

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Greetings, good people. Welcome back to another episode of Disability Inclusion: Required. I am your host, Justice Shorter. Have you ever felt the pulse of collective power and cross-disability solidarity thrumming through your body-mind? Well, I get this feeling every time that I have read or heard the words of Patty Berne. Patty passed on in May, and I would like to dedicate today's episode to their light, love and legacy. May their memory continue to shepherd disabled kin of all kind toward a more safe, liberated and joyous future. Our grief is palpable and our gratitude for all they have gifted the world, it knows no bounds. Today's episode, quite fittingly is all about power and solidarity. We're joined in conversation with Sandy Ho and Marcus Walton. Sandy is the executive director of the Disability & Philanthropy Forum. Before joining DPF, she served as the program director of the Disability Inclusion Fund at Borealis Philanthropy.

Prior to working in philanthropy, Sandy was a disability policy researcher at the Community Living Policy Center at Brandeis University. She's a co-partner of the Access is Love campaign that she leads with Alice Wong and Mia Mingus, and also founded the Disability and Intersectionality Summit, a national biennial conference organized by disabled activists, highlighting the lived experiences of marginalized disabled people of color. Marcus Walton is the president and CEO of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, he specializes in operationalizing conceptual frameworks, racial equity facilitation, leadership, stakeholder engagement, program development, and navigating philanthropy. As the former director of racial equity initiatives for Borealis Philanthropy, Marcus worked in partnership with 18 grantee organizations to move past the transactional nature of diversity, equity, and inclusion toward a more unified movement, which prioritizes strategies that close gaps and access to opportunities, resources, and well-being across all categories, including gender, identity, sexual orientation, class, and ability. Let's get into it. Marcus, Sandy, I'm so thrilled to have you both here. How y'all doing?

SANDY HO:

Doing great. Thanks for having us here.

MARCUS WALTON:

Yes, very excited.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

I'm so excited to have you. Let us get this thing going and I want to start with this particular question. So can both of you introduce yourselves by way of this particular prompt. Now, if you could create a solidarity dream squad consisting of three fictional characters, who would you choose to organize beside you in this current moment and why? Marcus, let me go ahead and start with you.

MARCUS WALTON:

I really wanted to hear Sandy's.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Let's talk to Sandy first. Sandy, bring us in.

MARCUS WALTON:

Yes.

SANDY HO:

Well, thank you for the invitation of this question. By way of introduction, my name is Sandy Ho and I'm the executive director of the Disability & Philanthropy Forum. And I use she/her pronoun. And some of us in this virtual podcast room already know this about me and maybe some of our listeners do as well. But I am very much an unabashed fan of, a Trekkie, the Star Trek series and franchise, and I think there are so many lessons that science fiction, and especially the way that Star Trek shows up in so many powerful social justice movements and spaces for us in this moment. But the three Star Trek folks that I would choose in my dream solidarity squad, it would be one Geordi La Forge, first of all, LeVar Burton.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Oh, come on, LeVar.

SANDY HO:

No other explanation there. The second character from Star Trek would be Jadzia Dax. And then the third would be Kira Nerys. I think Deep Space Nine, but also Geordi La Forge in the Next Generation all bring so many skills, whether it's tactical strategy, whether it's also a lot of the moral ambiguities and the notion beyond, a mission driven approach. But yeah, so that's me.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Saying they're getting us going with the Trekkies in the building. Marcus, I'm coming back to you now.

MARCUS WALTON:

Yes, yes. I love it. I'm so glad you're here, first tell. I love the alignment, as well as the contrast. So when I thought about the question around fictional characters and three that I would love to be a part of a squad, especially around make it really living out our solidarity dreams. You'll follow where I'm going here. But one was I thought about the, you remember Schoolhouse Rock?

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Oh, you know I do. I'm just a bill now.

