

S4E6

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SPEAKERS

Valerie Johnson, Monique Curry-Mims

Valerie Johnson 00:00

Hello, and welcome back to beyond philanthropy. I'm Valerie. I'm here with Monique.

Monique Curry-Mims 00:05

Hello.

Valerie Johnson 00:07

And we are halfway through the season.

Monique Curry-Mims 00:09

We are. we are, we've had some really good conversations about shifting power with some really great guests. Yeah. So we wanted to take a moment to, I don't want to say reset, but to

Valerie Johnson 00:22

be ourselves

Monique Curry-Mims 00:23

Yeah, to have a conversation about what we've talked about so far. And what we still need to talk about it and to maybe even hear from you guys, right, like, what more do we want to talk about? We have some great guests lined up some great live recordings lined up. But you know, maybe there's some room for some stuff to add to this.

Valerie Johnson 00:43

Yeah. So we personally have had some shifting power issues. Challenges. Yeah, man over the last couple of months, from two very different perspectives. So I as the fundraiser,

Monique Curry-Mims 01:00

and I as the funder

Valerie Johnson 01:02

are having very different challenges, however, similar, they're like, it's a lot of what I'm gonna call performative power shifting. It's a lot of folks who think they're doing a good thing. But they can't. They're afraid to let go. So, so part of shifting power is you actually have to let it go.

Monique Curry-Mims 01:30

Yeah. But, you know what, I wonder if that's a misrepresentation. I wonder if they're afraid or not, like part of me feels like, they want to maintain status quo, but look as though they are changing. And a lot of it is talking to talk saying all the good things. Yeah, being on panels, writing reports, talking to peers holding convenings, but then in their own private, personal professional practices behind closed doors, in board meetings, wherever else, they're still maintaining that status quo. That they perpetrate, that they've changed.

Valerie Johnson 02:10

I didn't tell you this. But speaking of that, okay. I was invited through another friend at another nonprofit, to a listening session with the city council person. Oh, on Tuesday morning, okay. The city council person is advocating for a return to all of the city offices following the vendor policies, so city offices that work with nonprofits. 20 years ago, there was a bill signed that said they don't have to follow the standard vendor practice. So for example, if there is a housing crisis, and a bunch of people become homeless, the Office of Homeless Services doesn't have to go through an RFP process,

Monique Curry-Mims 02:59

got it

Valerie Johnson 02:59

to find a nonprofit vendor who can immediately house those people, right. Our Office of Homeless Services here in Philadelphia has struggled over the last few years. They have been called out for going over budget.

Monique Curry-Mims 03:17

There's over budget. They created a whole new budget.

Valerie Johnson 03:21

They just kind of did their own thing, which was in response to a crisis. But however, we have a new mayor, a new city council. There's a lot of oversight happening right now into like, what happened and why. So one of the things that they're looking at is reinstating every vendor for the city has to follow the RFP process. So even nonprofits who are providing direct services would have to do this. The nonprofits obviously have thoughts. So the city council person who has been pushing it invited nonprofits, who are providing direct services, direct housing services, to a listening session, and they could not have been more gracious, they, you know, lead with this, this is what I'm proposing. And I would love to hear your feedback and I will take notes and they visibly took notes, thanked every single person individually for their feedback. They reiterated it to us make it clear that they were listening right. Which was wonderful. That happened on Tuesday morning. Wednesday was the city council hearing where this person introduced the bill, this return to vendor policy. And they were defensive. They were

aggressive. They were pushy. They were quoted in the Inquirer, the local newspaper, as saying that nonprofits are just afraid of change.

Monique Curry-Mims 04:55

Oh, hmm.

Valerie Johnson 04:58

Not one of us by the way, said anything about being apprehensive of change. We have legitimate reasons for being concerned about this. So that felt really icky. So like, which was the false face, right? Like, was it the was it their real face showing to the nonprofits but then they had to put on their city Councilmember face? Or were they just like a lion in sheep's clothing trying to make us seem like we were heard? Because we felt that. I walked away feeling very heard. I think everyone else was apprehensive, but felt like she at least listened right. Oops, I dropped a pronoun. But then watching the hearing, it's like, Did she listen? I don't think she listened. Or maybe she listened and just didn't care.

