

NARRATOR:

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum presents Jen Bokoff, director of development at the Disability Rights Fund.

JEN BOKOFF:

I think I want to name a few more ways that I've seen ableism play out and then give one space where I'm particularly fired up about it.

Some of the things that I see a lot, when we have disabled talent in our organizations, and spoiler alert, you do, you might not know that you do, but you do, how are we retaining and promoting that talent and making sure that they are in decision-making roles and that their voices are really being heard to shape initiatives? How are we integrating accessible technology and meetings? How are funders doing the homework so that when a potential grantee, an organization that focuses on disability justice comes to you to talk about their work, they're not doing basic education with you? How are we seeing disability as a separate issue? Which is what a lot of foundations do. So they say, "We don't do that issue," versus thinking of it as an intersection with probably everything else that you do.

One that popped up in my inbox yesterday, what happens when we don't communicate anything about COVID safety standards at your event? Spoiler alert, I will not be there. Maybe that's a good thing, but there are other people who you probably want there and you should communicate about that. That's all disability justice. And I think a bottom line there too is don't make leaders in disability educate you on what to do because that is inherently ableist as well. We really need funders and that is us. That is us in this room, on this webinar to do our homework, because otherwise I see a lot of extraction. That said, be an authentic community with disabled folks. Like we're here and we want to be in community and sharing.

I think the one other thing I really want to highlight is that all these foundations are talking about DEI all the time. One space where I specifically see it play out is in foundations that focus on gender or take a gender approach. What I notice is that when that gender approach doesn't carry a strategy for resourcing women with disabilities or transgender, non-binary, or gender non-conforming persons with disabilities and really including them in designing initiatives. Disability simply doesn't show up in the portfolio. That's one to really sit and think about, think about why, think about why those groups are not there. It's really unacceptable because many of the focal topics where this plays out like climate justice education, access to justice, economic mobility, gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, the list goes on, it all affects persons with disabilities in specific and different ways than they affect women as a blanket statement. So how can justice and rights move forward when funding for rights and justice isn't for us? I think it widens this marginalization gap.

NARRATOR:

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