MARCUS WALTON:

I'm just a bill, right? So the bill that turned into a law. It's just something about the story. Having a shared appreciation for how governance works in this nation just felt really timely. So I'm looking for the bill and let's spread some awareness around how our process works, especially as a counter to so much misinformation. The second one went to my spiritual orientation. So there's a goddess Ma'at that's an ancient African/Egyptian goddess of truth, justice, no pun intended, order, balance, harmony, propriety, and reciprocity. And I literally live by these principles. They were introduced to me when I was probably 20 years old and really looking into my background, the African side of what it means to be of African descendant. And the principles are so tried and true that they just have helped me shape a kind of character personally, that hopefully really shows through my leadership presence. And then the last one is the Genie in Aladdin's lamp.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Wait, are you referring to Will Smith's version? Which one are we calling for you?

MARCUS WALTON:

Well, see, I expected that one, and I'm not going there. I'm not going there.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

All right, I get you. I get you.

MARCUS WALTON:

I don't want to start a debate in the comments section, but what I will say is hope matters. And during these times and times like this, these cycles of change, this is just right on the heels of dramatic change that was really characterized by the pandemic and so much impact in social justice and criminal justice movements. Having hope, being thoughtful about the vision for thriving and dreaming is just really important. And so, that trio I think will help me grounded in a way that keeps that same kind of cosmic order that Sandy was talking about in her Star Trek examples.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

I love it. I love it. I love it. I love how both of you have really done a lot of thinking about where you are and where you want to be, and who you want beside you as you do this. I will tell you that my three, as I was coming up with this question are far less deep, because I chose Huey Freeman from the Boondocks, because he's hilarious-

MARCUS WALTON:

Oh, I was thinking about him too.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

I think he always got some truth. He always got some truth to spit, some way of analyzing things and just a particular way to get your mind cranking. I thought about Storm from X-Men, because all that is happening with the environment, I need somebody to help tame these winds. And I think all of us are living through several concurrent storms right now. And then of course, I thought of Riri Williams in terms of Ironheart, because sometimes you just need to take flight and you want to feel safe and protected in doing so-

MARCUS WALTON:

That's good.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

... so I feel like I need an iron suit, just to protect us from all of the real and metaphoric attacks that seemed to be coming from one way or another. But Marcus, I want to keep you talking here for just a second. Can you help to ground us by talking to us more about solidarity and explaining how it is truly transformative as a practice? And I know we can look up the definition online or pull out a dictionary, but can you really explain it through perhaps some everyday stories or examples?

MARCUS WALTON:

Yeah, I appreciate you saying we could look this up and there's a definition, and I think it's important for just clarity's sake to always define how we determine or make meaning of concepts in terms. So I'll start by saying, first transformation for me is about shifting my entire orientation, not just a little change here or there, a little tweak around the edges, but this is about comprehensive change in my orientation. And so, when I think about transformative solidarity and then I define solidarity by being in relationship in a way that's just unconditional, that is not just around convenience, but when we are sharing in the pain, if you will, when we are offering grace by way of a shared experience, but really making myself available to the experience of others, even if it translates into some discomfort on my end. That's what I think about when it comes to solidarity. And so, there's a couple of people who come to mind or examples that come to mind real life that really bring this home for me.

One is, so I don't even think, Sandy, you know this, but in early February I was diagnosed with early stage prostate cancer. And I'm 53 years old, so that's kind of young, which actually has an upside to it. So you catch it early, it's the earliest stage that you can identify before doing nothing. So the only stage before stage two is like let's keep observing. And so, as this was happening, I just happened to be in relationship with three people who had prostate cancer or some sort of cancer in the last three or four months prior to that. And at the time I'm making myself available to be present with these folks and their stories, the joy they felt, relief, maybe a

moment of just being hopeful, just from us. I'm just interacting with them like the people I know them to be.

I'm not focusing on the thing, as much as engaging them and really sharing the love that I have for them regardless. Being seen and experienced in that way I remember so vividly was helpful for them. And so, then when I came along with my own diagnosis, I was able to go back to them and share how much I appreciated their vulnerability. They didn't have to disclose any of that stuff was happening. As a matter of fact, there were probably a bunch of other people who didn't know that they were dealing with it, and yet they allowed me to be in solidarity with them. And so, first it's a privilege to solidarity in the discomfort. I always had wanted to show up as a person who could be there for their loved ones. I admired that as a child. And at the time, quite frankly, I thought I was a little selfish.

