

NARRATOR:

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum presents Cory Lira, Disability Frontlines Fund Program Officer at Third Wave Fund.

CORY LIRA:

First I just want to acknowledge that I think one of the key issues is really just staying alive. I think just staying alive and staying resourced and well and in community and connected. And so I don't want to jump right into other topics without acknowledging, I think that that is the first and foremost thing that comes to mind for me when I think about key issues.

And I think it's important to acknowledge this particular moment we're in, where I think a lot of the grantees I work with are navigating the different kinds of political repression and the types of changes in how we even talk about COVID, for instance. We have Long COVID Justice as one of our grantees and still doing work to not be like we're post-COVID, right? So just these pieces around staying alive and staying well as much as possible. But I think some other pieces that I'll just name is that I think we give out multi-year grants, and so we get to see the work over a period of time. And I think one large key issue, or key trend that I'll name is just that long-term sustainability of the work. And I think that that reflects that for, I think a lot of folks who are in the queer and trans and disabled communities. We know that there's a high level of expectation to do the work if you're in that leadership role, and there's also high burnout.

And so I think that there's a lot of leadership change that's happened, a lot of people who needed to move back or move up. And so I think a lot of groups are figuring out what that means in terms of actually being in a position to do long-term work sustainably, which might look like really shifting how work has happened up to this point. And I think that there's been so much rapid response work that's happened with COVID and a lot more tension on disability justice in the last five years that I think that this is a very critical moment for a lot of groups to really grapple with what it means to continue to do this work for 5, 10, 20 more years.

I think also acknowledging the particular economic limits of this moment, I think is very true for folks thinking about what kind of rapid response programs are out there now versus what were at the start of the pandemic, for instance. And also, just I think I care a lot about the workers of organizations and thinking about more and more people are just really stretched thin with the economy shifting. And then I think the other issue that feels like the most consistent one across the folks I've been working with is really wanting to move from that kind of the conversation many of us have around moving from representation into deeply embedded reflection of communities in leadership and programmatic priorities and values.

And so I think that we've seen an increase in folks talking about disability justice and talking about queer and trans communities and queer and trans disabled communities and communities of color, and how they all are impacted in this moment. And also, I think that there's this real issue of, and now what? And now what does this actually do to change both philanthropy, our organizations, the folks, our partners, so that these aren't just demographics

that we're talking about, but actually reflected values? And being able to really reflect the politics of queer and trans communities and the politics of disability justice into the work.

NARRATOR:

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