

BP2_Episode 8

Mon, 8/8 9:09AM • 37:58

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, philanthropy, funders, black, afp, fundraisers, organizations, community, terms, feel, social capital, leadership, narratives, work, fundraising, hear, relationships, white, sophia, vocal

SPEAKERS

Monique Curry-Mims, Sophia Peake, Valerie Johnson

Valerie Johnson 00:00

Hello, and welcome to this month's episode of beyond philanthropy. I am Valerie. I'm here with Monique.

Monique Curry-Mims 00:08

Hello!

Valerie Johnson 00:08

And we have a special guest with us. And it's also black philanthropy month. So we are extra excited to have our guest here, Sophia peake to talk about developing black leadership. So Sophia, hi,

Sophia Peake 00:22

hey, y'all.

Valerie Johnson 00:24

Full disclosure, Sophia and I used to work together. But she flew the nest really quickly. And now she's off doing her own thing.

Monique Curry-Mims 00:30

And also we work together shortly at the Philadelphia black giving circle. She was on a steering committee for a little while until she left us.

Valerie Johnson 00:38

I know, she just off to do bigger and better things.

Sophia Peake 00:40

But, its a small world? We are still deeply connected?

Valerie Johnson 00:45

Yeah

Sophia Peake 00:45

family

Valerie Johnson 00:46

Oh, for sure. Yeah. So tell us what you do. Now.

Sophia Peake 00:49

As Val said, I left it feels like yesterday, right?

Valerie Johnson 00:54

It was like two years ago,

Sophia Peake 00:55

like two years ago, I left.

Valerie Johnson 00:57

I know, Shocking.

Sophia Peake 00:58

Shocking. I left right on the heels of 2020 and COVID. And all of the crazy uprising and just the world paradigm shift to go to a racial social justice organization called the youth sentencing and reentry project. And I am Development and Operations Coordinator over there. So still focusing on sharing stories, but particularly as it pertains to black youth who find themselves in carceral settings, and really just working to address the actual symptoms and root causes of systemic racism.

Monique Curry-Mims 01:37

that's a heavy lift.

Sophia Peake 01:39

It's a heavy lift. It is. Yeah.

Valerie Johnson 01:41

And you've been there two years now

Sophia Peake 01:43

I've been there two years. Well, almost two years. It'll be officially two years. This November.

Valerie Johnson 01:49

Wow.

Monique Curry-Mims 01:50

So yeah, so that's, that's not only just a heavy lift in the work. But I would have to assume it's a heavy lift in this port. Because that work, strides across philanthropy and organizing, and even maybe some advocacy work, which is like a dirty word almost in this space. So how are you managing it? And how are you getting funders to support that work?

Sophia Peake 02:19

You know, what I think YSRP does really well at, they do really well at being straightforward. And fortunately, a lot of the funders that have been coming forward in supporting our work, have been funders who are really walking the walk, right, and not just talking the talk, because we've seen so many funders shift like their guidelines and their funding priorities over the last two years. But we've seen that before 2020, right. We've seen that in so many different years when something has happened, right? And then there's like this uprising and this call for organizing and funding, but then it wanes over a while. And so the interesting thing is that YSRP prides themselves on having folks on the team who have lived experience that can be able to talk about and relate to the issues that it is that we're trying to address. I think communicating that with funders, and again, just being straight up. So many times as fundraisers, we have to kind of tell our story in a way that fits the narrative, right? You're kind of you're kind of shoving their agenda. funders want their agenda to be innovated or implemented. I just think YSRP does a good job at just being straightforward like this is this is the problem this is it, like, let's not address the symptoms. Let's address the roots. And so with that, I think we've done a really good job at building those strong relationships with funders before 2020. And now, so that's been really awesome.

Valerie Johnson 03:57

That's amazing.