I was self-interested and I could just see other people. They seemed so generous, like, man, how can you do that? How can you be like that? I always wanted to be like that. And so, just this kind of regular real life interaction with folks who were living with cancer, language that I learned, it totally shifted my mindset. Prior to that I didn't use that language or even appreciate an orientation that would be articulated as such. And now I am living with that, which reminds me of another set of experiences related to that that I won't go into, but just about how we're always in recovery. I heard someone say that from their experience with addiction and it resonated with me, because I've been embarrassingly homophobic at different points in life and through my own circles of influence, being able to respond to that and change that.

And so, I'd say I'm always in recovery and now I feel like about cancer, and I can apply it to so many other things. And so, living with cancer in many ways has transformed my mindset of life happening in the ways that it does, that sometimes doesn't always feel good and sometimes actually generates a level of grief and heartbreak that really requires other people being in solidarity with us. So that reciprocity that I named in my response to my art and the principles that I care about so much are also a daily part of that experience.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Marcus, let me thank you for sharing your personal story and journey. I also want to tease out a couple of things that you mentioned. You talked about the vulnerability of disclosure and having people around you who have been on a similar path, if not the exact same path, helping to show you the way and guide you through. It very much reminds me of Stacy Park Milburn and her concept of disability doula, having people who have been there usher you through, kind of birth you through this process of change and transformation, being there beside you, showing you the way when you feel so lost and so alone. And it sounds precisely like the network of love and support that you were able to cultivate with your inner circle. And I'm so thrilled that you have found that. Many of us have been on the other end of diagnoses and we know precisely what that is like to feel like you don't know who to ask your questions too, who are not medical professionals.

MARCUS WALTON:

I love that.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

You don't know who can hold you during this moment where everything seems so hard. So I just so deeply appreciate that. And Sandy, I want to bring you in, because what Marcus talked about, a lot of that can be so scary. And when I think about it, it makes me come around to the notion that fear and fortitude, they're not mutually exclusive, right? Many folks, understandably so are afraid for themselves and their people in this moment. So can you talk about how solidarity can still take shape, even when we're scared or even when we're unsure of whether or not the things that we're planning, all of our efforts will ever even be successful? Talk to us about that, Sandy.

SANDY HO:

Absolutely. And I also just want to say that there are so many scales and degrees to which what we're talking about, and I think thank you Marcus again also for sharing your own personal story. And I know that when you and I first connected at the GEO Learning Conference, that was also part of your sharing with me around disability solidarity, how you personally are arriving at that. And I am somebody who admittedly, in ways that I need, have always resisted actually getting personal. And as much as I will talk about the importance of lived experience and the importance of prioritizing people, wisdom and insights, there is also something that is ingrained in me that through my background and training, and education as somebody who's a public policy student, I go immediately to that birth.

All to say that in whatever we are experiencing in this moment personally and also the country, and in this political landscape, is to remember that what my takeaway at this moment is to remember that none of what we are experiencing is normal and not be normalized. And actually in the practices of disability justice is actually to push back and to not accept the normality, or even the concept of that idea, how we show up as people in our day to day, whether it's work or family or in our social and community and spiritual lives. But it's also that because there is so much fear and an unknown, that we are able to come together in that. And going back to what Marcus brought up was solidarity actually involves a lot of disclosing and sharing a personal discomfort.

You don't get to a place of solidarity without recognizing and being self-aware of what it is that you are also uncomfortable about, and say, "Hey, I'm going to be here and I'm going to show up for you, but also know I might not know all of the things I need to know. But that doesn't change the strength and level in which we are going to continue to be together in our togetherness."

And so, there's several examples that I think, I mean, just in my own personal leadership of, again, I had said this several times and I credit some of my own team and staff members who said, "Sandy, you keep saying this is your first ED role, but you've got this."

And I'm like, "Yeah, but..."