Monique Curry-Mims 05:49

You know, I I don't even know. I had so many thoughts. Like first I was like, she's a politician. Or at least works in the political atmosphere. She was an actual council person. And that's a lot different from the nonprofit space and actually doing work on the ground. So there's, there's a disconnect there. So understanding what's needed in what hinderance are in how that might impact the work or impact operations. And you voicing those opinions? Or not, or maybe even facts isn't necessarily apprehension. It's like, okay, this is how it's going to disrupt us. Yeah, because we're not for profits. Like we can't I mean, even though, you know, nonprofits are business, but the way that they work financially, are not the same. Right? Especially when you're working with government, like, it's hard to say like, oh, yeah, we're going to not pay you for 30 60 90 days. And that's okay.

Valerie Johnson 06:52

A year.

Monique Curry-Mims 06:52

Okay, or a year.

Valerie Johnson 06:54

we have outstanding receipts. And we are one of many.

Monique Curry-Mims 06:56

Which is crazy, because as a for profit, like I have a for profit consulting company, like what I do at the end of the year, and how my money comes in, like, doesn't have as much scrutiny with the IRS with an auditor like, I don't have to be audited every year, right, right over that 750 mark, like I just go about my business. I pay my accountant, he submits it, IRS clears it. I'm good. Yeah, that's it. Like there's a lot more that you have to go through as a nonprofit. And if you're trying to explain to them that like, Hey, you want to do this, but this is not going to be in alignment with how we legally have to operate. That's not me being apprehensive to change. That's me saying, I don't think this is going to work the way you

think it's going to work. Let's figure out another way to make it right. But this particular path might not be the right path.

Valerie Johnson 07:43

It's not a viable business plan to have to renew your contract once a year. The main thing that nonprofits struggle with is consistent revenue, right? Especially if you work with government contracts, because they don't pay on time. So if we have to renew our contracts once a year,

Monique Curry-Mims 08:04

you're not even paying me to the next year.

Valerie Johnson 08:06

Right. and then who gets hurt ultimately is your clients as a nonprofit, which was I I think every single one of the 15 plus people, all nonprofit leaders who spoke during that listening session was the clients will pay the price for this. Yeah. So while I appreciated the shifting power, in having the listening session, providing the opportunity apparent like appearing piercingly listening to the feedback, but it was all a sham. And the vendor bill did pass City council, so.

Monique Curry-Mims 08:46

interesting. I mean, because the other side to that is like you said, like, the clients ultimately, ultimately pay the price. Because if you're telling me that I'm not going to be reimbursed for a year, then that means that I'm actually telling my vendors Yep, that they're not going to be in my vendor. So don't look at me like I'm crazy. Oh, well. So they'll be like, okay, we can work together because that's not okay.

Valerie Johnson 09:13

That's where line of credit comes in for most nonprofits, which you have to pay interest on.

Monique Curry-Mims 09:17

And I've seen nonprofits fall because of that.

Valerie Johnson 09:22

and you can't get reimbursed for that interest. So this the city or whatever, whatever government entity is behind on their payments, will not reimburse you for whatever financing you have to pay for to be able to pay your staff. so it's, it's it that sucks. And it just made me think of, you know, there's another example of how fundraisers, nonprofit CEOs are trying to do the right thing we're trying to advocate were given the space to advocate were seemingly given power in the conversation, but not but not really. There was no power there. It was all a sham.

Monique Curry-Mims 10:03

I mean, not only that, if there was really power there, you guys would have had a seat at the table at the council hearing.

Valerie Johnson 10:09

Correct.

Monique Curry-Mims 10:10

Instead of having someone else who obviously doesn't understand, speak on your behalf and analyze that a, in a in their own void with their own bias.

Valerie Johnson 10:20

Now, there were a few nonprofit executives that were invited to speak. and what happened. Council voted to approve the bill.

10:27

so my question is did they speak before or after the council person that was like, they're just don't want to change?