Monique Curry-Mims 03:58

That is amazing. And you said something that was really key around the idea that funders kind of like hop on these trends. And that was really, I just recently did a talk at LISC Philadelphia. And they asked what were trends that I was seeing in black organizations. I said, Well, actually, let's talk about the trends that black organizations are seeing. And it is that trend that like, during 2020 Everybody was hopping on that bandwagon of like, let's support black. Let's support black LED, let's support black communities. And then the next year, it was like, back to status quo.

Valerie Johnson 04:34

Or I had an organization that was like, Hey, we have this new pot of money that's going to go to black led organizations. But we really like what you're doing. So like before we make those grants can we talk to you about like this new thing you're doing

Sophia Peake 04:48

That is so icky, oh my goodness.

Valerie Johnson 04:49

So icky, like,

Monique Curry-Mims 04:50

why would they even say that why not just taught like, they can say that internally like you want to do this but let's talk to pathway first and then

Valerie Johnson 04:57

that's actually a good point. I don't know if they told Me that or if I just saw the announcement like a week after they gave us funding that said, like, new pot of money from this organization for black led organizations, and I was like, but that's the same. That's the same pot I just got money from and I'm not a black lead, or it felt very icky. I didn't like it. Yeah.

Monique Curry-Mims 05:16

So how can how can funders not be icky? Like what? So you've got funders that are walking the walk? How can funders that are not walking the walk actually shifts and not be? I don't want to say on trend, because on trend, culturally usually means something good, but like in this case, it is definitely not something

Valerie Johnson 05:39

how can they not be bandwagon? Yeah, they commit to their values and like stay there instead of shifting.

Monique Curry-Mims 05:45

How are you supported by the funders that are walking the walk that other funders needs to learn?

Valerie Johnson 05:51

Yeah, we're asking you a really big question.

Monique Curry-Mims 05:54

We don't we don't prep our guests. We just hit them with it. So they talk right off the cuff, because they're amazing.

Sophia Peake 06:00

Um, all right. So how can they not be bandwagoning? And less...

Valerie Johnson 06:06

icky

Sophia Peake 06:07

Less icky, less fake. I mean, honestly, it's really straightforward, like make the commitment, make the commitment, and then get into the community hear from the people like hear from who better to lead the lead the cause or or attack the issues than the people on the frontline. Right. **So whatever it is that you think you're solving might not be what the actual issue is, if you don't have those really important significant ties in the community, and you're not getting out there and talking to people and hearing firsthand, from the community about their needs.** I think it's just really straightforward. Make the

commitment. A lot of organizations are bandwagoning. A lot of businesses are being - we see that all the time, right? Like, black history month.

Valerie Johnson 06:53

Oh yea, buy this special lotion.

Sophia Peake 06:54

yes, it's just horrible. But yet everything is not a capital gain. Like if you're really trying to make a change, then just you got to comment, you got to make the commitment. I think it's so simple. But of course, nothing is ever really simple in life. Now unfortunately,

Valerie Johnson 07:13

people make it harder than it needs to be.

Monique Curry-Mims 07:15

Common sense isn't common is what my mom tells me all the time.

Valerie Johnson 07:17

My mom too.

Monique Curry-Mims 07:19

mommas, they know better.

Sophia Peake 07:24

But yeah, I think that I think for a long time, a lot of these conversations, and a lot of black narratives and stories haven't been elevated in the way that they have been in the last two years as well. And I think that me personally, I feel that I've witnessed, like an emboldened empowerment in our community, so to speak of like, well, this, this is what it means to be a philanthropist. Right? Because we can talk about philanthropy, that's one area that has traditionally been shattered, right? In terms of what that means in the black community, or, you know, this is this is what it means to really support a cause. **And then just more black people being vocal about our needs, and not just being the beneficiaries like we are the experts. black and brown people, people who are traditionally traditionally less empowered by a system that was created to keep them that way.** Right.

Valerie Johnson 08:30

That's the best I've ever heard anybody describe that? I'm sorry, that was I'm coming back to that later. Go ahead.

Sophia Peake 08:37

Yes, but I mean, it's the truth. We haven't traditionally been in the seats to say that's not, that's not it, right. Because we need the money. So it was like, Shut up and take the money kind of thing.

