Speaker 1:

The Disability and Philanthropy Forum presents Daphne Frias, climate and disability justice activist.

Daphne Frias:

I like to think about vulnerability as a hierarchy of who gets to survive and who has access to resources, and then as we go down the list of that hierarchy as to who is disposable and whose lives don't need to be protected and less access to resources. So when we talk about including disabled folks in the conversation of the climate crisis, it's not only inviting us into the conversation but letting us lead the conversation. Because the thing about our community is that we are holistically resilient. We've had to be resilient for all of our lives since we have been either born with our disability or have, at some point or another, acquired our disabilities. And I think that resiliency is a incredibly important factor when we talk about the climate crisis, because we are at a point where it's not necessarily about turning back the clock because time is running out, it's about using the time we have left to be resilient and find solutions. And there isn't a community I can think of that is better equipped to do that, because we live in a society that doesn't see us, so we've had to fight to be seen and had to have been resilient to get here in the first place.

Daphne Frias:

Additionally, I think that there is a sense of hope that is a natural thread amongst the disability community, because simply living our lives is challenging the status quo. To understand the lived experience of disability is to understand that society doesn't want us to be here, and they've made that very, very clear through multiple closed doors and multiple barriers. So I think it's important to inject that resilience, inject that pride, inject that joy. For me, the way that I organize specifically is through spreading awareness, but also spreading joy in my work. Because this social justice work and liberation work is very taxing on the spirit, taxing on just humanity in general. So I try to bring a positive aspect to that. And I think the climate crisis and the work that we do in the climate sector could very much utilize that.

Daphne Frias:

And I think, also, another reason why it's critically important to include disabled folks is instead of building communities and building infrastructure around us and having able-bodied individuals say, "I think this is what works for disabled people." And then have it not work at all because you are not experiencing disability. Here is the radical idea. Actually ask disabled people about the things that they need. And instead of trying to be our voices, let our voices speak for ourselves. And then maybe we would actually have infrastructure that works for us, because it was made by us. And I'm hopeful that we can get there. But we can't get there unless we're included in those conversations to begin with.

Speaker 1:

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