Valerie Johnson 10:40

I'm not sure.

Monique Curry-Mims 10:41

Because I wonder, I don't know. So that's a whole other thing, because I'm like that, whether they actually say, well, actually no. Or did they just let her ride? Because it's like, oh, she's a council person. And we don't want to make an enemy, which is a whole other thing, right. Like **if we're ceding our being able to allow people to speak their truths it should not be seen as a hostile thing. It should be seen as they're voicing their opinions about what they're experiencing, about what they know.** And it might be let's agree to disagree. And let's call it a day and see what we can learn from that. But I think that especially now, like even as a funder, you know, I'm in rooms with funders, and I'm having conversations. And I'm often looked at, like the angry black woman, because I'm literally saying, like, hey, this isn't gonna work. And I'm not seeing it from a I'm trying to be like the rebel rouser, which I am. But really, like, full transparency. I grew up in section eight. I grew up on WIC, I grew up on food stamps, I come from a divorced home, and a single mother, right? Like, I live this life. And granted, it's not the North Philly life. But like, I grew up from poverty and was able to, you know, do x, y, and z to be where I am today. And I think that when I speak, it's just like, well, do you know what you're talking about? And I'm like, Oh, I do, though, like I really do. Right? I still have family that live in that situation, right? Like, my family has been impacted by gun violence, I lost my favorite little cousin to gun violence. So it is something that I still live and experience. So when I'm saying things, it's not a matter of, I'm just trying to be right, it's a matter of what you're actually saying is not going to be impactful for this community. And here's why. And this isn't something that I've heard. And also it is something that I heard because I speak with nonprofits all the time, right? So I'm not just speaking in a void, but I'm coming with personal and professional experience around these things. And instead of just learning from that, it just, I don't know, it's a very, it's a very interesting place. And which takes it back to is it something that's accidental, right, in terms of like, oh, well, you know, we were trying to see, but you know, we're not coming off versus like, we don't really want to do to things that we have to do.

Valerie Johnson 13:08

I think that's where I get stuck, because I tend to give people the benefit of the doubt. I think I'm done. I think I'm done. I really think I'm done. Because I think that people have good intentions, or I try to

believe that they do. But ultimately, I don't think people want to change. I don't think people want to listen to opinions that aren't theirs. I don't think people care. I mean, I've told you this before I have a funder who consistently asks why we can't have clients at the funder site visit,

Monique Curry-Mims 13:43

because they want to feel better about themselves. They want to like they save somebody.

Valerie Johnson 13:46

and I've told them so many times, and they're always very receptive. They're always like, well, they're

Monique Curry-Mims 13:51

hoping that that one time, right?

Valerie Johnson 13:53

Yeah, they're like, I totally understand. I totally get it.

Monique Curry-Mims 13:56

I understand the last time you said it, but this time was different, right?

Valerie Johnson 13:59

And like, they'll ask me multiple times in the same meeting. And like, at a certain point, I'm like, Are you just choosing not to listen to what I'm telling you? And I want to give him the benefit of the doubt. But also, I would be like, I don't want to work with you anymore. .

Monique Curry-Mims 14:13

I was at an event a couple months ago. And it's like a little convening that someone brought together that had different philanthropic leaders, funders, nonprofits. And the the first question was, you know, why do you do what you do? Like what got you into this work? And everybody's going around and talking, and I sat there and they got to me, and I started, you know, I've been in different paths, right. So, you know, I was in a nonprofit space. Then I went to consulting to nonprofits, I'm now you know, managing and consulting with foundations, right. So like, there's been certain things that have moved me along.

Valerie Johnson 14:57

That's your second career right there.

