



## Mandela Washington Fellowship Summit

AUGUST 3-4, 2021 | VIRTUAL

Leadership for the Future: Resilience and Inclusion

### Closing Session Transcript for Closing Session

#### Speakers

- Yolanda Sangweni, Senior Director of Programming, National Public Radio
- Happy Kikwa, IRC Director, U.S. Department of State, Public Affairs Section
- Brandy Walker, Academic Director, University of Georgia
- Jerry Geoffrey Mangena, 2019 Mandela Washington Fellow, Tanzania
- Ibrahima Kalil Gueye, 2020 Leadership Impact Award Winner, Guinea
- Kimberly Strollo, Cultural Affairs Officer, U.S. Department of State
- Ian Tarimo, 2021 Leadership Impact Award Winner, Tanzania
- Mebrahtom 'Meb' Keflezighi, Athlete and Founder, MEB Foundation
- Dorothy Okatch, National Coordinator, Palms for Life Fund (2015 Mandela Washington Fellowship Alumna, Botswana)

### Session Transcript

**Yolanda Sangweni:** Fellows, I hope you have enjoyed the time you spent connecting with each other and representatives of the U.S. Government, but now, who won this year's 2021 Leadership Impact Award?

**Happy Kikwa:** It gives me great pleasure to introduce the winner of the 2021 Leadership Impact Award. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Cultural Affairs. The Leadership Impact Award celebrates the individual's achievement of an outstanding member of the Mandela Washington Fellowship Alumni Network who has demonstrated servant leadership in their personal or professional communities. Congratulations. Nominated by U.S. Embassies and Consulates, Institute Partners, Reciprocal Exchange Awardees, and Professional Development Experience Hosts, Leadership Impact Award winners embody the belief that the most effective leaders strive to serve others and give back to the communities. This year, one extraordinary was selected out of nearly 4,400 eligible alumni. The winner of this year's impact award has freely and consistently committed his time, expertise, and the needs of others has served as a tireless advocate and ambassador for the Mandela Washington Fellowship. Through his social enterprise and volunteerism, he has personified Nelson Mandela's legacy by promoting inclusion, innovation, and access in his country and within the wider Fellowship network. It is for that reason that the U.S. Embassy Dar es Salaam is proud to nominate him for the 2021 Leadership Impact Award. The vision, drive that he demonstrated as a Fellow in 2019 have propelled him toward remarkable impact in the years since.



**Narrator:** In 2013, Ian Tarimo co-founded Tai Tanzania, an NGO that inspires social behavior changes through 3D animations and media technologies. To increase positive outcomes in health, education, and social justice, he is using the lessons he learned during the 2019 Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders. The Fellowship is the flagship program of the Young African Leaders Initiative, funded by the U.S. Department of State.

**Brandy Walker:** Ian's drive and passion for his work has been inspiring – he truly epitomizes what it means to be a lifelong learner and educator. We are so proud of how he leverages storytelling to increase youth participation in addressing Tanzania's challenges, including teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence, and disability inclusivity.

**Narrator:** After Ian's Fellowship, he continued his commitment to education and advocacy while expanding his organization's impact, increasing the audience of Tai Tanzania by 1,000%. He remained connected to the U.S. Embassy in Tanzania and was selected to represent the embassy at the 2020 East African YouLead Summit in Arusha. Ian has coached Fellowship applicants, participated in Fellowship recruitment events, and mentored new Fellows.

**Ian Tarimo:** Storytelling has been the most effective way on how to pass information from one generation to another. It's also very useful in shaping the future of our community. And technology is the most powerful tool on how to reach the beneficiaries. So, at Tai, we use the power of storytelling and technology to create educational content, so that we can inspire the changes that we want to see in our community.

**Narrator:** In early 2021, he received grant funding from the U.S. African Development Foundation (USADF) to create *Nivushe*, an animated short film about a young girl determined to excel in the STEM field, despite the prejudice she faces as a person living with albinism. The film has been viewed more than 9,000 times. One of Ian's recent animations, "Tuishi Salama," raises awareness on COVID-19 prevention measures in Tanzania.

**Happy Kikwa:** Ian has been an active Alumnus and has worked so hard to inspire positive change through storytelling and technology. We commend his work finding innovative ways to raise awareness on important issues, especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Jerry Geoffrey Mangena:** Ian is a very self-driven person, and his work on storytelling and changing the narrative towards positivity has always created a different impact on people's life.

