

NARRATOR:

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum presents Daphne Frias, Activist, Organizer, and Founder of Box the Ballot.

DAPHNE FRIAS:

I always have believed that disabled folks are some of the most astute climate solutionists. When we talk about climate preparedness and climate resilient solutions, the most common word thrown around is adaptation. I don't know any more adaptive community than disabled folks. We literally have to exist in a world that is not made for us to thrive or succeed. Every moment of our day is adapting to society. So if you want a group of people that are leaders and experts in adaptation, we're right here, the one billion of us that exist throughout the world, the 15% of the global population, we've been here the whole entire time.

We also lead with love and joy. I think that that is such a beautiful part of the disability community to take a saying from the Black Liberation and Black Lives Matter Movement, we keep us safe. We are a community that understands what it's like to not have the external support systems we need to thrive, and we share mobility devices, we share medications, we share doctors' recommendations. We allow ourselves to thrive together as a community and we also lead with love because we know what it's like to live in that darkness and we know what it's like to not be seen, and the more that I always say that in order to have equitable climate solutions and to have a climate positive future, we need to fall radically in love with their planet and we need to fall radically in love with ourselves and I wouldn't be doing this work if I didn't absolutely love and am infatuated with our planet and who we are as people and believe in that better future.

And I think that disabled folks innately have that love within us because we've had to face so much adversity and darkness and we need your help, we need your funding, and we need your support. I also think to Dom's point, we are so critically lacking in research as to how the climate crisis affects disabled folks. As someone who has been two years or so working on their masters, I see data all the time. I see numbers all the time, but what I see beyond those numbers are people, are real stories, and I look at this data and various data sets and I think to myself, there must be disabled folks behind those numbers that we just are not seeing, and I like to push back against the idea of a lot of times I get called a voice for the voiceless, and I believe there are no such thing as voiceless people, just people who have not been given the appropriate platform to let their stories be heard, but just because you can't hear us doesn't mean that we aren't speaking.

We're still here and we're still being loud and so much of research defines policy. Policies are made because research shows the need for something to be created, but if we are not included in those research sets and we are not funded to conduct that research, we are being left out of policy and we are being left out of that conversation and that's what makes it really difficult and really hard because we can say 'til we're blue in the face that we need something, but if

research does not back that, unfortunately, a lot of times policy and funding doesn't follow through.

NARRATOR:

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