That voice of self-doubt. But then also it's been people like Marcus in the sector, like Marcus you and I are in our shared friend, Ryan Easterly. So many others who have welcomed me, but it's not just a welcoming solidarity, but it's a moment, because of how you all lead, I am able to do and be in my own leadership. As much as I, there have been terrifying moments. There's still a lot to be afraid, as I'm making these statements, as I'm sharing more about myself as a person with the sector, that yeah, there are not a ton of possibility models that look like me, Ryan and Marcus in the field. And because we are out here now that I understand exactly what, Justice, your question, which is that fear and fortitude or not, it's mutually exclusive.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

I often tell people that there is seldom a time where I am showing up in a new space or even a space I've been in quite a few times where I'm not scared. There's seldom a time where I am not scared, but my people also built me brave. And what I simply mean by that is that all that my grandmother and my mother, and my sisters, my people have poured into me still give me enough resolve to rise to the highest level of myself that I can on any given day. And that's just going to have to be enough. It's enough for me and hopefully it will be enough for the communities that I serve, because people are trying their very best to push back. And that's what I want to talk about next. I want to talk about folks trying to push back against these rollbacks of our rights.

Now, the power of collective organizing is evident in every major civil rights advancement that we have experienced in this country. So Marcus, tell me how can philanthropic leaders help to energize advocates who find themselves quite honestly feeling discouraged or deflated in this moment, especially at the prospect of having to continue to organize, to protect and preserve rights that their ancestors have already worked so hard to secure?

MARCUS WALTON:

Oh, Justice, you just took it so deep there. Can I add something just based on Sandy's testimony, I think the language she used was terrifying, how the experience, especially newness with all of the pressure, all of the expectation, well-intended expectations, because people believe in us, they expect a lot from us, right?

To me, and I want to share this with folks who maybe don't have a similar level of visibility, maybe they don't have a formal title, but they have other people that look up to them. For Marcus Walton, President and CEO of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, GEO, life is terrifying on a regular basis. Love is terrifying on a regular basis, and I view life and love as the same. It's just different in how we express it and articulate it in language, but the energy of life and love is the same. And terrifying is important, because I'm allowing myself intentionally to experience the fullness of all of the possibilities happening and all of the possibilities not coming to fruition simultaneously. Now, that takes a lot. It takes practice, it takes a support system, it takes a deep connection to folks that are no longer here in the physical form that I believe are watching my back on some other plane.

Call it a spiritual lifestyle. It requires a lot and it requires a true commitment on my end to be open and willing to allow other people to support me. All of the things that I just described are what philanthropy, the institutional practice of philanthropy, those people who make that practice happen can avail ourselves to. All of the openness, all of the willingness to not know, to be terrified, to be discovered for what you thought was true that others maybe hadn't seen, but that would change a person's perspective about you if they found out. There's a way that institutional philanthropy happens in an ivory tower that is not transparent, that is very intimidating, that feels like it's on a pedestal and therefore inaccessible by ordinary people, by the lay person, by community folk, by the people who nurtured and shaped me back in Cleveland, Ohio, who still remain there.

And so, philanthropy can be very intentional about how it uses its dollars, its influence and his voice, its networks to close those gaps, to eliminate the variables, the ways that we sometimes show up, the structural impediments that separate us, that reinforce disconnection or make us feel like there's more that needs to be added to me as an individual before I have the right, or before I earn access into these hello spaces.

So there's a whole lot that we can do, and it starts with where we started here, solidarity. Commit to solidarity, commit to using your influence and voice to spread the word, to legitimize efforts of the hardworking folks in community and the grantees that you support that aren't well known outside of the very specific spaces within which they operate, but participate in the stuff that people are doing. Make yourself available as an advisor, as a resource. Connect people with relationships that are outside of the ones that they have organized for themselves. That's what it means to share power, is to really be thoughtful in how we position other people to be able to make decisions that influence their capacity or ability to thrive.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Marcus, I so appreciate that and we're going to talk a whole lot in just a little while about some of those harder parts of philanthropy when you're dealing with things that quite honestly could make an organization uncomfortable, when people are hurting, when people need a bit more support. And I'm looking forward to getting your thoughts on that. And while we're on that topic, I want to come on over to you, Sandy. I want to bring you back in, because I want to talk about any advice you may have on how to navigate relationships when assumed allies are absent or when they just don't show up. When we think about solidarity, it's often when people are beside you and when people are showing up with you in community. But what are we to do when people do not show up? What are we to do when we get empty promises from folks who say that they'll speak out and they'll be by our side, and they aren't present when we need them most? Any advice? What are we to do?