Monique Curry-Mims 15:01

But the thing was, as I was saying, as I was explaining, like, the traumas that I experience in those instances, in what I saw as the underlying reason for them that I, you know, put my Superwoman hat on to be like, Okay, this, I need to go, I need to I need to work in this space, or I need to fix this, or I needed to support this effort. I was like, Oh, I feel like I'm telling my feelings story. This story that's like, in at that moment is when she became the villain. And everybody busted out laughing. And I was like, Well, no, I said, because all of us are talking about trauma. Yeah, like no one is saying that they woke

up and it was just like, I want to save the world. Everybody experienced something in their childhood, in their teen in their, in their professional that they were like, so I'm now doing this,

Valerie Johnson 15:50

I would actually say my lack of trauma is why I'm here. Because I grew up with, I'm not saying we had a lot of money. I'm not saying that things were perfect. But two parent household, never wanted for anything, was first person in my family to go to college, which was exciting. So like, you know, but that wasn't traumatic. So I think for me, it was meeting people who had gone through trauma, and being like, Oh, well, what is the difference between me and them. And the difference is, I was born into a different family. And that's incredibly unfair. And it doesn't need to be that way. We we could do things to help support families that are struggling to ensure that the next generation does not have to deal with the same traumas. So I'm opposite of that.

Monique Curry-Mims 16:46

But I think at the same time, and I think that, you know, you're coming in on the nonprofit side, right? So you're on the ground in the community. I think there's another side to the foundation side. Yeah. Where they're like, Oh, my lack of trauma. So now I have to go save, but I'm not really saving, right? Like, I'm not on the ground. I'm not working directly with people to really be of the community.

Valerie Johnson 17:12

you're saving from a place that feels safe.

Monique Curry-Mims 17:15

You're saving from a place that feels safe, and a place that has inherent power. And when somebody tries to tell you that, hey, that's extractive, okay. That's whatever, that's racist. That's this, then it becomes, oh, my gosh, cry, cry. You know what, there is a new book, it's not new, it came out last year, and it's called white women cry and call me angry. And I bought it because that because I heard this story. It was really about this black woman philanthropy and it's her story, right. And it's, it's a little bit of a tell all, she's naming names, and foundations and organizations, whatever. And I bought the book because I was like, Okay, I feel seen, right. And not that I had a white woman cry, call me angry, but just some of those instances that we're coming up against. But then most recently, I was having a conversation with a white philanthropy leader, where all I was doing was one pointing out hypocrisy and what she was saying, but also holding her accountable for the actions that you know, she had done. And she starts crying, and literally calls me angry. And I was like, Oh, shit. Oh, like, this is a real thing. This is not like a metaphor. This is like a real thing. Yeah, and it kind of like took me aback because I'm sitting here, like, what? Why are we crying? Right? This is like, we're adults having a conversation, right? And in even an even if life is lifing I don't know. And everybody's different. Right? So, you know, personally, I was going through a lot of stuff in my life, and I just wasn't happy go lucky me. So Right. But at the same time, you know, this woman was going through some stuff in her life, but she decided to take it out on me, right? And if I would have taken it out on her or somebody else, it would have been a big deal. But you know, someone said to me, Well, not everybody grieves or not everybody processes the same way and I do understand that but also at the same time, I'm like, That's not fair. Because if I would have done that

Valerie Johnson 17:21

you would have been the angry black woman

Monique Curry-Mims 19:24

I would have been the angry black woman that was already like basically called that in that in that call. But like I would have been the angry black all of that without actually being without actually being angry, but it's like it would it would have been a thing would have been a thing. It would have been a thing or have lost credibility. Like it's and I'm like, Yeah, my husband calls me naive. He knows me he's because I'm who's one like, I'm just a really like, I'm a happy go lucky person. I let a lot of things roll off my back. I want to see the best in people. I want to give people a second chance.

Valerie Johnson 19:55

And you want to fix things that are broken. you're really good at seeing the solutions. And I, after you share this story with me, I was just like, I really hope this is not going to break her spirit.

