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SPEAKERS

Valerie Johnson, Andreanecia Morris, Monique Curry-Mims

INTRO

Shifting Leadership, Shifting Trust, Shifting Funding, Shifting Impact, Shifting Engagement, Shifting Communities. Welcome to season four of Beyond Philanthropy: Shifting Power.

Valerie Johnson 00:23

Hello, and welcome back to beyond philanthropy. I am Valerie, I'm here with Monique. Hello. And we've got a guest today. And this guest is someone that we met when we were in New Orleans. And she was part of a panel. And she was the only panelists that we were listening to by the end of the panel.

Monique Curry-Mims 00:43

We were texting about like, we gotta get her on the podcast, sitting at different tables texting each other, we gotta get her on the podcast.

Valerie Johnson 00:50

especially because one of the things we wanted to talk about going into the season was being at the intersection. So before we introduce the guest, I'm gonna have Monique just talk a little bit more about what at the intersection means to us and why we wanted to kind of delve into this topic. And then why are our guests ended up being the perfect person to talk about it. So Monique, take it away.

Monique Curry-Mims 01:12

So when we were thinking about the theme at the intersection came up. And as you guys know, we settled on shifting power, because that's what it all comes to shifting the balance of power around different solutions, issue structures. And the idea with at the intersection is to think about those diagrams with, like the three bubbles, and in the middle, that's the intersection of all your passions, your solutions, whatever. When we think about the social problems that we're facing, we think about them almost in a silo, tackling education, just around education and not thinking about poverty and not thinking about housing, not thinking about workforce, we're thinking about workforce, we're thinking about training, but not education, and all those things. And that is part of our issue. So we thought that at the intersection at the intersection of our solutions at the intersection of our issues is where we

needed to have at least a conversation and have one with someone that we know is working at the intersection.

Valerie Johnson 02:10

Yes. So that brings us to Andreanecia Morris, who is with housing Louisiana, and really, really, really impressed us. So I actually work for an organization that does Housing First. So as you were talking about housing first and how you're doing that in Louisiana, I was sold immediately, because it really is a model that is at the intersection of several needs. So I'm not going to introduce you, I'm gonna let you introduce yourself because I want you to brag on yourself a little bit before we delve into this topic. So tell us who you are and what you do.

Andreanecia Morris 02:46

Good day. It's great to be here. Thank you all for having me. It was a pleasure to hear that the message that we delivered resonated.. That's always what we're trying to do. So I'm Andreanecia Morris. I'm the president of housing Louisiana. I'm also the Executive Director of Housing Nola and the president of the Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance. And together we call those three organizations the put housing first triad, working to end housing insecurity, first in New Orleans in the metro area, and then eventually across the state. We're also working in other communities to help them stand up the put housing first model, which means exactly as Monique said. Valerie also echoed this intersectional component, we know we can prove housing is at the root of so many of our almost all of our structural and systemic problems going back to the founding of this country, right? So because in order to be a fully realized citizen in this country, you not only were only had to be a white male, you have to be a white man who owned property. And this the founding of this country, we have spent time keeping housing, keeping property away from people of color, what we have done to the indigenous has been, you know, rooted in marginalizing their communities and taking their land away from them. women not being able to own property and also the idea of human beings being property and all of that has manifested itself and housing is the big marker inside of that, that this pops up and it's the one that we don't talk about. It's the one that we don't deal with, right, as we've talked about, you know, the rights of women getting the right to vote, the you know, ending slavery. We are still not doing right by the indigenous. Again, still struggling there. But also what you see is the housing pieces are the places where okay, we're going to keep you in a box. All right, we're gonna, we're gonna let you vote. But we're going to make sure that your hat that you're segregated in there at your housing is substandard. And then if we let you participate in the political process, your housing is you can't buy a house, you can't build well, right, we're going to, we're going to give whites the opportunity to build massive wealth by letting them buy homes and you not, and on and on and on, and how it is today, where the rights of renters are discarded and dismiss people have seen almost as commodities. Because if you because again, you don't own your home, whereas what you're contributing, home becomes generational wealth, it's an investment property, it is going to be rented to someone else, someone else will have to live in it for it to realize its full value. And then we see homeownership being taken away and stripped away from people of color made harder. And the system pushes back on them and say, Well, you can't have it by people have you got to go back to the second tier citizenship of being a renter and women? Why are renters second tier citizens? Right? You were accepting this caste system? And thinking we just got to move on up, right, as opposed to No, we need to guarantee housing for all. And nowhere is that even more in how we treat the unhoused. Right, **this relatively recent phenomenon in this country's history of people**