SANDY HO:

Yeah, I think when I am considering this question, I'm going to draw from my lived experience and those that I am aware of in terms of what it means to be part of a community of people that has historically and systematically been overlooked, not just by way of disability, but also as a

woman of color, as an Asian American, as a queer person. And in that sense and the combination of those experiences and the intersections of the relationships, there have been so many moments when assumed allies, both through by family, by friends, by the other adults who I looked up to were absent or didn't show up in solidarity. And it is truly where I think even today when in my current role and in philanthropic sector, why I continue to say the no's are just as important to me as the yeses.

And I say that because I recognize now that it is because there have been moments of absence, personally experience, and that has led me not only to seek out those who will be there and who are there, that has allowed me to access more social, political community and power, and privilege. But that's not where the no's for me ends. That's not where the relationship of the no's stops.

In fact, because of that access then to community and finding our allies who will be there, I am then able to have more of a support system and understanding, and the tools to actually work on the no's and turn them maybe over any amount of time, and some of them still, I'm moving on today, my personal life to become an eventual yes. In terms of advice on how to navigate relationships that first of all personal boundaries and also the extent to which you want to continue pursuing those no's. I would never want to invite or suggest that we need to lead us to the end of and be all, that up to our own personal decrement or harm. And this is why personal boundaries and growth in that way is helpful, but that when we do experience the gaps, it is never that we are actually alone in any of this, ever. And there are times of isolation and loneliness, but there's always, even in the feeling of fear or discomfort of reaching out to ask for support and help, it does exist.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

I appreciate that response, Sandy, because listen, solidarity can be hard. It is not always a happy space. There is often harm that takes place when hurt people are trying to organize against many oppressive and truly dangerous systems and individuals, and finding a way to navigate that with folks or to distance oneself from folks in order to protect yourself or to learn more about yourself, or to get to a space where you can continue mobilizing or doing the work that you truly wish to do. I think it's really important. So I'm thrilled that you shared what you shared to kind of give folks a few entry points on how they can assess their own personal or professional situations in the future. Marcus, I want to ask you about conflict avoidance, because we're on this wave, right? And I want to ride it, I want to ride it.

I want to ride this wave of talking about the harder parts of solidarity. So I want you to give us a little bit of information, just your thoughts around conflict avoidance and philanthropy. As an expression of solidarity, what does it mean to be committed to the communities you serve when you may not agree with a decision that they make? We have conversations with organizations all the time who said, "Listen, they rip our funding away, because we have a stance that they didn't agree with. They ripped our funding away, and it wasn't even a conversation. We didn't even have a process around it. We had no ability to mediate or mitigate the situation. It was just we're avoiding it, we're done with it, and we're moving on."

So can you talk about the importance again as an expression of solidarity, the importance of dealing with conflict both internally and externally as it relates to philanthropic organizations?

MARCUS WALTON:

Another question. What a question. I'm a call and response person, so I got-

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Come on now. You know it.

MARCUS WALTON:

Okay. Yes. So I'm going to be responding. I'm hearing Sandy clapping it over here, signifying this question's so powerful around conflict avoidance to me, because it is something first that as an organization that is interested in transforming philanthropic culture, that's the culture of our sector away from what I would describe as a charitable one, which is an orientation tour like, oh, doing good. For those folks over there, it's a distance, right? I'm disconnected from that. I'm just going to toss some resources over there and I can feel good about that, right? We shifting the transformation. The reorientation is away from or building upon even a charitable mindset to actually having an investment of substance, looking at the dynamics that are contributing to the conditions that we want to change and being all in for that level of investment. Investment as I described, that sometimes occurs through dollars, and we hope that always, as long as we have a capitalist system that grant makers are prioritizing dollars, but not exclusively. And the other forms of capital that I described, were also their influence and their networks.

