

NARRATOR:

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum presents Dom Kelly, Co-Founder, President & CEO of New Disabled South and New Disabled South Rising.

DOM KELLY:

So I think often about just the barriers to accessing funds are often quite difficult to move past really long grant applications, inaccessible grant applications and the back ends that you have to navigate that I have heard from many people who use screen readers who say that they're not screen reader accessible. The amount of physical labor it takes to type a really long grant application, the knowledge of some of the terminology that you might need in order to understand certain financial requirements, things like that, that I think can be laborious and can really I think contribute to that really alarming stat that Emily uplifted around that 0.1% of funding that goes to disability rights and justice.

I think that starts often with the barriers are in the way to actually accessing funding. I think oftentimes, reporting requirements can be very similar, especially with small movement organizations with very limited staff capacity, and I follow this LinkedIn account called crappy fundraising practice I think is what it's called, and it's so good, they really uplift a lot of those things not through a disability lens, but so many I could point back to that lens and I've worked with funders before on how do we make your practices more accessible and inclusive of disability, not just a few funding disability, but also making the process to accessing funding more inclusive and accessible. So I think that is a big barrier in the way, and so I think improving that is a great opportunity. Trust-based philanthropy is I think the future and really critical, especially when we're talking about so many great ideas and so many great organizations in the disability rights and justice ecosystem that don't have access to these kinds of opportunities because of so much of the requirements that they would be required to adhere to.

And then I think really, it's making sure that when you are thinking about funding disability, talking to disabled people. In that stat of 0.1%, that is not including the typical organizations that do get funded that are not a part of this ecosystem, which are the charity model kind of medical model organizations that are looking for things like fixes or cures to disability, the sort of parent-led groups, right? They have their place, but they're not disability-led. Disabled people don't really have seats at the table. So I think oftentimes they get a lot of the funding because there's nobody in that space when you're making funding decisions who's saying, "Hey, these are the groups that are doing really good work who are led by and for disabled people." So making sure we have seats at the table or you're coming to us and asking for recommendations.

And I think that's really critical and I think that's a way for philanthropy to kind of do better and would help support not just our activism, but the broader ecosystem and that's going back to that we need that infrastructure built for us or we need to build it and we need the funds to build it. That goes back to we don't get the kind of attention from the Mackenzie Scotts of the world that other issue areas might. So we need to be a part of those conversations, bring us in, have us at a seat at the table.

If you're bringing folks together to sort of think about who are going to be your new grantees, make sure you have a disabled person there to talk about that as well. So I think that will help strengthen our broader movement and philanthropy really, and this goes back to not just philanthropy, it's pretty much everywhere. We talk about the census, we talk about government, nothing about us without us, what I'm trying to say with this entire spiel is we need to be a part of that conversation, that's going to help us be able to do the work that we need to do.

NARRATOR:

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