

**Lauer:** Donald Trump is our next guest and joins us exclusively. he's out with a new book called "Time to get Tough, making America number one again." Donald, it's good to see you.

**Trump:** Good morning, matt. tell Chuck Todd it will only help.

**Lauer:** You said you were going to host this debate December 27th . you heard George say people should stay away from this. Ron Paul says it's beneath the office of the presidency. he went on to say it contributes to a, quote, unwanted circus-like atmosphere and people surrounding Jon huntsman called this the presidential apprentice debate with the Donald. do you think other candidates will stay away?

**Trump:** No, I don't. I think most candidates will join and I think those two candidates have zero chance of being elected so it makes no difference. Ron Paul says Iran should have nuclear weapons are can have nuclear weapons and doesn't even think in terms of Israel. I think they are joke candidates and they are doing poorly. Mr. Huntsman is doing extremely poorly in the polls and gives more air time to those that have a chance of being elected.

**Lauer:** Do you think the other candidates might agree you have them exactly where you want them? a lot of them stop by looking for your approval or support. that would be a wasted effort if they snub you or don't show up at your debate.

**Trump:** A lot of top rips ask -- Republicans asked me to do the debate. we're doing it with news max and I have millions of people that follow me because they're tired of seeing this country, our great country, the United States , getting ripped off by China, by OPEC, by almost every country, Matt, that does business with us. I'm tired of it and a lot of other people are tired of it. I think the candidates know. I mean I left when I left because of the equal time provisions I'm not allowed to have a show and run. when I left I was leading in the polls.

**Lauer:** I've known you for a long time. let me tie this up by asking you this isn't going to be all about Donald Trump . you're not going to use this as a way to get on center stage and talk about what you believe, this will truly be about the candidates, right?

**Trump:** I want a great candidate, **a candidate that is going to beat President Obama . it's very important. it's vital for this country. if we don't get that candidate, we are in big, big trouble because the country is in big, big trouble . it's being led down the drain.**

**Lauer:** Let's talk about newt Gingrich surging to the top of the polls in Iowa. you're going to meet with him a little later today . as I already mentioned, he's agreed to show up at your debate. he made some controversial comments lately about the poor and jobs. I'll play them for you and get your reaction.

**Gingrich:** *"really poor children in really poor neighborhoods have no habits of working and have nobody around them who works. so they literally have no habit of showing up on Monday. they have no habit of staying all day. they have no habit of I do this and you give me cash unless it's illegal."*

**Lauer:** Maureen Dowd in the "Times" on Sunday has he not heard of the working poor? the problem isn't that these kids aren't working, it's that they don't have time with their parents who often toil day and night at more than one job and earn next to nothing, difficulties Newt Gingrich mischaracterize what's happening?

**Trump:** No, it may not be politically correct but it's the truth. one of the reasons he's surging is because he says it like it is. I like Maureen Dowd very much but in terms of what newt said, that's the way it is. he's looking at the inner city where Obama has done nothing, he has done nothing for the inner cities and he wants to do something to get them going.

**Lauer:** but the children in those inner city areas really have no role models who work?

well, I think you have a role model in president Obama . let Obama be the role model.

**Lauer:** In their own families, though?

**Trump:** It hasn't turned out to be much of a role model. no, they don't have in many cases role models, Matt, it's very sad. they do not have role models . so I know it's not a popular statement, but it happens to be true.

**Lauer:** Let's talk about Mitt Romney . obviously he's someone who has had a difficult time breaking through in the polls. he's going to be on the cover of "Time" magazine this week and it says something to the effect of why don't people like me. what is it with mitt Romney ? why has he had a difficult time either getting to or maintaining front runner status?

**Trump:** Well, I'm actually a little surprised. he's a very attractive guy. I've gotten to know him very well. he's been up to the office a number of times. he really is a very good, solid person. he doesn't get traction. I've actually spoken to him about it. I don't understand. he's not getting traction.

**Lauer:** Does he have a problem with flip-flopping?

**Trump:** Well, I don't think so. **Look, everybody changes their mind. we have, you have, I know for a fact you have over the years. we all change our minds or things.** I think people have done a good job in saying that, but for some reason he doesn't get the traction. when Herman goes out and Herman I got to know very well and he's a good guy but has suffered greatly over the last few weeks. when Herman , now you take those votes and divvy them up, in theory he should get a lot of those votes but he just doesn't seem to get traction. I don't know what it is.

**Lauer:** You write over a lifetime I've seen many people who don't change and they always get left behind. Smart people learn things and change their minds. Only stupid people never change their minds. Is it more important to you that you have a candidate that can beat Barack Obama or someone that sticks to conservative principles?

**Trump:** Well, I actually think it's going to be a combination of both. I think you're really going to have a combination of both. but you do have to -- you know the fighters, you learn a lot from boxing. they have an expression. you have to go with the punches. you sort of have to go with the punches. and it's true. life changes, the world changes, things and events change. sometimes you change your mind . if you don't change your mind , you're stuck.

**Lauer:** You are someone who's changed your mind as well and you're right, I have as well. have you completely ruled out a run for president even as a third party candidate?

**Trump:** Well, as you know, and again the equal time professions don't allow me to run until may, when I'm a free agent and you happen to like because I have a very successful show on your network. I hope that's the reason you like me. anyway, but the fact is if the wrong candidate is nominated to run, if I think it's a candidate that's not going to win and not very good and that could happen, I'm seeing some very good people an talented people and **if the economy continues to be bad and I think it will because I think we have incompetent leadership** I would certainly think about running.

**Lauer:** You flirt with this a lot in the past. I was in your office when you talked about it. but do people have a right to say at some point you talk the talk , roll up your sleeves and walk the walk?

**Trump:** Absolutely. but I never really looked at it seriously until this year. **People thought that I looked at it years ago because people wanted me to do it, twice. I looked at it once for a period of one week.** I love what I'm doing, I love the real estate. in fact in my book which comes out today, I actually disclose the financial disclosure. I give it, and it tells my network.

**Lauer:** how many billion dollars?

**Trump:** **\$7 billion and almost \$300 million in cash.** Nobody ever knew that before. I've never disclosed it before. frankly I did it because I'm very proud of what I've been able to build. I built a great company and I'm proud of it.

**Lauer:** Donald Trump , good to have you with us and thanks for your time this morning.