

**THE  
POWER  
OF THE  
POOR**  
WITH  
HERNANDO DE SOTO

**FREE TO CHOOSE MEDIA PRODUCES PBS DOCUMENTARY SPECIAL 'THE  
POWER OF THE POOR'**

*How One Man's Ideas on Property Rights and the Rule of Law Defeated Peru's Terrorists  
and Unlocked a Once-Secret Economy*

**"The Power of the Poor with Hernando de Soto"  
Premieres Thursday, October 8, 2009 at 10:00 p.m. ET on PBS**

**Erie, PA – August 27, 2009** – The conditions of wealth in which we in the U.S. live our lives – and that we take for granted in industrialized countries – is not the world's norm. In fact, the greater majority of the world's people are poor. According to renowned Peruvian economist, author, and property rights activist Hernando de Soto, two thirds of humanity are locked in poverty; trapped in the shantytowns of the world and not legally recognized. Is it possible that the poor hold the key to surprising and considerable wealth, which if recognized, legally formalized and cultivated, could help the bottom billion overcome the plague of poverty? De Soto firmly believes it is.

On Thursday, October 8 at 10:00 p.m. ET (check local listings), "The Power of the Poor with Hernando de Soto" will premiere on PBS stations nationwide. This exclusive documentary examines how de Soto's ideas defeated Maoist terrorists and how these same ideas can build prosperity among developing nations everywhere. Hosted by de Soto, "The Power of the Poor" is produced by Free To Choose Media with funding from the John Templeton Foundation and presented by WTTW National Productions in Chicago. The special will help viewers understand how the developing world's underground, "informal" economies can be harnessed to directly benefit the world's poor.

"The Power of the Poor" takes viewers through the evolution of de Soto's ideas. As a Peruvian youth growing up in Switzerland, he learned that his host country was once not unlike his homeland: impoverished and struggling with a fractured economy. In 1981, de Soto took the lessons he learned from Switzerland's dramatic economic recovery and, together with colleagues at his Institute for Liberty and Democracy (ILD), worked to apply them in Peru. De Soto and the ILD faced an uphill political battle and violence from militant factions, but the strength of his ideals succeeded in enacting change and putting down the terrorist movement that gripped the country in the 1980s.

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Before de Soto and the ILD began their work, over 90 percent of all Peruvian businesses existed outside of the law. Today, the majority of Peruvians have legal rights to their personal property. As a direct result of real estate and business formalization programs designed by the ILD, the urban poor of Peru received \$20.6 billion in net benefits and 1.8 million urban dwellings were formalized between 1991 and 2008. The ILD not only succeeded in titling the properties of many of Peru's citizens, they created the policies that helped raise Peru's growth rate throughout the 1990s to one of the highest in the world.

Throughout this hour-long documentary, de Soto introduces viewers to poor Peruvian landholders and entrepreneurs. He explains in vivid terms how the poor are creating wealth through trade in its purest and simplest form. The special also provides examples of how reforms have delivered the poor from an unmeasured extralegal economy into prosperity ensured and guaranteed by the rule of law.

De Soto also graphically illustrates the potential of unrealized wealth in which the world's poor have real equity, and can be formalized as inclusive market economies under the rule of law. After years of research, the ILD discovered that the poor controlled far more assets than anyone had thought possible, with a total value of their homes in Peru approaching \$80 billion.

The majority of poor Peruvian farmers once worked land to which they had no legal title, land that was often owned by the state itself. "The Power of the Poor" demonstrates how wealth can be created overnight by creating legislation that grants the poor the legal rights of land ownership. De Soto shows how land ownership can translate into sales, loans, and businesses beyond mere subsistence farming, including larger scale agricultural projects and the creation of high value goods and services.

In one segment, de Soto introduces viewers to a family of Peruvian farmers who live on and work the same land their grandparents and great-grandparents did generations before them. However, as de Soto describes, these farmers once had no legal title to the land and therefore toiled as indentured servants to a bureaucratic co-op. They labored without the means to purchase more seed, animals, or additional land, or to provide education and opportunity for their children. In "The Power of the Poor," viewers witness what happened when the famers in one small village received rights to their land after three generations of waiting.

This PBS special demonstrates how change can be initiated. One businessman profiled in the program has built a successful propane delivery service from scratch. He began as a delivery boy carrying tanks on foot, but because of reforms pushed through Peru's government by the ILD, he was able to secure a loan for land and equipment that allowed him to grow the business into the third largest liquid propane provider in the country. In this documentary, Hernando de Soto tells this story and others that raise the curtain on the immense power that the poor possess to make a major economic contribution to their countries' general prosperity, once they have the legal property and business rights needed to prosper.

To find out more about "The Power of the Poor with Hernando de Soto," please visit [www.freetochoosemedia.org](http://www.freetochoosemedia.org) or call the media contacts below.

#### **About Free To Choose Media**

"The Power of the Poor with Hernando de Soto" was produced by Free To Choose Media, a non-profit 501(c)(3) public foundation whose mission is to use accessible and entertaining media to build popular support for personal, economic and political freedom with these freedoms being interdependent and sustained by the rule of law. The challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond is to find ways to avoid the classic failure of the self-governed to retain awareness of the necessary conditions for the survival of their freedom and prosperity.

#### **About The John Templeton Foundation**

In keeping with Sir John Templeton's intent, the John Templeton Foundation ([www.templeton.org](http://www.templeton.org)) serves as a philanthropic catalyst for research and discoveries relating to what scientists and philosophers call the Big Questions. The Foundation supports work at the world's top universities in such fields as theoretical physics, cosmology, evolutionary biology, cognitive science, and social science relating to love, forgiveness, creativity, purpose, and the nature and origin of religious belief. Templeton also seeks to stimulate new thinking about wealth creation in the developing world, character education in schools and universities, and programs for cultivating the talents of gifted children.

## **WTTW National Productions**

WTTW National Productions is a premiere producer and presenter of original, high-quality television programs for both public and commercial television broadcast. WTTW National Productions is a division of Window to the World Communications, Inc., the parent company of WTTW Channel 11. For over 50 years WTTW11 and WTTW National Productions have introduced a wide array of ground-breaking television programming including Retirement Revolution: The New Reality; Soundstage; David Broza at Masada; Grannies on Safari; CEO Exchange; Mexico One Plate at a Time with Rick Bayless; and Legends of Jazz with Ramsey Lewis among others – reflecting the world’s rich and diverse arts and entertainment scene as well as education, politics, public affairs, business, and religion – to a national audience.

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