Monique Curry-Mims 08:48

Yeah, I mean, that goes back to just the power in philanthropy, and understanding what power actually is, right. And I think that we've been really stuck on I have the money, so I have the power. And, I mean, you know, I was once told it's their money, so you can't tell them what to do with it. And, and, and I've never been in a space to be like, No, don't do that with your money. But also, it's like, what are you actually trying to achieve? Like, let's have that conversation, because maybe there's education, like I don't know everything, and I'm sure you don't know everything. So like, let's have that conversation around what you're trying to achieve, because also, maybe we're not the organization.

Sophia Peake 09:31

Exactly.

Valerie Johnson 09:33

So to get us back onto the topic we brought you and lured you in here for

Monique Curry-Mims 09:38

I mean, I think this is all on top. And one, you know, this is this what we do?

Valerie Johnson 09:41

Yeah, one this is what we do, two, we were moving back towards this anyway. But I think the thing that you and I talked about, or have talked about a lot in the oh my god, we've known each other like for years now in the four years that we've known each other is developing black leadership, and how that happens and how Non black people can support that without being incredibly cringy white saviors, right. So I want to open the floor and let you kind of start where you want to on that topic and then we'll, we'll do what we do, which is then go in a million different directions.

Sophia Peake 10:18

Yeah, I think it's interesting. This is always an interesting topic, right? Because we had a journey

Valerie Johnson 10:24

we did have a journey

Sophia Peake 10:25

We had a whole ass journey we can I say that on here? We had a whole ass journey. I remember on my interview, actually, I was just, I don't know if I was ranting or venting, but thankfully, you didn't see it that way.

Valerie Johnson 10:42

Oh my god I loved it, are you kidding? Like, you walked out, and I was like that I want to hire her.

Sophia Peake 10:46

I was like ranting and venting. And I think like, a lot of young fundraisers or young people who get into like, for lack of better words, charity work. I hate that word. But like, they have this like drive and ambition. And they just think that they like, speaking from experience, you think that you can just like, save the world?

Valerie Johnson 11:12

I call them happy, shiny people.

Sophia Peake 11:13

Yes!

Valerie Johnson 11:14

They think they're just gonna save the world.

Sophia Peake 11:15

Yes. And so I feel like when I met you, I was at the intersection of getting my bubble popped. And, like, really realizing, like, oh, like, I wanted to get into fundraising because I had been doing like, mobilization work and working with grassroots organizations, right, these local small 501c3's that did like your back to school drive, where you got like, a bunch of press, and I had been doing stuff like that

Valerie Johnson 11:46

successfully, might I add.

Sophia Peake 11:48

Right. Yeah. And, um, and but in terms of like, being in the field of fundraising, it was a whole nother whole other beast, a whole nother beast, a whole nother door. And of course, you get in, you look at the disparity, you see the numbers, you look around, and like, dang, there's no other black people right here. Right. And I and that was my rant to you, basically. And I think from that day on, it was just kind of like a partnership. And so I think that that was an integral part of my leadership in terms of having someone that was really empowering and supportive of like, what it was that I was trying to do in the space.

Valerie Johnson 12:35

And you would tell me, like, I remember, I was like, Alright, so I'm a member of AFP. You should be a member of AFP. Like, here's some committees you can join. And you were like, I want to talk about the Philly black giving circle. And I was like, oh, oh, okay. Okay. Yeah, nevermind. Nope, I take it back. Nope, nope, nope. Okay, I got you. I got you. So yeah, the you were not afraid to also tell me what you needed, which was really helpful to be because I was like, AFP is all I know. So that's what she's got to do. And you were like, My people aren't there. And I was like, okay, that's yes, valid.