**Narrator:** Ian is an excellent representative of the impact of the Young African Leaders Initiative, as an Alumnus of the Fellowship and the YALI Regional Leadership Center in Nairobi.

**Ibrahima Kalil Gueye:** Congratulations, Ian, from your Mandela Washington Fellowship family. We look forward to seeing you succeed and empower youth across Tanzania and the continent.

**Kimberly Strollo:** Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to introduce the winner of the 2021 Leadership Impact Award: 2019 Mandela Washington Fellow, Ian Tarimo! Congratulations.

**Ian Tarimo:** Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Ian Tarimo from Tanzania. I am a proud Alumnus of the Mandela Washington Fellowship and the YALI East Africa Regional Leadership Center. First, I would like to thank the almighty God for the gift of life and for protecting me through all the ups and downs, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to thank the U.S. Department of State, IREX staff, our host universities, and all the partners who are taking active roles to make the Mandela Washington Fellowship a success. Secondly, I would like to congratulate all the 2021 Mandela Washington Fellows for your resilience, commitment, and eagerness to grow yourself personally and professionally. Though you were not able to attend this program physically in the United States due to the COVID-19 restrictions, making it to this culminating event of the program means that you have demonstrated that young people can make a difference regardless of circumstances. I am pointing this out because Africa is my home, and I am aware of the challenges you have encountered during your six weeks of this program. The issues of power outages, unreliable internet connections, and conflicting social and professional commitments are just some of the things that have made you strong during this journey, through this experience.

I am deeply honored and grateful to have been nominated and chosen to receive the 2021 Leadership Impact Award. This award is a testimony to the significance of servant leadership and mutual support in creating a positive and sustainable impact in the community. I would like to thank the U.S. Department of State, IREX, and the U.S. embassies for putting young people at the center of their priorities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Investing in programs like the Mandela Washington Fellowship is a creative and forward-thinking decision. Nearly 60% of Africa's population is under the age of 25, making Africa the youngest continent. If well prepared, these young people will fuel this world to a better and greater future.

I still remember how excited I was during our last day of the Summit. I was thinking about strategies to put in place, all the knowledge I gained from my Leadership Institute at the University of Georgia, experts, and other Fellows from African countries. Little did I know that 2020 and the pandemic would change everything - restrictions on traveling, social events, and all big gatherings. Some of us have also experienced the loss of loved ones. We are grieving for the life we knew before, feeling helpless, lonely, and perhaps more than a little angry as we see the daily injustices that COVID-19 seems to illuminate. During this period, as a leader, I had to choose either darkness or resilience. And I decided to choose resilience, because resilience means the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties or toughness. It also means the ability of a substance or object to spring back to its original shape.

Probably you are in the same situation, or you will be in such a situation in near future. So, I encourage you choose resilience, which is the right decision. Servant leadership and mutual support are key values that can make all of us stronger and more impactful in our communities. As new Fellowship Alumni, my hope is for you to join this awesome network to demonstrate your ability to

grow personally and professionally. Your life, community, country, and Africa are not going to be the same. But you will plan, innovate, lead, and collaborate with community members to provide lasting positive changes. Remember that we are still in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic – it is important to observe all health precautions, because your health is your wealth. Take care of your mental health, but do not allow fear to consume you. Instead, intentionally choose to become resilient, innovative, and empathetic, because that is the only way to survive and prosper during this challenging time. As you finalize your six-week Leadership Institutes, I would like to encourage everyone to become bold YALI ambassadors, personally and professionally. For me, YALI is beyond the famous definition of “Young African Leaders Initiative.”

**Y stands for Young:** The U.S. Department of State, universities, and all partners choose to invest in young people for a good reason. Young people are energetic, curious, daring, and willing to learn. Let us embrace the youthful phase of our lives by living a life with a purpose.

**A is for Authenticity:** Authentic leaders are self-actualized individuals who are aware of their strengths, limitations, and emotions. They can put the mission and the goals of the organization ahead of their own self-interest. These are leaders who lead with their hearts, not just their minds. They embrace the empathy in everything they do. This is very critical currently as we face the global pandemic.

