God and that you love Jesus. And just a few weeks ago, I was with a group of people in a professional setting, and they asked the question, you would really know me if you knew. I thought, oh, what am I going to say? What am I going to say? You know, there's a lot of things I could say. And I realized that the only answer for me was, I love God and I love Jesus Christ. And what was fascinating about that is that afterwards I had so many people say to me that was so brave that you shared that.

Gail Miller: Yeah.

Whitney Johnson: And and yet what I find. Wonderful is that while there are many people who are uncomfortable stating that they believe in a higher power. Many, many, many people do.

Gail Miller: They do. And I use that in talks a lot. I don't use God or Jesus Christ, but I say it's really important that you believe in a higher power, someone who is greater than you, because we all have to get there has to be an aspirational thing, or you have no purpose, right?

Whitney Johnson: It gives you it grounds you when through everything. So what do you do to relax? To just be.

Gail Miller: Well, is there a time for that?

Whitney Johnson: Well, mine is to watch K-dramas. I love Korean dramas. There's great plot. It's great escape. It's something that we do as a little mini hobby as a family. So Korean. Korean dramas.

Gail Miller: I've never heard of that.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. So they're made in Korea, but they've got these great plots and great storytelling. They're completely clean. So where do you find them? On Netflix.

Gail Miller: Really? Yeah.

Whitney Johnson: I'll give you a list.

Gail Miller: I would love that. I listen to podcasts.

Whitney Johnson: You do? Okay. That's what you do. Just to relax. Yeah. Yeah. Is there a podcast that you love to listen to?

Gail Miller: I like Brilliance, My sons. Yeah. Okay. He does a really good.

Whitney Johnson: Job and he's been doing that for a while.

Gail Miller: Yeah, quite a long time. And I like crime. Crime podcasts. You do? My husband thinks I'm nuts. He says, why would you listen to that stuff? There's enough bad in the world.

Whitney Johnson: All right. And I will give you a list of K-dramas to try.

Gail Miller: Okay, great.

Whitney Johnson: All right. So let's talk about a slightly different kind of philanthropy, which is state electoral reform. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

Gail Miller: It's a challenge. It's a big challenge. We've been working on it since 2014. And every year it comes up in the legislature. What I'm talking about is a count my vote.

We call it count my vote. And it's reformation whereby people who want to run for office can gather signatures rather than go through a caucus because caucuses are very tightly run and the people that come through the caucus are favored sons generally who the caucus representatives want to have in office. And we feel like there should be a broader scope and a broader opportunity for people to get on the ballot and then they have to win at their, you know, on their merit. But to get there is the hard thing. So we created an effort by or we went through an effort whereby people who can who want to run for an office can gather signatures if they get a certain number of a qualified signature bass, they can be on the ballot. And it passed. It did well, it didn't. We actually were doing it. The legislature came to us and said, "Well, we will. We'll okay this if you'll do this. So we compromised. And then it went through. But every year you get a new group of legislators who want to reform. And so we have this challenge every year of how are we going to keep it out there, how are we going to make it stay viable?

Whitney Johnson: And they want to reform it because they like the sort of political boss because it's easier to get on the ballot or keep people off the ballot.

Gail Miller: Yeah, they either want to reform it or do away with it. So it's a challenge, but it's the right thing to do. And I think about 65 to 70% of the people in Utah favor it. But when you get people in power flexing their muscle, it's hard to overcome that.

Whitney Johnson: You've kind of answered this, but I want to ask it just to see if anything else pops up for you. What are the obstacles to effective philanthropy today? And another question How do you define philanthropy in your brain?

Gail Miller: I think effective philanthropy has to be something where you can see the needle move for the betterment of the masses. I mean, if you're we feel like when we look through a list of requests. Are these requests where we can make a difference or are these requests where they're going to get the money anyway from someone else? So we like to focus on five areas and. That's what that's the criteria we work on. Also, we like to think about how many people will benefit from this give. Is it going to be one, two, or is it going to be a group or is it going to spread beyond that? I know we've had I remember a letter I got once from a young man that received some charity. He said, I really want to do this. I want to be able to give like this. And it influenced him to go on

and be a philanthropist. So I think we can have more impact than just giving the money. We have to have an impact on how does it change what they're doing, who they are.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah, you said there are five major criteria.

Gail Miller: Okay. The five areas that we focus on are health and medicine, shelter and food security, education and training, jobs and economic self-reliance and cultural and spiritual enrichment. Okay. So I pretty much covers the spectrum of life. Yeah. And we can be pretty liberal within those areas, but it gives us a guideline by which to teach our younger children and also to guide the community as they're asking, these are the things that will.

Whitney Johnson: That we care about, right? Yeah. All right. So I'd love to know if there are some small moments that that confirm to you that change is happening. You know, banquets are nice, but there's something about that. Thanks. And maybe you just describe the letter, but maybe there's something else. Or a hello in a soup kitchen line that overrides that. So where do you find that? Where you say, Oh. It's working. We're making a difference.

Gail Miller: It's evident in a lot of areas. When I when I just came to mind is junior achievement. Junior Achievement is a program that we give to because it reaches young people and they have the opportunity to develop into responsible adults. It's a training ground for future leaders, and it's so impactful that what we do is working is we not only give money to it, but we have in their program we have a Minnie Miller company, so they get to see how it works. So you have a CEO and they have a finance manager, and so they get to role play and learn how a business works. And it's a great program and that's one that I think we will feel a lot of reward from as time goes on, year after year, and each new crop comes in. You're developing the leaders of the future. So that's a great program. But there are a lot of things like that where we can see they're working. We. After Larry died from diabetes, we got involved with a program at the University of Utah called Driving Out Diabetes. Well, we bought a truck for them and outfitted it so they can go into underserved communities and test people for diabetes who never knew they had it or suspected they had it and couldn't afford to go have a test.