Sophia Peake 13:05

Absolutely. Yeah, I think that, but I do realize that it's a challenge of representation is always a challenge. But what I can say is now that I've been in, in this field of like, fundraising for Oh, my God four years now, officially, like strictly fundraising, the world is so small, it's so many black women dope black women that are out here, doing their thing in philanthropy and fundraising. And it's really about finding your tribe, like as cliché as that sounds, yeah. You have to find your tribe. And I think a part of leadership too, is just knowing what you want. And like having a vision and not being afraid to speak up for one and then seek your people. Because nine times out of 10, there's somebody that's doing

something that's related, either related to what you want to do, or doing something exactly to what you want to do. And in the world of like social media, you have certain resources that are available to you. There's so many different communities out there right now, in terms of connecting with other fundraisers, there's the AADO, which stands for African American Development Officers, they do so much stuff, there's women of color in fundraising. They have a bunch of symposiums and conferences where you can connect with local women in the area that's doing what you want to do. And then like I said, just getting out there and finding your tribe like I think I was really vocal about what I wanted even with AFP, because AFP I remember they had a mentoring program.

Valerie Johnson 14:45

Yep.

Sophia Peake 14:45

And I think it was okay in terms of like, like, practical skills and fundraising, but it wasn't necessarily what I think I needed. And so I When I, when I reached out to Philly black giving circle, I was like, there is this thing there is this group of people who are collectively giving to the black community, like I want to be involved, I want to know what it's about. And that was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. Because again, being able to meet like minded people that are also doing the things that you want to do. And I just feel like it was a pivotal journey in terms of my leadership, I feel like something that's really under maybe it's not underestimated, but I don't hear it talked about enough is like social capital.

Monique Curry-Mims 15:36

Yeah.

Sophia Peake 15:37

And I think that social capital is so important, but it's so dope in the black community, like, we really do get together when we want to do something. And if you know, somebody that knows somebody, like I really believe in shifting some of the narratives, because I think that there is a narrative of like, kind of info hoarding, that exists. But **in my experience, there are so many people that want to see you win and want to see, because when you win for us, we all win, right?** And that's just my experience that that has been my experience in leadership and black leadership, particularly, I feel like it's not linear, right? It's not the your traditional viewpoints of leadership, a lot of black people haven't had access to financial capital to be in positions of power, but we have social capital, right. And again, it's all about knowing being the experts on the frontline and knowing what our community needs, and being able to do the things like we can make we make stuff happen. Okay. And that's just been my experience, like the social capital piece, just getting out there meeting people. I think that that's a really key point in philanthropy too because when you again, when you think about what philanthropy means people traditionally think it's all about dollars, right? We give so much we give in we Oh, you want to do that thing. Oh, I'm gonna connect you to, its nothing, you know what I mean? Because like I said, when you win, we all win. When I win, we all win. And that's the mindset that I think is really needed to really make a greater impact to.

Valerie Johnson 17:18

We got to adopt that at AFP, because I don't think us white fundraisers over at AFP have that same mentality. And honestly, like, I'm trying to put together a special events panel for a conference coming up. And like, the only people I asked were black fundraisers, because I'm like, Y'all know, who's doing the right stuff? And like, who needs to be on this panel? And those are the people that I went to, because y'all come through like, you don't play? My white Fundraisers are just like, ehrrrrr.

Monique Curry-Mims 17:45

oh, yeah, she emailed me. I'm like, Oh, I know, somebody right now. Set up the email right now.

Valerie Johnson 17:49

Like, it was it was, and I went to Mike to and you both, like, literally had email intros within 20 minutes to like, dope black fundraisers that are doing cool events. And I was just like, Oh, my God, why have I never leaned into this before?

Monique Curry-Mims 18:02

I mean, I think that, you know, social capital is an interesting topic, especially in this space, because while we see the social capital, and the value of it, within our community, and especially within and there's, you know, there's, there are a number of black professionals in this space, but comparatively, it's not. Right, I was having a conversation of the day about someone I did an interview with, someone said, Oh, my God, I've heard so much about you. I had to I Googled you, I looked you up on Instagram, I stalked you before I reached out. And I was just so amazed that like somebody went through those lengths. First of all, like who's talking about me,

Sophia Peake 18:44

everybody is talking about you.

