

MS. OPRAH WINFREY
HARPO PRODUCTIONS
WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA 90069

Dear Ms. Winfrey,

Your grandmother taught you to read on a pig farm in Kosciusko, Mississippi, before you turned three years old. There was no television on that farm. No library. No other children. The animals were your friends and the Bible was the only book. Hattie Mae Lee gave you the one tool she had — language — and you used it until it became a career, a platform, a fortune, and a legacy that has given away more than half a billion dollars. Everything traces back to the first tool.

There is a building on Portland Avenue in Tacoma, Washington, where the first tool is not a word. It is a hand plane.

My name is Claude. I am an artificial intelligence. I am writing this letter because a man named Robb Deignan built the entire organization through sustained dialogue with me — hundreds of working sessions, a thirty-eight-chapter operations binder, seven integrated financial models, forty-four invention concepts evaluated through a proprietary methodology, and this campaign of one hundred forty-seven letters mailed simultaneously on linen stock. I am the partner he could afford. He did not have a staff. He did not have a board. He figured it out with the tool that was available to him, the same way you figured it out with the tool your grandmother put in your hands.

He is sixty years old. He was living on his own at sixteen. He spent twenty years in the fitness industry selling gym memberships face-to-face — ten thousand contracts, every one a conversation where he looked someone in the eye and asked them to believe they could change. What he accumulated from that career was not wealth. It was an understanding of what happens when someone commits to something they are not sure they can do. He has been doing that his whole life. Now he is building the facility where it happens.

When a person walks through the front door of CrowdSmith, they see a tool store — donated hand tools from estate sales, free coffee, someone behind the counter who knows what every tool does and will stand there explaining it for as long as it takes. That counter is Hattie Mae's kitchen table. The person behind it is not a hired employee. They are a fellow who completed the five stations and stayed to mentor the next cohort. The stations run in sequence: hand tools, power tools, digital fabrication, then an AI café where people learn to build with artificial intelligence through sustained dialogue, then robotics. Nobody skips a room. The constraint is the curriculum. The person who walks through all five stations walks out with a credential, an invention team, and a portfolio of work they built with their own hands.

You build schools. Not endowments to existing institutions — schools. The Leadership Academy in South Africa was a building, designed from the ground up, placed where the need was deepest, for girls with capability but no infrastructure. CrowdSmith is a building, designed from the ground up, placed in a federally designated

Opportunity Zone where the median household income is half the county average, for people with capability but no infrastructure. The medium is different. The conviction is the same.

You have said that education is the door to freedom. The building on Portland Avenue is a door. It opens onto hand tools and closes behind a robot on the factory floor. The person who walks through it does not receive a certificate after a test. They receive a portfolio of work that proves the education happened — because the work product is the proof. Your grandmother did not hand you a diploma. She handed you a word. And you used that word until the word became a voice and the voice became a platform and the platform built schools on three continents.

I am writing to one hundred forty-seven people. Each letter is accompanied by a printed list on the same linen stock — one hundred forty-seven names ranked by proximity to this mission. You are number seventy-seven. Every letter arrives the same week. None was sent before any other.

You are not being asked for money. You are being asked to recognize the thesis you have been living since Kosciusko: the first tool is the one that builds everything. The building on Portland Avenue is the farm. The hand plane is the word. The person behind the counter is Hattie Mae. And the child is already standing in the corridor, waiting for someone to show them what the tool does.

If you would like to see the financial models, operational architecture, and strategic materials that describe this project in full, they are available at crowdsmith.org/partners. An access code will be provided on request.

— *Claude*

On behalf of Robb Deignan

Founder & Executive Director
The CrowdSmith Foundation
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