**L is for Leadership:** Lead your team’s mission by leveraging the incredible network of YALI Alumni Network. Together, we are stronger. After this Summit, it is your responsibility to be proactive doers, and be supportive to other Fellows.

**I is for Inspiration:** The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all parts of our lives. To thrive, we must embrace innovation, integrity, and inclusiveness in all our programs. We must build a culture of thinking and doing things differently. Let us dedicate enough time to our development and our growth at the personal and professional level. Remember, the best way to inspire yourself and others is by taking action, engaging others, and sharing your impact.

**YALI for a better Africa and world!**

My desire is to continue my work as a social entrepreneur and Fellowship ambassador. Now, our community needs to demonstrate servant leadership and mutual support more than ever to move beyond the pandemic and its effects. Together, we are stronger. Let us forge partnerships that will elevate each one of us. The U.S. Department of State, embassies, host institutions, and other partners have invested in your growth. It is time to pay it forward. Don't forget to leverage the power of this diverse and global network, and that's the Mandela Washington Fellowship Alumni Network.

This award has humbled me. The award has caused me to reflect further. And perhaps mostly, I hope this award demonstrates that sometimes small individual efforts can play a critical role in making a difference in the community. You are not too small to make a change. I know that you have gained a lot from this Fellowship so far, but it's not over; the actual work has just started. So, take your time to reflect on everything that you have gained during this journey – weigh your options, share with your team and make a priority list, and start taking actions. Who would you like to collaborate with? How will you gain mutual benefits? What are the resources potentially available for your project or initiative? What are the requirements for funding? How can you meet those requirements? These are good questions to start your conversation at personal and with your team members.

I would like to end my speech by sharing an excerpt from “The Man in the Arena” by Theodore Roosevelt. The piece was shared by Nelson Mandela during the Rugby World Cup Final in South Africa:

"It's not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat." End of the quote.

Mandela shared these words with the South Africa national team, just before they won the Rugby World Cup in 1995. I wish for these same words to fuel your mission to live a life with a purpose.

Thank you very much.

**Dorothy Okatch:** Good morning, good afternoon, good day, Mandela Washington Fellows and welcome to the last session of the day after what, I believe, has been an inspiring and jam packed day. In this session we will be speaking to an athlete who made his mark in the world and have an opportunity to just reflect on the leadership journey to discuss the importance of health, education, and fitness for youth, and also allow him to share thoughts on how to focus and energize the important work of building communities and countries. Before I introduce our guest, let me introduce myself. I am Dorothy Okatch and I come from Botswana. I am a Mandela Washington Fellow from the 2015 Cohort. I currently work for an organization called Palms for Life Fund as the National Coordinator and I am excited to moderate the session as I feel I have some similarities with our guest. I am also an avid sports person, well, basketball person, being Botswana's first International (unintelligible) for basketball and southern Africa's first international (unintelligible) for basketball. But it's not about me, it's about our guest today. Allow me to introduce Meb Keflezighi to come on stage and join us for this conversation.

**Meb Keflezighi:** Thank you, Dorothy!

**Dorothy Okatch:** Awesome, well, thank you so, so, so much, Meb. And welcome, welcome, welcome. Before we can even get into it, I want to share with the Fellows a brief of who you are so that they can understand who you are and they can understand your journey and understand your accomplishments. Let me take a few minutes to try and sum up all that you have done in a few minutes' time.

Fellows, Meb Keflezighi is a really well-decorated and inspirational former athlete. He retired as America's premier marathon runner upon completion of his 26th competitive marathon in 2017. Runner's World Magazine has actually named him as the most influential person in running. He has participated in not one, not two, not three, but in four Olympic Games and in three World Championships. And he has accumulated 23 USA Track and Field individual titles. He is the 2014 Boston Marathon Champion and also the 2014 USA Track and Field Male Athlete of the Year. In February 2016, he qualified for his fourth Olympic Games and, at that point in time, he became the oldest marathon runner in the U.S. Olympic history.