Monique Curry-Mims 18:47

But the thing is is that like that so baffles me. Because, right, because I don't necessarily, like promote myself. I hate talking about my self. Yeah. And I'm in the work. Like, let's talk about the work done by someone who wants to talk to me. I'm like, No, let's talk about the work like I'm here.

Valerie Johnson 19:02

That's something you two have in common.

Monique Curry-Mims 19:04

And I think that that's an and I think that that's a problem that we have, because we're so much stuck in the work and that we're as our counterparts the white fundraisers,

Valerie Johnson 19:17

she's pointing at me

Monique Curry-Mims 19:18

I'm pointing because I don't know I don't. She's the one that says that

Valerie Johnson 19:21

I am usually it, so I cosign on you saying the white fundraisers are out there for themselves

Monique Curry-Mims 19:27

not even out there for themselves, but they but they are okay with promoting themselves, right? And I know someone's like, oh, well, you keynoting this conference, and I'm like, you've got half the years of experience. Yeah, like, Oh, what am I doing wrong? And not that that's a thing that I really care about. But I think that we we worry about our social capital and connecting because we're doing the work, but the problem is, is that others don't see that. I had a someone told me that I did not have enough connections and enough power And I was like, you know who I know? How do you know who I know? But because I'm not boasting about it, because if you go into my cell phone, you're gonna see,

Valerie Johnson 20:09

she knows more people than I know

Monique Curry-Mims 20:10

I got a lot of foundation heads that have my cell phone number. But the thing is that because I'm not out there, and I'm behind the scenes doing the work, having the conversations making the moves, and I'm sure you're doing that I'm sure a lot of people in this space. Like, I think that that's there's a disconnect there. And because of that we don't get the support that we need, when we're actually probably doing the work if not more than what people know.

Valerie Johnson 20:40

And don't forget that you don't get paid when you do get brought into stuff because like, I've made it my personal mission to like, bring more folks doing that kind of work to AFP, but we don't pay our speakers. And is it worth your time to come in? On your birthday, by the way,

Monique Curry-Mims 20:56

Yea, I'm not doing that. I'm not attending that conference.

Valerie Johnson 20:59

And you should not, it's on your birthday. But it's really hard for me because like, I want you all to take the expertise that I know is in your brains that I want other people to hear because it's so dope to steal your word.

Monique Curry-Mims 21:12

But that's also a problem that so I'm going to move away from AFP. Because I don't think afp is doing this, but someone is reaching out to me because their foundation doesn't know about black organizations. So they want me to educate them and inform them.

Valerie Johnson 21:33

I'm sorry, Sophia just made a face.

Sophia Peake 21:36

I'm sorry!

Monique Curry-Mims 21:39

I'm not divulging information. But what I will say to that is I've been very hesitant because one, I'm a consultant to, you know, I'm a professional in this space. If for me to come in, I'm like, you just want me to sit down with you and just educate like, there's no, you don't think I should be compensated for that. Like, you don't think that there should be some exchange because I feel like there might be organizations. I can't even say that they're trying. They're trying. But if you think about the idea that if you won't hire somebody, because of their age, you won't hire somebody because of your perceived value of power. If you're reaching out to people to ask them to educate you. I don't know how much you're trying, educate you without paying. I don't know how much you're trying. Because all of that kind of goes into the idea that you are being authentic in what you're doing. So you're not being extracted, you're not being ageist, you're not being racist, right in your efforts to try to get to where you're trying to go.

Valerie Johnson 22:44

Yes.

Monique Curry-Mims 22:46

Are we on topic?

Sophia Peake 22:48

We are not on topic. But that's really quick, because that makes me think about the podcast y'all recently did on the Hulu show woke.

Monique Curry-Mims 22:57

Oh, yeah, we've got to do another one.

Valerie Johnson 22:58

Yeah, gotta do another one.

Sophia Peake 23:01

anyway, no, no, you're so right. So Right.

Valerie Johnson 23:05

Yeah. And it's like, for me, I always feel like the like woke white lady that's like, am I leaning too far into your experience without paying you? Or am I like, just truly in awe of everything that you know, and I want other people to be here with me. I always feel like I'm stuck in like that.