Monique Curry-Mims 20:10

Oh it did it. It did it did for a little while. And then something else happened with the same person. Like, we were just going through it for a little while and I was just kind of like, man, what is going on in philanthropy? It just made me realize this conversation, right? Like it made me realize that there are a lot of foundation leaders. And I do have to say, even though like that was a white woman, there are other people in philanthropy, black people, right, especially older generation, people who have assimilated to the traumatic, harmful practices of philanthropy, that perpetuate the same things. And I'm just kind of like, Yo, like, there's, there's no safe space here for anybody. Yeah, like if I'm a funder, like I'm literally giving out money. I'm literally working with foundations who give you money. Like if you're treating me that way, how are you treating other nonprofit leaders? How are you treating the people that you serve? Right, but I also know that like, You're treating me that way. But you're not treating that white foundation leader that way? Right? Right. So it's just a really, and I'm just sitting here looking at everybody, like, it must be me. Like I need to see it's actually not just you.

Valerie Johnson 21:19

So I recently, there's a black woman leading one of our programs that work who's similar in age to us who has kind of let me know that there are some older black folks at our organization that have kind of taken it upon themselves to mentor her.

Monique Curry-Mims 21:40

That's good.

Valerie Johnson 21:41

She didn't ask for it. So it was kind of

Monique Curry-Mims 21:45

forced mentorship.

Valerie Johnson 21:46

Yeah, like I don't think it was completely unappreciated, but was a very old guard mentorship, like this is the way it is, people are going to be like this, you just have to find a way to get through it, we need them. We need their support in order to make it through the day to keep our jobs to get things done, yada, yada, yada. And her reaction was just like, why does it have to be this way?

Monique Curry-Mims 22:11

It doesn't.

Valerie Johnson 22:12

Right. So it's not just you. It's like an entire generation of folks who have had to do what they had to do to find success.

Monique Curry-Mims 22:21

And you know, and I appreciate them. Because they paved the way, they did, right. They allowed it so that this next generation, this new guard, I'm going to call it a philanthropist, whether they're foundation leaders or nonprofit leaders can move up into leadership. Yeah, but at the same time, and and this is like across the board, because even in philanthropy, there is a changing of the guard as a whole. And the next generation doesn't want to do things the same way. Yeah, like our world in literally every aspects, like every aspect is on fire. Like every aspect of this planet of our world, from education, to economics, to international relations, and wars and politics, like them, and them and like the world is on fire. And philanthropy has been around for 100 years, years. And what has it done?

Valerie Johnson 23:21

Nothing

Monique Curry-Mims 23:22

right. Like, I don't want to say no, to nothing, but a lot of band aids on things. A lot of putting this band aids on, it's like, you know, you put a bandaid on, and then you went for a swim. And now the band aid isn't sticking anymore, right. And now you've got gangrene because you got an affection in the water. Like, this is where we're at. We're like, we have to do more, we have to cut the limb off at this point. And we have to do something different.

Valerie Johnson 23:44

We have to be smarter about how we do it.

Monique Curry-Mims 23:45

Yes, I think so.

Valerie Johnson 23:47

So we've been going through a strategic planning process are we had like a retreat with board and leadership staff. And they asked, you know, what is the change that you want to see in the world as a result of what pathway does? And everybody kind of wrote their answers. The staff were very realistic, realistic and literal, like very literal. Like, we want to house X number of people. We want to provide X

number of apartments, we want to, you know, something very literal, the board aspirational. They want to end homelessness. That's not our mission.

Monique Curry-Mims 24:27

And you can't do that as an organization.

Valerie Johnson 24:29

But our board members think that that's what we're doing. And part of me is like, that's wonderful. I also want to end homelessness, but I'm not going to do it through my work here at Pathways because we are band aids, we are not source of homelessness.

Monique Curry-Mims 24:46

unless you guys are leaving or joining a continuum of services. And I mean, like not just direct services, but like advocacy and lobbying and all the things that are actually going to change homelessness in Philadelphia. And if that's your dream, that's fine. But then you have to restructure, and bring in someone who's going to oversee advocacy and like restructure some of your work, which is good. I mean, which is doable, but like that's a conscious decision, either going to be aspirational and not really do not anything but like, never hit it. Or you're really going to be literal and figure out how you're going to get there. Yeah, I find that very interesting. That's so Okay, now we're off topic. You can you know, us guys. So I was having a conversation, and this is probably going to be an article that's going to come out soon. Yeah. Nonprofit governance. Yeah. In the fact that boards don't really know how to board. Yeah, they don't know what their fiduciary responsibility is. Yeah. What that really means, like, you can't be aspirational. When you are liable for what goes on in your organization. I mean, you can't be aspirational. But you have to know that like you do have a level of responsibility. It's not just showing up once a quarter. And the reason why that came up is because of U Arts and what's going on with U Arts. Yeah. For those that don't know that I'm sure we made national news, University of the Arts in Philadelphia abruptly closed.