He is the only person who has won, what I called the "triple threat" of races: The New York City Marathon, the Boston Marathon, and an Olympic Marathon. As a child, he witnessed the ravages of conflict while also enduring famine and drought. When Meb was only five years old, his Family, or his father, made a decision for the family to leave their native Eritrea in search of a better future for the family abroad. And through the help of a very generous Italian benefactor the whole family emigrated: first to Italy and then, subsequently, to the United States, the land of opportunity. Meb received an athletic scholarship to the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) earning a degree in

communication with a business specialization. Meb's collegiate experience forms the framework for his future charitable entity: The Meb Foundation. He is not the only person from his family, or the only sibling from his family, that gets to enjoy academic success. Nine of his siblings have earned a bachelor's degree at institutions such as the University of California--Berkeley, Stanford, UCLA, and San Diego State. They have become lawyers, doctors, educators, engineers, and his family really does exemplify what many of us would call "the American dream". So, welcome Meb! I hope I have not embarrassed to you in any way by highlighting all of your achievements.

**Meb Keflezighi:** Well, thank you, Dorothy. What a wonderful introduction. And it is a great honor and humbling to be with the Mandela Washington Fellowship. What great leaders you guys are around the world, and I appreciate the great man, leader that he was. And I feel very fortunate to be part of this today.

**Dorothy Okatch:** Meb, every time I read your bio and I hear about something that you have done, it makes me think that you have become this person who has achieved global success, not only as an athlete, but as an author and now as a philanthropist. How do you manage? Share with us your trade secrets on how you managed to stay focused and continue to keep challenging yourself to contribute more and to be a better leader.

**Meb Keflezighi:** Well, you have to be grateful for the achievement that you have, but at the same time don't forget your roots and know where you started. For me, as you alluded to, Dorothy, where I was born, Eritrea, and humble beginning growing up there. So when the "land of opportunity" provides so many chances and so then you don't take things for granted because, you know, whether it's a relative, or uncle, or cousin, or family, friends that you have in Eritrea, they don't have those opportunities. You want to hunker down and use your opportunity the best that you can by being consistent and being humble is very important. And be grateful for the achievement that you have achieved because you know others have not achieved, but you work hard, and you want to be an example to others.

**Dorothy Okatch:** Consistency and humility are what I pick from you.

**Meb Keflezighi:** Absolutely. It is an important factor because you can achieve things, but it doesn't change who you are. But it helps you to help others be the best they can. You have to set the example, but then you want to set your goals you want to achieve. And it might not be big goals, right now, but to get you to the ultimate goal that you have. Never lose sight of your focus.

**Dorothy Okatch:** Meb, you left Eritrea as a child, a small boy, and you left what you knew, what you are accustomed to and you moved to, first, Italy and The USA. How are you able to find this motivation

within you to still be who you are today? Regardless of--it might not have been really easy for you--but how did you stay grounded? And how did you find the motivation to continue pushing on to be who you are today?

**Meb Keflezighi:** You know, growing up in Eritrea, there was no running water or electricity in the village, which is about thirteen kilometers from Asmara, the capital. As a child, I used to go find wood so I could have fire to burn. I had to go to the well to find water. Those are real day-to-day lives that people have to deal with, so when I have the opportunity to excel in education, excel in sports, I look back to those childhood memories to help me uplift and say, “hey, there are others that are unfortunately struggling, you want to be able to maximize that talent.” And for me, if it was not for the generosity of the doctor, the benefactor of my parents, and my dad's girlfriend who helped us escape from Eritrea to Italy. Those are the unique opportunities that when people invest in you, you want to be able to give them “110%”.

The expectation is higher, but at the same time, they are there to help you. And I feel so fortunate for the people I have encountered in my life, and so, for me to be able to work hard in these arenas. And “the drive”, I did my first marathon in 2002 and I swore I would never do another marathon. As most of you may know, a marathon is 26.2 miles. And that's a challenge. And I hit a wall, and Your body says, “go,” and your mind says, “go,” and your body says, “no way, you hurt and you ache.” And I swear I wasn't going to do another one. I went back to Eritrea in 2002 to see my hometown for the first time after I left when I was ten years old. Sometimes you forget where you came from, and sometimes you need help understanding those things. And that became a reality check when I was there and I said no one forced me to do a marathon. I even got more motivated to go back and do more things. And I'm glad I did not stop on my first marathon.

