

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/moving-beyond-entrepreneur-stereotypes>

Stitch Fix founder and CEO Katrina Lake observes that there are many historical stereotypes around what a typical entrepreneur looks like. She emphasizes the importance of elevating and celebrating the narratives of founders from more diverse backgrounds, and shares how stories of the immigrants and strong women in her family tree were powerful motivators for her own entrepreneurial journey, and helped instill a belief that anything is possible.



Transcript

- Lot of people sometimes think like, 00:00:03,100 oh, you went to Stanford, that must be where you like were inspired to be an entrepreneur.. And, and even honestly, even at Stanford where I think there is so much exposure to great entrepreneurs and where it is like such a clear career path for so many, even there I don't think I had realized that this was a path that was available to me.. And so, you know, I think some of, like some of why I think it's important for stories like my own to be shared is because I do think there are a lot of historical stereotypes around what entrepreneurs look like.. And, and you know, I think some of those, and there's many, many people who don't look like Mark Zuckerberg and don't look like Larry and Sergey or whoever who are kind of like the, you know, the stories of Stanford lore.. And there's a lot of other types of ways to be successful as entrepreneurs.. There's a lot of people that look different and different backgrounds.. And so, you know, I almost arrived at this path, almost through process of elimination.. Like I thought, like, you know, apparel retail is super exciting and interesting and you know, my Thesis was like, I just wanna be at whatever company is going to be like the leader of the space in 20 years.. And, you know, ultimately, like I couldn't quite find any companies that I thought fit that bill.. And, you know, ultimately like literally by process of elimination, I realized like, well, if I, if I don't see a company that's doing it, like I can, you know, imagine it myself..

But the one thing that I would attribute in terms of my background is that, and it's interesting, Ravi, I think you are the one actually who shared with me that like, you know, I do think being the, being the daughter of an immigrant, I think is I think just having, you know, having people in your family who immigrated from a country and took big risks and changed their lives.. And, you know, having that narrative is just like a really, it's a really, you know, lucky thing, I guess.. And, and you shared with me that that's one of the predictors of entrepreneurship was one of the only things that correlates with being an entrepreneur.. And, and I think, you know, kind of related to that, there were a couple of stories in my childhood that I attribute to my belief in possibility and an expansive belief of anything being possible.. And, um, one of those is, yes, my mom immigrated here from Japan, but what's kind of interesting is actually her mother, my Japanese grandmother, that like desperately wanted to be in the United States.. And she was like born in Japan during the war.. And I grew up during the war and idolize the United States and, you know, always felt like she should like dreamed of being an American someday.. You know, she lived in Japan, she didn't learn to drive a car.. She was in an arranged marriage.. Like, it was like, it was crazy that somebody in that context would think someday I'm gonna be an American and, you know, through a long, you know, way where it's like she had two daughters, she made sure her daughters went to college and encouraged them to go to Grad school in the United States..

And like, and actually through her daughters was able to make her way to the United States eventually.. And then, so that's one of them.. And then the other one on my Caucasian side is that my, let's see my grandfather was raised by two women.. So he was raised by his mother and her sister because both of them, when my grandfather was only like a year and a half, he lost his father and his mother's sister also was in a similar circumstance where both, you know, where both fathers passed away.. And so now these two sisters had five kids in between them.. And this is before welfare.. And before a lot of the social services that we know today, this is like a long time ago.. And so these two sisters got together and they were like, you know, one of us is gonna be like, she was actually a buyer at Jedidah becoming a buyer at a department store in Minnesota.. But like, one of them was like, I'm gonna go to work.. The other, one's gonna take care of the kids..

And so they had this household that was led by two women.. And so like my grandfather, my Japan.... My American

grandfather, he like taught me how to use a computer.. He taught me to ride a bike.. He taught me to drive.. Like, you know, he had this belief that like girls and women can do anything because of his upbringing.. And so, you know, I think these narratives, this probably seems like a random aside, but I think these narratives are really important.. And I think, you know, as we think about like, how, how do we instill? And now I have two young children.. And then as you think about like, you know, how do you instill in children and young people? This, you know, this belief that anything is possible.. And, you know, I think, well, I'm incredibly proud of the journey that I've had..

And I think I've come, I've overcome a lot to do this.. I feel like I have overcome less than some of these people in my family that I've heard about.. I'm like, you think like taking a company as public, like, Whoa! Like raising five kids, like with, you know, with, I mean, that was a crazy thing to do.. Or like, you know, imagining that you could be an American someday when you were in an arranged marriage in Japan, like that's insane.. You know, and so I think just like having those, having those as like the benchmarks in your mind of like, Oh, these are the things that people do.. And like that's normal.. It actually like creates a really expansive mindset.. And so, you know, I think these narratives we tell are super important.. I think, you know, to be able to have these and everybody, I'm sure every single one of you listening has narratives in your family of like people who've done incredible, amazing, totally, you know, beat the odds things.. And like, I think those things are really important to celebrate because it really changes your mindset..

It really changes what you believe is possible for yourself.. (upbeat music)..