Speaker 1:

The Disability & Philanthropy forum presents Rebecca Cokley, program officer for the US Disability Rights program at Ford Foundation.

Rebecca Cokley:

How can we use the mechanisms of philanthropy that we engage with to not just create a better future, but address historic inequities. I don't think that you can actually have the conversation around frankly, the history of philanthropy in this country if you don't start talking about the fact that most of our major foundations, most of our legacy foundations had a role in funding the eugenic movement and actively sought to see the eradication of disabled people. Just thinking about the way that lens shaped the relationship that philanthropy went on to have with the disability community, from moving from trying to eradicate people to frankly acting like disabled people didn't exist for decades to acting as though... I know for example, a foundation had only ever made one disability grant and in their note to a disability organization said, "Go and beg the federal government for money or ask March of Dimes."

Rebecca Cokley:

And that the door really was closed, that there was a... To use the actual technical term for the equipment used on a horse, there were actual physical blinders on philanthropy in a lot of ways to even thinking about how to be inclusive of people with disabilities to a place now where any thinking about this work, it can't just be like, "We're going to do this." Something that our CEO talks about a lot is reflecting honesty and embracing risk. And so actually taking time within your institution to unpack what is your organization's disability history? What has the engagement been like with the community? Has there been any? Going through the archives and seeing what is there, what isn't there. What role did your institution play in perpetuating inequities and how does that all inform the work that you want to do going forward and who you bring on to really do that work?

Speaker 1:

To continue your learning journey, visit disabilityphilanthropy.org.