Gail Miller: So and in Utah or in Salt Lake Valley. The lifespan from the east side to the west side is a ten-year difference. So to be able to go into the west Side to these communities and say, we want to help you have a better life and a longer lifespan, that's making an impact. Yeah, so there are there are just lots and lots of things. We did a Utahns for Ukraine program where we shipped I don't know how many containers, but within the first two weeks we had raised \$4 million for that effort and then we spearheaded it to make sure that all of the donations and all of the money got where it was supposed to go. And I know that has to be making a difference not only in the lives of those who gave to it because they trusted that we would do what we said we would do. But on those who received it, who were able to have the things they needed during a winter, or as they're displaced, to feel a little more secure, that there's somebody else that cares about them.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. You know, when you just said that about making a difference in the lives of the people in Ukraine, but also the lives of the people who gave, one of my favorite quotes is from Charles Dickens, and you probably know it, but he said, if our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, then we have not given enough. Do you know that quote? I do, yes. Don't you love that quote? I do.

Gail Miller: It's true. It's very true.

Whitney Johnson: I'm also thinking about junior achievement. So we had a sheesh on the podcast Who runs Junior Achievement? So I'll make sure our listeners can listen to him because he's a wonderful human being.

Gail Miller: Well, that a vision.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah, that's great. Um, okay, so wrapping up, what is a new S-curve? Something you're doing new that you've jumped onto recently that has nothing to do with business or philanthropy or money? Something new?

Gail Miller: Well, I've decided that even though I've only been in the business world for 14 years since Larry passed away, that I have my own legacy to leave. And I've decided that what it is, is something that should be carried on after I'm gone, that people say, oh, that was that was because of what she did and not that I need the glory, but that I don't

want it to stop when I die. So there is a business school at Salt Lake Community College that's named after me, one of only four in the country named after a woman and the only one in Utah. So I want to and I haven't cleared all of this. So this is probably a little preliminary or premature to talk about, but I want to create a program at that school that will perpetuate the business world for women or those who need a leg up by creating a prize for a competition that students who go through a class and then develop something that will better the world can be rewarded by having their effort recognized with a prize. So that's it. That's it in a nutshell.

Whitney Johnson: I love that. And I think so there's a little bit of philanthropy in there. But I think the thing for me that's sticking as you're saying that is it's also about love. Legacy. But more importantly, it goes back to what we said earlier about having a voice and helping women have a voice. And by doing that, that's contributing to that.

Gail Miller: That's true. That's very true. And I think one of the unintended consequences for me of being in the role I'm in is that I have become a role model for sure, especially for women. And so I need to take that and use it well and perpetuate it and help other women realize that they all have something to give. They all have that opportunity. It's there just because I mean, they can have it if they grasp it. Okay.

Whitney Johnson: Like I'm high fiving you, body slamming you right now. I'm so happy with what you're saying. It's amazing. And if I can help in any way with the Salt Lake Community College.

Gail Miller: Oh, thank you.

Whitney Johnson: I'm here to support.

Gail Miller: I appreciate.

Whitney Johnson: That. So what are you going to take away from this conversation? What's been useful for you?

Gail Miller: Well, I hope I'm having some kind of influence for good. And I take away that you've given me a platform to be able to say something that hopefully will make a

difference in other people's lives, because that's what we all need to do. We have to share the good we have to the masses so that they can see that the world is a great place. You hear a lot of horrible stories about how bad it is and how divided it is, but that only happens if we let it happen and we can make a difference and we all have to work together to do that.

Whitney Johnson: So beautiful. Gail, thank you very much.

Gail Miller: Well, thank you, Whitney It's been a pleasure. You're great. I hope you had fun.

Whitney Johnson: I totally did. And I am actually absolutely serious if I.

In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and really in all the Judeo-Christian faiths, there's a concept known as Zion, a holy place. Joseph Smith, in one of his early revelations, said, "Seek forth and establish the cause of Zion." It takes on several meanings depending on who you ask and what you're reading. Sometimes it's a real place: many refer to Jerusalem as Zion. Sometimes it's synonymous with plans for a utopian city in the United States. Salt Lake City certainly comes close, but more broadly, it approaches something of a state of mind. Zion: It can mean simply a community of the pure at heart, a society of builders and givers, not just feeding others when they're hungry, but also building a society where those values of love and compassion are instinctual. Second nature. Think about how Gail lets her grandchildren pick where the foundation's resources go to, or how she's formed this Council of Philanthropists to coordinate efforts. We could talk all day about the love that is baked into a soup kitchen meal. Gail deserves all that and more. The state of Utah is forever changed for the better. But what about the love present when you teach others how to love? Isn't that the core of Zion? The pure at heart.

This is what I want to leave you with. Philanthropy is building people up. We share what we have because we want to leave them stronger. We love them so much. We see who they want to be and we want to help them on that journey. No matter which context you find the word Zion in, it'll never mean one person. For more on building up your community, there's my talk with Her Royal Highness Reema Bandar. **Episode 325**. Her Royal Highness understands what it takes to build and guide a community from

diplomats to the country's first women's soccer team, and for a deeper dive on the emotional machinery of giving what you have to others. There's **episode 289** with legendary 40 Niners quarterback Steve Young. Thank you again to Gail and thank you for listening. If you enjoyed today's show, hit subscribe so you don't miss a single episode. Thank you to our producer Alexander Turk, production assistant Antje Harris and production coordinator Nicole Pellegrino.

I'm Whitney Johnson

and this has been Disrupt Yourself.