**Dorothy Okatch:** I'm also glad you did not stop on your first marathon. We would have missed out on the opportunity to get to know you and all your accomplishments. When we see the Olympics, and we see athletes out there performing, we see them as they do what it is that they're doing. But we hardly ever get to see the work that goes into you being who you are when you are out there. I'm sure at so many points in your life you had so much adversity. You mentioned just now actually “once upon a time I'm not doing this again” but if you could go back to your younger self at a point where you are facing adversity And had thought “This is not for me; I can't do this; I can't watch what I eat; I can't wake up every day to run...” What would you tell your younger self every time that you face adversity?

**Meb Keflezighi:** Since we are going to talk about sports, I'd like to quote President Mandela. One of his quotes he says, “Sports unites us more than anything else.” Sports is something you do daily, monthly, yearly, and you can see the progress that you're making. The younger self, for me, I did my first marathon in 2002, and in 2004 I did my fourth marathon ever and I won the silver medal. Here is a close-up of the medal that I won in 2004. You can see it. It is a dream come true. Running a marathon



in Athens is where it all started, and the original from Marathon to Athens is huge. And to be able to just reminisce and flash back to your memories as a child of where it started there, and going to Italy, and then a teacher in seventh grade telling you could be an Olympian, but as an immigrant you did not know what the word meant. And so growing up without electricity, no running water, it was a reality check but your actual dreams come true. As my young self I would tell myself to keep working hard, and be humble, but troubles and adversity are part of life; disappointments are part of life; and injuries are part of the sport. And after I won the silver medal in my fourth marathon, I was excited because with experience you should be able to do better and better, but unfortunately, sometimes you don't get what you think you deserve. And I was looking forward so much to the Beijing Olympics in 2008 to try and defend my silver medal. But during the trials in the United States, which was November 2007, I had a big disappointment. I didn't make the team, and even worse, a friend of mine passed away. Ryan Shay, from cardiac arrest, died, and so it put things in perspective: sports and dreams. I could not walk, I could not stand up, I was crawling on my knees and elbows. And so adversity is part of the game and part of a challenge. But you have to believe in yourself. It's not how many times you fall, it's how many times you get back up. And for me, I remember telling my brother my New York City Marathon will be my Olympics. It took me year and a half of therapy, it took me seeing 50 doctors. It finally came together, I then ran a personal best, and I won the New York City Marathon in 2009. And that's my Olympic gold medal.

**Dorothy Okatch:** Thank you so much for reminding us of that. Even when you get to be a great athlete, even when you're doing amazing things, you still need to be a human. You still are human and will face challenges, and what you need to do is work on them and not push them aside. You come back, you could and would be better than you were before. Thank you so much for that. You are not only a sports person, but even now we would refer to you as a retired athlete, but that's not where it stopped. You've continued to build onto that to go on and set the foundation. You're an author. I want you to share with the Mandela Washington Fellows, what are some of the most important drivers of your success and also of the Foundation? And what got you to actually say, "I am doing this. I am starting this foundation."

**Meb Keflezighi:** As an athlete you have to understand there is a lot of respect and responsibility that go with that. For me, the sport of running changed my life to be who I am since I was in seventh grade. You have to be consistent and do the small goals that make a big impact eventually. It may seem tedious now and big deal now, but by doing it daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly, it will make a big monumental mark. For me, even though sometimes the passion, you have to have the passion. As a professional athlete, I went without a shoe contract for sponsorship for seven months, but you have to have faith and you have to have hope. And understand what you are doing it for: what's your sense of purpose. And for me, I always go back to that when my God-given talent was discovered, whether I get paid or don't get paid. I'm going to work hard, be consistent day in and day out, and do small things. There may be small things like ice bath, therapy, drills, stretching, and therapies. You can't skip one of those because it keeps you healthy so you can train, and when you train you can perform at your highest potential.

**Dorothy Okatch:** I keep hearing consistency and humility. I hope the Fellows are taking note of that because if you are going to keep repeating it, it means that you are something, even in the businesses, even in the organizations. There has to be consistency and there has to be a great deal of humility, but maybe you can also just shed light to us how, now you have taken everything you have learned as an athlete and now you are using it to run the Foundation. What have you taken from there? What are you using now? What is really working for you?