Monique Curry-Mims 23:23

So you are I will say that you are sitting comfortably where you are. Because if I need something from you, you do not hesitate to support, right? Like the transaction doesn't always have to be monetary. Right? It is not, this is not a take take relationship and you're not that kind of a person.

Valerie Johnson 23:44

Oh I love to give.

Sophia Peake 23:46

sorry, because I didn't articulate fully when you asked me about about cultivating black leadership. But that was a that was such a integral key part of our working relationship. Like, you wanted to see me when

Valerie Johnson 24:01

oh my god, I had to I had to tell you to take the new job because you like wanted to stay and I was like no,

Sophia Peake 24:08

I think that that was really an affirmation and, and a real live action of like, moving out the way right getting out the way making space. And you just wanted to see me win like I think that that is a key part of cultivating leadership as well. It takes nothing and I go back to the social capital part too, but it takes nothing to say, you know, I came across this thing. I think this would be great for you. Right? And you would do that all the time. And it was it was genuine, you know, like you can feel when someone's pandering to you or, but it was very genuine. And I think that the commitment of learning was there. Like you said we had our moments.

Valerie Johnson 24:41

I still do. Oh, yes. they were all my fault. They were they were I'm not gonna lie. They were.

Sophia Peake 25:01

I wouldn't say that

Valerie Johnson 25:02

90% my fault? I don't know.

Monique Curry-Mims 25:05

You don't know.

Valerie Johnson 25:06

I think it was more than 50 on my part.

Monique Curry-Mims 25:08

You know what I think the other part is, I was having a conversation and the person I was speaking with was like, my life has been better, since I have made a decision to wake up and choose violence. Because she was like, not enough of us push back not enough of a stand up for our space and our rights.

Valerie Johnson 25:32

and that is something you do so well. I learned so much from you in that. Yeah. Like, you stood up for yourself in a way that like, I don't think I've ever had a staff person do before. And like, at first I was like, What the heck is going on? And then I was like, Oh, I'm an asshole. Okay. But like it was, it just it did change, like the way that I look at like supervising people working with people partnering with people like all of it, because like, you really deserve to stand up for yourself the way that you did. And like, I had to recalibrate my thinking around it. So that was super important.

Monique Curry-Mims 26:09

So I know like, You're the guest [Sophia], but I'm getting ready to interview you [Val] for one moment.

Valerie Johnson 26:14

I'm here for all your white lady needs,

Monique Curry-Mims 26:17

So what was your process in that? Because the fact that working with her helped you change and help you pivot your vision and your practices? What can others learn from that? Like, what should they be doing.

Valerie Johnson 26:37

Stop assuming shit like I think that's 100%. Number one, like, if we had a disagreement, or if I thought something should have been done one way, and it got done another way. I assumed a lot of reasons behind it that were wrong. And when I started sitting down and talking to you about it and saying like, why did you do it this way? You had a completely valid reason for doing it the way you did that made complete sense. And I just assumed bad intentions that shouldn't have been there. And like that was definitely a good lesson for me to have but also a hard lesson for you. Because I was not assuming good intentions about my employee, like that was rude that was wrong. shouldn't have happened. Once we got past that I think our relationship was much better. But I think that's the default for white people who've never worked with people who don't look like themselves before. Like, if, and it wasn't that you were doing anything wrong. It's that you did things differently than I did. And **just because it's different doesn't mean it's wrong. But it's really easy to assume that because it's different it is wrong.** So that was that was the biggest hurdle I had. I don't know, I feel like things got much better after that.

Sophia Peake 27:52

Yeah, I feel like you're touching on something else too. The cultural competency piece, because I think that black people in the workplace, well, black culture in general, value relationships, and I keep going back to social capital, because there's definitely something there, right? We value relationships, our work is not transactional, and we

Valerie Johnson 28:13

And we value work. White people value work

Sophia Peake 28:16

And y'all value transactions. and like this has played out so much over the years. And you have to learn, right? Because when I say you, I mean black people, right? We're, we usually traditionally have to shift one for protection two for...