Valerie Johnson 26:10

And now there's been a week's notice to students that were enrolled in summer sessions.

Monique Curry-Mims 26:14

they found out via social media with everybody else that their university was closing. And now there's several class action lawsuits about the closing. But the board is kind of what allowed it to get to where it was, it was the board's decision to then abruptly close and now the board is now being sued. It's just like, and I'm like, What does your I don't know how far D&O insurance goes. But I'm sure that there's not going to be a level of personal responsibility because of some of the missteps that we're taking over with the oversight of the board.

Valerie Johnson 26:47

and speaking of shifting power, the president of the university was a woman who was in the role for less than a year.

Monique Curry-Mims 26:54

Yeah, she didn't, she did not actually create the issue.

Valerie Johnson 26:57

But she's getting the heat for it.

Monique Curry-Mims 26:58

she's getting the heat for it. And that's a whole other board issue, right? Because the person before her created the problem. And they allowed that person to create the problem, because as the board, they did not have proper oversight and governance of the organization. In my opinion, that's just my opinion. But I think that when we have nonprofits that are closing down, because of things like that, when we have issues in a lot of it is like, Oh, we were just, I don't know, if it was you and I are talking, both talking to someone, I was talking to my trainer, and she was talking about this organization. And I was like, but because the woman was just the executive director she was talking about was just like, being ridiculous. And I was like, does she have a board? And she was like, Yes, but she does have a real board, right? Like, because a real board would not allow her do that. And that's the thing like we as leaders are not providing or leaders are not providing their boards with honest information.

Valerie Johnson 26:59

Right, right.

Monique Curry-Mims 26:59

So boards aren't making decisions. And then the boards aren't asking questions. They're just taking the information and being like, this all looks fine, and gravy, keep doing a great job. And then your staff was like, she's doing a shit job, or he's doing a shit job. Like we're not having real conversations. boards aren't asking real questions. They're not actually doing their legal jobs. And I think that people struggle with that. Like, I remember being in a conversation, and people complaining about like, I'm on this board, and they're asking me to do this. And you're asking me to do that. And I'm like, that's not what a board member does. Like you don't know what and I had to stop that conversation. And say, actually, they're right. Like, that is what you're supposed to be doing. As a board member, you are at a job that you pay for. So instead of showing up and getting a check, unless you're at a for profit on a for profit board, you're showing up and you're writing the donation check. . You have it's a job. It's not a 40 hour a week job. But you have work to do you have responsibilities, especially as the executive director.

Valerie Johnson 28:59

the board is there to tell you what to do. I mean, to a certain extent,

Monique Curry-Mims 29:03

to a certain extent, I mean, they're your boss, but in the context of this conversation, so bring it back, like so now we have boards that aren't doing their work. And then they bring in women and bipoc leaders into a situation that was harrowing. . And expect them to save it or expect them to be the face of the failure. And it's just like, Oh, we're giving you power. We're now trying to be inclusive. And it was all a setup all along. Either that and I've also seen foundations where they've hired women of color to run it, but then they really didn't give the that leader autonomy. Yeah, they still micromanage at a board.

Valerie Johnson 29:39

Oh, yeah. Oh yeah. It's a whole thing. It's a whole thing. So if you're out there, and you have any power to shift, think about why you're shifting the power. And whether you actually want to.