So give voice to the issues that groups stand for, even if you don't agree with them, but really be present with them and help others understand the position, the trade-offs, if you will, the benefits as well as connect folks to other individuals, groups, organizations, agencies, resources that will help them realize the shared vision that we all have for society and the communities that make it up. Now, the thing about philanthropy that I'll offer as it relates to solidarity that I find particularly important for leaders today, again, leaders affiliated with organizations or not, but anyone who has someone looking up to them to understand what to do next to make sense of what is happening. One of the challenges that I want to encourage all leaders to include in the challenges that they've already agreed to is that we are all socialized under the same set of dominant, violent, racist in terms of hierarchies, in terms of exclusionary, ways of viewing other beings, ways of thinking, competitive.

Those characteristics, if you will, do not reinforce connection. They do the opposite. They reinforce separation, isolation, individualism, right? It's me, it's me. My fate is different from yours. If you just do X, Y and Z, then things could be different for you too, right? We're socialized to believe that that's true philanthropy and a philanthropy that promotes solidarity, that is operational, operating in a way that is promoting solidarity is saying that that way is not the way toward a shared vision for thriving in our communities. It's not the way of realizing the full potential of this American experiment is not even the way for us as holders of grant-making resources to realize the fullest impact of investment of these resources. The way to do that

requires a shift in behavior. It requires that we slow down a little bit, that we continue to explore strategies that will generate that kind of impact that a rapid response model would do.

So let's pool our resources together and do a bunch of giving over here, right? Let's give a bunch of money to that place over there that matters, that matters. It's necessary, and it's insufficient for the kind of disruption of systeming dynamics that continues to produce inequity across different groups of people, regardless of age, identity, characteristics, categories, income categories, race, gender, ability, all of the different things that define us. These constructions are really significant in terms of our identity. So an institutional philanthropy, a practice, a group of people who are practitioners in this craft who bring analysis and understand that there's a group of folks that we are all identified differently that uses data. So the data is showing us that these groups are faring worse than these groups consistently.

A group of practitioners that look at the drivers of philanthropy, of inequity and say, "It serves us as a field to use our limited resources. As abundant as they are, they're not enough to address every issue in the world, but how might we use our resources to connect over to those governmental resources and those corporate resources to really drop a deeper level of impact, and address some of these inequities once and for all?"

That to me is the challenge and opportunity for solidarity in our sector. The last thing I'll say is that what I found, and I appreciate you naming the lived experience, Sandy, because I'm on the tail end of a 20-year career in philanthropy, and hopefully I have about 10 more years to go and I want to go out with a bang. So I'm thinking how can, what's the most audacious thing I can do to leverage all of the goodwill and interests and other resources influence that I may have accumulated over these years? And I think that asking human beings to engage each other with this level of transparency, with this level of openness, with this level of being unconditional that cuts against our social conditioning is one of the most challenging things we can ask a person. And my experience is such that individuals don't even necessarily engage with that level of vulnerability with their closest loved one.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Yeah, absolutely. And I think there's so many things that you hit on there, especially around things that are challenging and how people, sometimes folks can run straight towards those things, and other times we afford it, because there's so many hard things crashing down upon us at any given moment. And so, trying to find ways to protect oneself is often what is happening in those moments, but thinking about how do we live into the values that we have professed to that we have said we are committed to, how do we do that? And it makes me come back to this notion that things will not necessarily be easy, but they will so certainly be worth it if we can come through it on the other end. And if we can come through it together, no one's saying that that journey will be swift or that it will be simple, but it will certainly be of substance and it will certainly be worth it if we can come together at the end on the other side. And so, I deeply appreciate everything that you just mentioned.