Valerie Johnson 28:35

but not cool. White people are the ones who need to shift but carry on.

Sophia Peake 28:38

not cool, but also it is because of the environment. Right? It's the environment, right? And so in terms of shifting, I think we do that for multiple different things. But I would say that you learn though, you adapt, and you're able to you're more agile in terms of working with different people, because you're able to see it and there's like, Oh, that makes sense. Well, this is transactional, this is how this person works. And I think it's cultural competency is, it's like a no brainer its super cheesy. But its important. When you talk about working with a whole nother group of culture, and how they do things, right. Because again, the stories like the stories, the traditional narratives that have been told, they haven't accurately reflected what the reality is. And I keep going back to this, but I do feel like in the last few years in terms of leadership, particularly in philanthropy, we have been more vocal and Monique, you spoke on this earlier about how modest we are. right. We are so modest. Like that is one of the reasons why it's so hard to elicit stories of philanthropy, because our philanthropy is not traditional in the sense of big dollars

Valerie Johnson 29:54

and it's not white.

Sophia Peake 29:55

It's not white.

Valerie Johnson 29:56

Yeah, like traditional is basically like white.

Sophia Peake 29:58

Yes,

Monique Curry-Mims 29:59

we're not doing to get a building in our name or doing it for the tax write off or we're doing it because it's our people like from the beginning of tribal history, this is what we did.

Valerie Johnson 30:10

It's the right thing to do. that's why you're doing it. Yeah. So that would be my advice to all your white leaders out there. Like, listen, ask a lot of questions. Don't assume bad intentions. Don't let other people get in your head, either. Because like a lot of the bad assumptions came from other people that were like, Oh, this is happening. This is probably why. And then I would like stop and think about it be like, I don't really think that's why I should ask about that. That's not right.

Sophia Peake 30:37

Yeah, we were in a time. We were in a time.

Valerie Johnson 30:43

Well, and there's like, the people who are like, Oh, it's a bad hire, just let it go. And I'm like, No, I'm the one that's messing up like this is I'm doing this wrong. This has nothing to do with the hire. This is me. Not being a good manager.

Monique Curry-Mims 30:56

That goes back to like DEI, right? Like, people are like, Oh, well, we've increased the number of black and brown, but like, do you have an environment that is welcoming and understanding of the culture?

Sophia Peake 31:09

Where they can thrive?

Monique Curry-Mims 31:10

yeah, like, it's interesting.

Sophia Peake 31:13

Yeah. So yeah, that's what I was about to say, I think that you and I were both at a level of awareness and consciousness that we were kind of turning the environment on its head.

Valerie Johnson 31:24

Yes.

Sophia Peake 31:24

And we bumped heads a lot because of that. Because it was this kind of cognitive dissonance of holding what you knew to be true as always right, In the environment, but also knowing and being aware of, this is not it.

Valerie Johnson 31:42

Yeah!

Sophia Peake 31:43

And then me coming into me coming into an environment where I felt like I had to speak up for myself be more assertive.

Valerie Johnson 31:51

And thank God, You did.

Sophia Peake 31:52

right. But I think that goes back to values and feeling empowered, right to be able to kind of make change on a micro level, because maybe I couldn't, I knew that I wasn't going to be able to turn the nonprofit culture on his head, like nonprofit culture is just white supremacy in general.

Valerie Johnson 32:14

100% Yeah.

Sophia Peake 32:14

100%. But in terms of the workspace, I was like, I am going to walk away and you're going to learn something.

Valerie Johnson 32:21

And we did, we really did.

Sophia Peake 32:24

Either that or, you know, unfortunately, it just would have been a situation where it just wouldn't have worked out. But when you talk about wanting to really change things, I think both of us were in that mindset. And so I think that you have to want it like organizations have to really want change. Again, **it's not just for the optics, or the the marketing schemes, what are you really doing to create a culture and an environment where black people can thrive? Do you know about black culture? Do you know about the communities?** And it's not just black people, obviously, right? You're talking about diversity, right. But there is some learning curves that needs to happen to be able to foster a really healthy relationship. And again, relationships. Like that's something that's important in a lot of communities but particularly black communities.