Monique Curry-Mims 29:52

Maybe that's a question. I'm sorry. That's the question we need to be asking. We need to be asking why are you shifting? Power. And really like and really dig into it because I feel like if they can't answer the question, yeah, then you know that it's not authentic. If they're like, Well, this is just what everybody's doing, or oh, I just see a need in the community. And it's very generic. It is a generic response, because they are not authentically shifting power, like there has to be, we have to start asking questions, the people who show up as allies, because I'm tired of allies. I'm tired of people who show up and give bare minimum, we need co conspirators at this point in life. And I mean, like, across the board, whether it's for black people, for women, for LGBTQ people, like, we need co conspirators because allies I'm sorry, like, you guys were great. And we appreciate you and you've opened the path for the CO conspirators only go so but it's only going but so far. And it's just because well, that's the right thing to do. Yeah, that's not that's not enough.

Valerie Johnson 30:56

No, I mean, so in my corner of the world, part of shifting power, for me, is empowering the next generation of fundraisers. And that does require literally giving away my power, like, for, you know, people who are on my team at work. I don't always make all the decisions, like a lot of times, I will say, I think a and b are both good options, choose one and run with it. If it's a failure, that's my failure. It's not their failure. But I think a lot of people do the opposite. They'll say, pick one and run with it. If it comes back to failure. Why did you do that? What did you do wrong? This is your fault. getting knocked for it on their, you know, evaluations and getting in trouble for it. No, I gave away my power, I empowered someone else to make a decision. If it's the wrong decision. That was my mistake, that wasn't their mistake. But no one looks at it that way, like for foundation leaders, board members want to hire a person of color to lead their foundation, you got to actually let them leave lead. And if they make mistakes, you have to be there to back them up and help pick them back up. You empower that person to be in that role, you can't dump on them.

Monique Curry-Mims 32:22

And I think in both instances and empowering that person, does it mean, here? I'll see you in the end and how it turns out. like there is a level of support that has to be given along the way, whether that is utilizing your inherent power to make connections or to do something but I think in too many instances, we put people in charge, or give them false power for them to fall and be like I told you, so this is why I don't hire women. This is why I don't hire people of color. Where it was like, Where was your support? Where was your support along the way, like,

Valerie Johnson 32:58

Oh, I'm annoyingly supportive of the people on my team, I'm sure to the point where they're like, I got it. And I'm like, I'm here to help. I'm happy. Like, yesterday, our CEO asked for socks because we have like boxes of socks in our emergency pantry. Bombas has loads of socks every year. It's a little too many. But you either get 1000 or you get none. Okay, so we take 1000. And then sometimes we have

extra, so she wanted to pass them off to the Catholic Worker. So my Development Associate is in charge of the pantry and I was like, Do you need help? Do you want me to go with you to load up the socks? And she was like, I know how to load socks. I know you do. But I feel bad asking you to load boxes today. So can I help you? And she was like, Get out of my face. I know how to load boxes. So I'm a little annoying.

Monique Curry-Mims 33:48

A little, I mean, maybe you were already being annoying. So I felt like it's like you're not trying to be like, Okay, you have to bend at a 45 degree angle like you're not micromanaging. You're just like, hey, I'm gonna grab some boxes. I just want to make this go faster. Or I just want to I don't want you doing this alone. Yeah, but also I'm also the kind of person like even my husband's like, Hey, can I help you do that? I'm like, No, I got it. Like he could pick up the box. Or like when I bring the laundry like you want me take it upstairs. I'm like, No, I can carry the load upstairs. He just doesn't want me to carry it on. Yeah, I got it.

Valerie Johnson 34:15

Yeah. So that's a little bit me. But like any kind of project like it, I mean, boxes was a bad example. But like any project, like our marketing person, when they're like, how do you want me to design this postcard? I'm like, I don't know. You're the designer. Why don't you just make right and show it to me and I'm happy to like, review it give you feedback, like if you direction but like, why don't you just do it and then show it to me like I don't want to design it for you. And I think a lot of bosses would try and design it for them.

Monique Curry-Mims 34:44

Yeah, I've ever experienced that. And I'm just like, hey, I went to school for design, did you because that's not good. No, we're not putting script font here. What are we doing? What are we doing?

Valerie Johnson 34:52

I didn't go to school for design, you did so yeah, go ahead, do it. And then when they show it to me, I'm like, That's fucking amazing.