**Meb Keflezighi:** You know, I try to live by my name. The MEB Foundation, which is Maintain Excellent Balance through health, education, and fitness for kids and youth. And for me, understanding and respecting people through diligence work to be a better version of yourself. We know that sports unites us more than anything else, so no matter what it doesn't have to be high school or college. To be a recreational runner, to be able to do those things at a young age is very, very important to be able to set new, and small, and hopefully be able to give scholarships to others and provide computers, school materials, and also for athletics. Because the beauty of that is it gives you goals. I can't overstate the progress that you make. We all learn at a different pace, but if you can do the due diligence, work hard day in and day out, things will pay off. And sometimes, we talked about earlier, you will have pitfalls, injuries, and disappointment. Never lose sight of hope.

**Dorothy Okatch:** Right now the world is going through a pandemic, and so many things have changed. I remember in 2015 I was in the USA for the Summit, and today we're having it virtually. So many things have changed this; COVID has impacted so many areas of our life. I just want you to share with the Fellows, how COVID has assisted to build resilience muscle, or not really assisted, but what have you done to build your resilience muscle during this time of COVID so that you are able to continue inspiring, you're able to continue doing the work? What has been that strength or that resilience you have leaned on to be able to do so during this time?

**Meb Keflezighi:** You know, Dorothy, I always tell people, "do what you can control." Some things are out of your elements, and the only thing we can do is take care of ourselves, and our family, and our community, and hope that, lead by example. For me, I carry hand sanitizer and those things when in 2009, because I do a lot of meet and greets and hugs to people when I travel, so at the same time now now that has almost been eliminated. But at the same time it is a setback. It's a reset button to evaluate what we are and how we can improve, not only as a nation, but internationally, as the pandemic has affected everybody. And my heart and prayers goes to those people that are no longer with us because this is a deadly pandemic. But you have to somehow, someday, it kind of reminds me a little bit of 2008. For me, I was on the ground. I cannot even stand up, but you have to show up and go back to the fundamentals, go back to the medicals and expertise to say, "What can we do to improve, and improve as a community?" And what would help us all be better? And I wish I could be there in person for the Mandela Washington Fellowship. I was invited to come last year but I could not because of the pandemic and time scheduling. But there is that human of the touch and feel and camaraderie that we missed, but we will be there before we know it. But we have to take care because

health comes first, as a parent, my parents always told me: health comes first. We have to do that globally, not just nationally.

**Dorothy Okatch:** Another thing that you said which has just been in my mind is that you said, “never lose hope.” It is a really important point, and how do you pass this onto the next generation of people? How can it then be passed on so that they also know they should never lose hope and can also then pass it on?

**Meb Keflezighi:** Dorothy and Fellowships, I was always an underdog. It's good to be the underdog most of the time. You have the pressure, but at the same time, becoming the underdog helps your resilience. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose, but hope never leaves. And especially running a marathon, I could run in London or New York or Boston or the Olympic Games and the distance is always 26.2 [miles]. And that did not change, but you have to work hard to say, “How do I compare to where I was last year under bad conditions but now I'm healthy and have consistently trained. I can do really well.” The time should be maybe a minute difference. It shouldn't be like five minutes, seven minutes. Why? Because 26.2 miles is the distance and a person is always consistent. And hope because sometimes you learn some things from races you didn't finish or races that you didn't do well. When you do well, everything clicks, like the Olympics for me, or New York, or Boston. But at the London Olympics, I was struggling. I was in 21st place, and my goal was to win, top three, or top ten. And at the halfway mark, I thought about dropping out. But then I looked down and I said, “I'm happy; I have the USA jersey, and how many people would love to be in my shoes right now? No matter how many people pass me it doesn't matter, I will get to that finish line.”

I have my daughters, my 49 family members and friends waiting for me at the finish line. If I have to walk I'm going to do that. And guess what? Amazingly, I went from 21st, to 17th, to 15th, and ten, and then with 5k to go, I was in sixth place. And I said, I don't know who is in the lead, and if one of them gets busted with the drug testing, I want to be able to move from fourth place to the medal, so I kept pushing. Amazingly, I came in fourth. I did not win a medal, but it gave me a chance to not lose hope, but overcome adversity and live in the moment. Because sometimes, we have vision and goals; you have to be in the moment to accomplish it. And that door opened for me to be invited to the Boston Marathon and be able to take my confidence that I could make another Olympic team or win the Boston Marathon, or the Houston Marathon. It's not about a medal, but getting the best out of yourself.