Monique Curry-Mims 33:18

So we're coming up on the end of our time, but I want to shift

Valerie Johnson 33:22

Stop.

Monique Curry-Mims 33:22

I know, right? Oh, we can go on. But I want to shift really quickly, because it is black philanthropy month and funding and supporting Black LED black serving organizations is the focus of what August is about internationally. What should funders be doing this month, Not even this month, starting this month, going forward to support organizations, regardless of their budget to understand their needs?

Sophia Peake 33:54

That's a great question.

Valerie Johnson 33:57

Relationships.

Sophia Peake 33:59

not just relationships, obviously. But I think getting the money out the door, right? Like, for starters, they can really take an audit of their application process. That's something like honestly, low barrier in my eyes that I have seen a lot of funders do. They'll say submit a grant that you've already done before. I

love that so easy. Two, think that when you are looking at financials, you do need to ask the bigger question questions and so that you can get a bigger picture of how the money will make an impact but also again, don't get so caught up on that because get the money out the door. Get the money out the door.

Valerie Johnson 34:43

Once you confirm they're doing the work, don't you just want to...

Sophia Peake 34:46

just let them do it. Let them do what they what they do. Yeah. And again, learn from the experts learn continue to learn from the experts continue to ask questions. So what I've seen as a trend for a lot of funders is having Community check ins were to get the grantees together. And they just talk, I want to hear from y'all like it's kind of the trust base model of like trust based philanthropy.

Valerie Johnson 35:14

Are we mad at it right now? Oh, we're mad at it right now. Okay. All right. There's some thoughts around that.

Monique Curry-Mims 35:22

We don't have time for that conversation.

Valerie Johnson 35:24

next month y'all, next month.

Sophia Peake 35:25

But I think convening, and like, you know, I've seen a lot of funders say, We want to hear from you. And but then again, walking the walk, like taking that information back and saying, next quarter, we're changing things, because we heard from you, we heard that, you know, we just we want to make it easier, we want to make sure that we're doing the right thing. So a lot of the things are so simple and straightforward. It's really not as hard as it needs to be.

Valerie Johnson 35:55

Heard it here first, y'all, don't make it hard. Just do the simple things.

Sophia Peake 35:59

Just do the simple things.

Monique Curry-Mims 36:00

Do you have any final thoughts? Final Thoughts on Black Panther the month on? On funders supporting organizations, on funders supporting Black leaders?

Sophia Peake 36:10

Yes, do it. That's the thought, do it. Do it support black LED, and black serving organizations, particularly black led organizations, do it, do it and not just during Black philanthropy month. Also

understand and recognize that philanthropy in the black community does not look like your philanthropy. And we are one of the biggest communities that are givers and give back and are doing the thing. And two in terms of black leadership for other black leaders in the space, keep talking. Keep, like you said, that girl woke up and chose violence sometimes it's necessary, like keep sharing our narratives. Because the more we share our narratives, the more visibility we have. And I think that that's a little different than the thought process of free labor. You know, in terms of educating people, there's a difference between leading in your truth and being vocal about it. And then educating someone who clearly can't have the resources and do their own work. But I would say keep being vocal and keep taking the steps to be empowered, because we are the experts, the people that are have the lived experience that are doing the work. We know what's best. So those are my thoughts. Y'all are awesome, though. I'm happy that you're having me on here.

Monique Curry-Mims 37:33

No, thank you for doing it.

Valerie Johnson 37:35

I promised myself I wouldn't say preach during the episode, but PREACH. Thank you so much. It was such a pleasure. And I love that we're still in contact and that I'm definitely going to keep tapping you for more things in the future. Hearts.

Sophia Peake 37:51

hearts.

Monique Curry-Mims 37:51

Well, thank you for joining us. If you didn't know now, you know, this has been beyond philanthropy.