MARCUS WALTON:

Yes. If I may. I appreciate being a part of this conversation with Sandy, because we came into a thing together. The first time CEOs of a particular kind of organization in terms of its structure. There's a way in which we could have had an initial conversation, gotten to know each other, and then gone in our own directions. I'll see you later. Good luck with things. The way you describe this, how do we respond to the challenge? To me, there's a modeling of solidarity. That's critical. And if an entire sector for institutional philanthropy, as a sector of practitioners modeled solidarity, we would be demonstrating what it looks like to sometimes show up as less than our best, but to continue to show up.

My commitment to Sandy is that I'm not going to always be dynamic or energetic Marcus. Sometimes I'm going to be a little low energy, a little off kilter, but I'm showing up and I'm showing up over time, so you can rely on me. And that trust and reliability then translates into a kind of safety. I think you mentioned that earlier, Justice, that I think it's critical to that the psychology, why we respond to situations in the way that we do. So the modeling is enough. I don't want people to walk away from this believing that they have to know something that they currently don't. What I am saying is that it's incumbent upon us to practice the things that we preach and that we care about so much.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Oh, for sure. And that is how we sustain, no? That is how we sustain the work. That is how we sustain solidarity. I want to bring Sandy back in here. The two of you were previously in conversation earlier this year at the GEO Conference, and one aspect of your discussion concentrated on joy. So Sandy, I want to ask you, how do we harness the power of joy in ways that shift material conditions for multi-marginalized folks?

SANDY HO:

Well, I first want to start by saying I want to make a comment to something that Marcus just shared, because Marcus maybe in the tail end of your philanthropic, but I hope that you've got a lot more, because I only want to be the sector as long as you in the sector.

MARCUS WALTON:

Well, thank you. We need to win it longer.

SANDY HO:

No, you're allowed. And we're going to bring our friend Ryan in long-term journey as well. So yeah, about the power of joy. Well, I'll just say that in terms of some of the more materialistic ways that Marcus was also naming earlier around, yes, we do need in certain moments, and right now in many places in the country, specific places that do not have the same kind of access to institutional philanthropy in many communities across the country right now. But when I first was thinking about this idea of joy and funding and grantmaking, a lot of the initial reaction to me from Grantmakers was, "Well, how do we find joy and how are we going to measure it, and how will partners submit their reports on it?"

And I was like, "Well, I understand."

There was questions from a day-to-day practicality, but maybe the transformation of the sector that we really should be considering is actually that those questions are actually getting in the way of the transformation that needs to happen. If we're asking community partners to measure their joy, that's not the purpose of it. And so, harnessing that power of joy is really what I'm saying is that part of what I believe institutional philanthropy's role in this is not to only show up in moments of deficit or crisis, but that we can and we should, I believe, had a responsibility in sustaining the good.

And I think in a lot of ways, some of that might be why we are partly in the moment that we are in. And what was effective and wonderful, and idealistic and inclusive, generally inclusive about our democracy was not well-resourced. And so, in harnessing the power of joy and that shift in material condition, especially for historically marginalized people is also about understanding the holistic value of a human being is not in their work and not in their fault. It is not to say, "Oh, we're only going to pay attention to you, because there's a problem that needs to be addressed and fixed, crisis. Actually, we're going to pay attention to you, because you are a vital part of our community and our society."

And when I think about how movement building has always needed to connect the points between the crisis, the grief, and the joy, those are such key moments of movement building and movement shifts through, whether it's the civil rights movement, whether it is LGBTQ or trans justice, climate justice. There have been these moments where we, because at the end of the day, it's people are feeling these joys and griefs, and who are actually doing the movement building. People remember, people grow from each other in the strength of our community. And so, that's when we trust in our community, in our movement to know what the wild and the sources of joy and grief need to be then. But that's what I mean whenever I say or hear the phrase of believe in our movements, the guidance of disabled people, for example. And that's how part of how I believe we can really harness joy.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Sandy, I actually want to ask you a follow-up question. You mentioned philanthropic organizations showing up during times of crises and kind of having that be centered around somewhat of an emergency response, right? An emergent response in the moment. But earlier in our conversation, Marcus talked about kind of that long form, long-term recovery in a metaphoric way, but also in a very physiological, a very everyday way in terms of how people maneuver, how people need support in order to continue onward. And a lot of times funding can be packaged in a very time bound manner, where it's just a year or two years or so, but we know that the arc of recovery for many people is long and wide and expansive. So what would you say to philanthropic organizations about the importance of making sure that they lean into supporting organizations and individuals in the long term by way of a real vested interest in their recovery, their support as it relates to grief and navigating crises?

