

NARRATOR:

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum presents Mel Brown, Co-Founder of Deep Space Mind 215.

MEL BROWN:

But one thing I think is also important is in philanthropy, I think that there is this barrier. There's a guard in thinking about engagement and on the ground, and the elbow-to-elbow.

So it's really about being intentional and building those relationships and listening. I think that when you have communities that are really wanting to build sustainability and focusing on it locally. Because like I was saying earlier about in Philadelphia, it feels like each neighborhood has its own thing, its own history, its own issues, its own people, its own landscape.

So although it does feel like it would take a lot more work to be engaged directly, I think that when it's about authenticity, that there is a possibility for that engagement without it feeling like surveillance. And that means bringing yourself, and so for me, again, thinking about hierarchy and how to enter in this space.

With the background of professionalization but also institutionalization, it's like I lead with a certain level of intimacy, vulnerability and deep engagement. And the only way I can do that is through listening and being authentic to my experience. I think philanthropy can take a few notes around that.

Yeah. Just give people directly, direct the funds to the people who are doing the work, and getting away from the feeling like the need for there to be measurables.

NARRATOR:

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