Speaker 1: The Disability and Philanthropy Forum presents Keith Jones, President and CEO at SoulTouchin' Experiences.

Keith Jones: I think philanthropy itself as a notion is a noble and grand effort and absolutely is needed and necessary. I think where we're doing it right is you're having this discussion, you are talking about economic and disability justice. I think what can happen is that we need to understand that the people who have the money and the people who need the money don't necessarily run in the same circles. The people who have access to the money are not necessarily interested in the people who need the money. There is a nonprofit industry. The question about this movement is where are we moving to. This should not be a perpetual, ongoing thing. When you talk about economic policy, you talk about philanthropy. The hope is that those people who are making the decisions are using their intelligence versus their emotion in terms of saying, how can we address an issue that we know is systemic?

We have understood poverty and segregation of people with disabilities and mostly marginalized communities is foundational to this country. Philanthropy has the ability to do some things on the margins. What we can do is underpin the fact that some of these issues are money-making for some people who are very interested in making money. They're not here to stop disabled people from being homeless, or undereducated, or underhoused, or underemployed. Philanthropy has the beautiful opportunity to say okay, we're going to take new, non-traditional, and innovate the ways of getting this money to those communities who can actually use them and go on about their business. Nobody wants to be in a perpetual state where they have to constantly come back because we have just enough to do something but not enough to do nothing.

How can philanthropy elevate itself, again, is understanding how this economy works. We have not been a manufacturing-based economy for almost 40 years. We are a service-based and information-based economy. That means that the 60 million people who are disabled are those large parts of the community who can participate with some minor accommodations, can actually assist themselves in the philanthropic community in elevating those things in which they're funding. So the opportunity is, again, to be innovative in how you spend money, how you give money, how long you give money. It's like oh, we gave you $10,000 to do what and for what? $10,000 is nice. $10,000 is I have to pay rent, pay a staff person, get transportation, get the community to come out because they don't trust us and feed them because clearly we understand what the issues are. $10,000 is a one hour event for one community in one place to do one thing.

So we have to be real about the cost, real about the mechanics of it, real about what it really takes to build an infrastructure, not to sustain the ability to continue the right grant, but to sustain the ability to get these communities out of poverty onto an economic and social footing in which they deem their quality of life best.

Speaker 1: To continue your learning journey, visit disabilityphilanthropy.org.