SANDY HO:

Yeah. Well, one concrete example, if I were to just name some dreams here of our sector is if there were philanthropy or some kind of resource that was solely committed to resourcing joy for movement, well generations, that is one example. When I think about the generational wealth building that also needs to happen, but I also think about the generational joy, the generational healing that also needs to come alongside all of this work that's happening as well.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Come on, expanding the dreams here, Sandy.

MARCUS WALTON:

Yes, let's go.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Yeah, I appreciate this so much. Now it's not officially a wrap without the closing credits, so we would love for both of you to close us out with your real-life solidarity superstars. We started off with fictional characters, now we're talking about real-life solidarity superstars name a few of the folks who have helped produce or direct your solidarity dreams thus far. Marcus, I'll start with you and we'll close with Sandy.

MARCUS WALTON:

Oh, wow. I mean, can I start with Sandy? Thank you. And our colleague Ryan Easterly, as she mentioned, but there's Louise Green who is living with breast cancer and really introduced the concept of living with cancer to me that I referenced earlier. Maurice Mitchell, who a dynamic movement leader who currently leads the Working Families Party and just offer one of the most dynamic papers as a synthesis of ideas from movement, which is titled Building Resilient Organizations. There's Alice Holm, who runs the Change Philanthropy, which is a network of affinity groups, meaning that they're ethnic oriented groups of funders, and really a space for folks to get really specific around the populations they care about, and shaping and inform how data is shaped, organized, collected, and used to promote thriving across those different communities.

Pastor Ryan Eller is someone I think about when it comes to rural populations. He leads the Appalachian Funders Network, and there's a variety of others. I'll just say the senior leadership team at Grantmakers for Effective Organizations with whom I have the real privilege of working with every day. Megan Duffy, our executive Vice President, Akilah Massey, our Vice President of Programs, Christina Works, our Vice President of External Affairs, and Myla Yocum, who is our Vice President of Operations. All of them represent different diverse backgrounds across all different identity categories, and it is a profound growth experience and honor for me to come to work every day knowing that I'm working alongside those people.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Come on now with your Solidarity Superstar shout-outs. I appreciate that. Sandy, I'm coming on over to you.

SANDY HO:

Thank you. Oh my gosh, yeah, likewise so many. But among those who within in the philanthropic space for me have really been, that I've learned so deeply from Laurie Villarosa.

MARCUS WALTON:

Absolutely.

SANDY HO:

And she's over at the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity. Folks such as Julia Beatty, who most recently was of the Black-led movement fund at Borealis Philanthropy. I would also shout out Dimple Abichandani and her latest work, A New Era of Philanthropy. Among movement committee folks, I am really, I've been thinking a lot lately of the late Patty Berne of Sins and Valid and one of the foremost founders of disability justice. I want to shout out Alice Wong, of the Disability Visibility project, and there are so many. Melissa Thompson and also Justice, Justice Shorter, our incredible podcast host herself. I don't even remember when she and I first connected, but I know we've been organizing for a minute together outside of the sector, and it's so incredible just to see all our people showing up in this moment and the privilege that I also had to lead an all disabled staff team in staff Disability & Philanthropy Forum as well.

JUSTICE SHORTER:

Big love, big appreciations to both of you. Thank you all so much for joining us on Disability Inclusion Required. If you want to keep your learning journey going, visit the Disability & Philanthropy Forum at disabilityphilanthropy.org. I'm Justice Shorter, and this has been another episode of Disability Inclusion Required. Thanks so much for tuning in and join us again next time.