

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/blog/videos/historical-and-global-change-through-clean-technology>

With the long-term health of the planet at risk and the history of alternative energies in the making, Steve Westly, former CFO for the state of California and founder of VC firm The Westly Group, challenges students and entrepreneurs to leave their hand print on the changing shape of the world. He cites the example of great explorers like Magellan and Columbus who broadly reached beyond boundaries never thought capable of being broken. Dependence on oil has these same challenges. He asks the audience, "What new things are you going to discover?"



Transcript

Folks, the long-term health of the planet is at risk.. There are some studies we're just looking at that showed the average temperature of the planet could be up as much as five degrees over the next 50 years.. The impact on the water level of a five-year increase is stunning.. Absolutely world-changing impacts on the climate.. Amazing.. Billions of dollars will be made.. Billions will be lost.. Whichever country comes first will be part of a tectonic shift.. Countries will move up that get it.. Countries will move down that get passed by that don't understand the wave of history..

And the question I throw out to you is, "What role will you play?" So let me just throw this last light out to you.. In Spain, in the 15th century, on the bottom of every coin, just as a reminder, it said, "Ne Plus Ultra." It's what you grew up with.. As a kid, every coin you get, you look at it.. It says, if you live in Spain, "There's no more beyond." We're the edge.. There's China, the Middle East, Rome in Italy, and then there's Spain.. That's the end.. As in, "fall off the edge" end.. All of a sudden, Magellan, Vasco de Gama, Columbus, these people go out and come back and say, "Folks, you're not going to believe this.. There's, like, a whole new planet.. Different people..

Tobacco.. All these things.. Gold.. It's stunning.. All this time we thought, just us.. We were the end of human understanding." I would just submit to you.. My entire life we heard one thing.. I used to work at the Department of Energy.. It said, "There is no economic growth without using carbon-based fuels." You cut back on using oil, you run your economy into the ground.. It's the end..

For the first time in human history over the last two years, California showed you can continue economic growth like that and cut your dependence on oil.. Everything we've heard my entire life turned out to be false.. So, I come here to challenge you.. What new things are you going to discover? I don't care whether you're an engineer, you want to be in the policy world.. What things will you make a difference at? What new worlds can you discover? How can you use the Stanford education to make a change that your kids will be growing up talking about for the rest of their lives?..