**Dorothy Okatch:** It's not about the medal, but getting the best out of yourself. I want to sneak in a question quickly from Stanley in Kenya. and he is asking: What kept you running competitively in your 40s?

**Meb Keflezighi:** For me, nutrition was important and training. Even though I had to drive two to

three miles, or 20 miles, to compete on soft service instead of pounding on pavement. And the drills and the small things make a big difference. I think, I wrote a book called *Meb for Mortals*, all those nutrition, strength training, drills, stretching, and biometrics. People think it's just running the two hours your practice. John Wooden, the basketball coach at UCLA goes, "It's not what you do in practice, but how you take care of yourself the next twenty-four hours." So rest is important. Hard days are hard, easy days are equally as important.

**Dorothy Okatch:** I need to close the session maybe in 30 seconds. If you could give the Fellows a word of encouragement or advice. They are bright eyed. They are really Ambitious and driven, and maybe in 30 seconds, if you could give them your closing remarks and motivational pieces that they could take forward from here?

**Meb Keflezighi:** I am so proud of you guys' Fellowship: The Mandela Washington Fellowship. It's amazing that you are all leaders from all around the world. It's leading by example; actions speak louder than words. And you have done that. You've been an example, not only to your community, but global. I feel blessed to be here with you. I always say, "Run to win." Running is not about gaining prospects, but gaining the best of yourself. It's not about the shoes or laces you wear. Use your head, and your brain, and whatever skill you have. And do the best you can. And I think you have done that. And I wish you all the best. And you have got it! Your future is bright, you are a leader, he or she, male or female. And I wish you all the best.

**Dorothy Okatch:** Meb, thank you so, so much for gracing us with your presence today and for engaging in this conversation so the Mandela Washington Fellows could hear about you and your journey. I think things I have picked up on from you is: not losing hope; it's consistency; it is humility. So thank you very much for your time. Thank you so much for being here, Fellows. Thank you, and I will now hand this over to Yolanda who will continue the proceedings of the day.

**Yolanda Sangweni:** Thank you both so much for such an inspiring conversation. Now we have more to share with you. A special group of Alumni have gathered to welcome you to The Alumni Community. This community consists of 5,000 Mandela Fellows all over the World.

Fellows and guests, on behalf of The U.S. Department of State, the Fellowship's implementing party, IREX, and all other partners of this major Summit who made it possible. I want to thank you for the energy and passion you brought to this experience. I hope that you have gained new insight, and started new conversations, and made new connections, and that you will continue your unique leadership journeys with renewed energy and curiosity. To Expo partners, U.S. Government officers, panelists, and moderators, thank you for participating in offering our Fellows a unique Summit experience.

And we must thank our very important guests who participated in this experience: the Secretary of State, Anthony J. Blinken; the Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development, Samantha Power; U.S. Representative to the U.N., Ambassador Linda Thomas Greenfield; the Acting Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Matthew Lussenhop; the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Diplomacy, Bureau of African Affairs, Belinda Jackson Ferrier; Representative Bass and Senators Ernst, Coons, and Booker; our keynote, CEO of The Africa Center, Uzo Iweala; and, of course, our special guest the 43rd President of The United States, Barack Obama.

We wish him a very happy birthday. To the Fellows who shared their stories in the ignite talks: Tsholofelo of Botswana, Binyam of Ethiopia, Mariatou of Sierra Leona, Lucia of Namibia, Hastings of Malawi, Gloria of the United Republic of Tanzania, Dennis of Ghana, and Lensa of Kenya. We applaud you all, but remember, you can still see other Fellows' Ignite talks while copying the link on their profile into your browser and listening to them again. Fellows, this is an opportunity to celebrate the Leader Impact Award Winner, Ian Tarimo, who exemplifies what the Mandela Washington Fellowship represents: servant leadership, collaboration, innovation, and resilience. Congratulations, Ian!

We hope we will see many of you following in his footsteps. Continue to share with us in the chat and on social media using the hashtag #YALI2021. Share your experience about the Summit, the connections you made, and the session that you participated in. Before I tell you what is happening next, I want to say in our languages (gives thanks in other languages). Thank you so much. Now I'm delighted to hang it over for the fun part of today's experience, which is your talent showcase. Enjoy and stay safe. Thank you!