Monique Curry-Mims 34:57

Let's do it. The FCC is not regulating. Okay.

Valerie Johnson 35:03

So why don't you run with it?

Monique Curry-Mims 35:06

I mean, and I think that, you know, just back to your point around funders, like, as a funder, as somebody that works with funders, I mean, I think that what I'm doing, I you know what, I think that you know, somebody, somebody checked on me other day, I was just like, I just want to check on you, and see how you're doing. And just to make sure that like, you're not running away. I'm like, I'm running away. I'm running away. I'm actually running to Disney. And another conversation with a friend recently,

and we're just talking about, like, where we're going with our work. And I think that at this point, like seeing this false shifting, yeah. I think I just want to step away from people who need to shift.

Valerie Johnson 35:51

Yep. And work with people who know how to.

Monique Curry-Mims 35:53

not only that because I was so that's the thing, right? Like, people are always like, I have no idea what you do. And I wear a lot of hats. But I don't think a lot of people at least locally, realize that like my consulting practice is outside of the area. So people like well, what do you actually do? I'm like, why consult like, oh, for who am I, for this organization in London for this organization in Tanzania for this organization, Chicago. It because I work with organizations who are like minded like that, right? Like they're already shifting, or they've already shifted, or they didn't have to shift because that was just the beginning. That's how they operate. But I'm also now thinking that, you know, maybe it's just also this, like working with bipoc philanthropist in helping them not fall into the trap of traditional philanthropy. Yeah, and perpetually, those same practices, and then need to shift later because they're like, Oh, well, we gave air conditioners to the school, we thought that was appropriate. We're not gonna go on to that conversation.

Valerie Johnson 36:57

If you're gonna give air conditioners pro tip, make sure that the building is set up to receive air conditioners.

Monique Curry-Mims 37:03

I'm really worried about the the electrical grid for that, but that's a whole other conversation.

Valerie Johnson 37:09

Actually, I have a friend who works in like, tech at the schools, and she's like, this isn't gonna work. She was like, this sucks.

Monique Curry-Mims 37:17

Exactly.

Valerie Johnson 37:19

Um, yeah, I think my biggest struggle was shifting power in the last month or so. Is that good people who bring really valuable things to philanthropy are burnt out.

Monique Curry-Mims 37:33

Oh, yeah. There's been 1,000,005 articles.

Valerie Johnson 37:36

And, and leaving.

Monique Curry-Mims 37:37

Yeah, a lot of people are trying to leave

Valerie Johnson 37:39

because they personally don't want to put up with this bullshit anymore. And the longer we perpetuate that, the more we're going to lose good people. And it's going to keep happening, it's a new people coming into philanthropy are going to be immediately disenfranchised. And they're gonna go right back out again, and we need people like that we need those people in philanthropy. So we need to find a new way, we need to find a new way forward.

Monique Curry-Mims 38:05

So have you guys have any advice on how to authentically shift power? Or find this new way? I mean, it's just like the idea that, you know, the word philanthropy is so toxic at this point that we need a new word and what that word is no one has thought of, but like, if you guys have ideas, like, let us know, like, drop us comments on Instagram, you can also on our podcast page, leave notes. But we really want to hear from you. We want to make sure that I mean, not even make sure like we understand that a lot of people are going through this, especially people who are really about this work. Yeah, this isn't these are not like one off instances. You know, even some of the examples that we're talking about are not even us, right? Like there are people, other people that are experiencing these things that we're just bringing to light. And we want to we want to make sure that at the end of the day, communities are being changed in the people who are the change makers are jumping off the ledge that they're standing on.

Valerie Johnson 39:04

Yep. I couldn't have said that any better.

Monique Curry-Mims 39:07

So with that being said, thank you for joining us for this all of our episodes, but thank you for joining us, for I'll just say this transparent episode, getting to know Valerie, the fundraiser and Monique, the funder, a little bit of what we're experiencing and a little bit of what we hope can change in the sector. If you didn't know now, you know, this has been beyond philanthropy. Thanks, guys.