being severely unhoused, which is the ultimate expression of the failure of the housing market, the real estate market to meet the basic needs of everyone that it doesn't work on supply and demand that these are not market forces, especially when you are you have communities that have plenty of room. So why aren't you housing those people, and we tell ourselves, and then again, when you talk to people, the visceral reaction, sometimes it's pity, most of the time, it's fear, that a prompting action does not have crap on them, and blame them. Because if I ignore the systemic barriers, that means it won't happen to me. And so you see all of this, you see people who are the most progressive, you know, on climate change, and on reforming the criminal justice system, and they talk about building affordable housing and the neighbors neighborhood and they turn into Klan members, right? They sit there like Wait, what are you talking about? We need to make sure this is happening. And this is happening. And then an audit report and it kind of really reveals how they're missing those pieces. And so they're not getting to the issues that they claim to care about. They may be education experts, and they're not fighting to make sure that their students, the students that they keep fighting for have safeties and homes to live in, to nourish them, so they can be prepared for school. And they because they're just gonna go to the homeowners, I need vouchers, or I'm a homeowner, and I've contributed to the system and my kids should be able to walk to school. So I can't have these homeless people nearby. I can't have this public housing nearby, because that's going to affect my property values, and it's going to ruin my school. And you're like, What are you talking about, right?

Valerie Johnson 08:11

Is that not in my backyard? Yeah, nimbyism.

Andreanecia Morris 08:16

Not in my backyard. nimbyism, nimbyism, housing kind of reveals all of that. And so it also reveals that you're not all in on your issue, the issue that you claim to care about, you have a huge blind spot, and that is why you can't address education. We can't address health care, we can't address criminal justice reform. We're struggling with voting rights, right? Again, you know, we want to re-enfranchise people they need addresses, you know, the right to vote, is there only two people you can vote for? That is not determined by where you live. The President and the Vice President, everybody else you get to vote for is dependent upon your address. Right.

Monique Curry-Mims 09:02

So how you're actually making the impact and the policies that impact.

Andreanecia Morris 09:07

Right, exactly. Those people who are the most important and those people often don't care about housing at all. They've told you, you've allowed them to ignore it, you allow them to use it to scare you. And we get that in New Orleans. We're not all the way. But trust me, there's still too many people here with NIMBY nonsense. When it's a role you hate is still you know, it's respectability politics, it's internalized white supremacy. It's factual white supremacy. That's when it was in the open. But we're having the conversation more frequently. Because, you know, because where we live with climate change, intensified hurricanes, Hurricane Katrina, the last 18 years that we've been dealing with everything inside of that. If the flags pop up, much simpler, much But the flags pop up much more obviously here in New Orleans. And is it hard? It's hard to ignore it. People try Lord knows.

Monique Curry-Mims 10:09

I mean, they're trying everywhere. And I think that part of it is I mean, even though there's the climate naysayers, people see it, and they see how it's impacting them. And I think because there's so many people who are othering, like, that's not me, that's not us. That's not my neighborhood, they're not really concerned about it. So when you think about or how you're working around that intersection, how do you tell that narrative around how it is an intersectional issue that impacts other things that impact you? But also how are you trying to solve it and provide services and solutions at the intersection?

Andreanecia Morris 10:49

So that's what we're doing. You're dead on the money. That's what we're doing, is we number one, we spend a lot of time studying housing, right? We understand this, you know, mindset, my team and I, this is all we do every day, we need to understand what's happening, understanding what people think, what people say, like, you know, perception is not necessarily reality. It's just perception, we need to understand what that attitude is I hate working with some consultants. Yeah, that perception is reality. No is not that that gives you an idea of how far away like where you need to persuade, and how you need to influence and also how severely myopic that person is, right? If they see if they're like, you know, this is, like, my favorite misperception, everybody who's homeless is choosing to be homeless.

Valerie Johnson 11:42

Oh, my God, because that's where people want to be, right.

Andreanecia Morris 11:44

I mean, that's a huge one, like, Am I an ally? And I, people with that all the time, what you're talking about with shutting out? And you're like, Well, yeah, he's choosing to be homeless, based on what's right. And they're like, well, they could go to the shelter. What's shelter? One time? No, there's a shelter.

Monique Curry-Mims 12:01

How are they going to get to the shelter?

Valerie Johnson 12:03

Where's the shelter? And are you sure you're eligible for that shelter?

Monique Curry-Mims 12:12

Are kids are allowed, are their dogs, their significant other? Yeah, right. Right.

Andreanecia Morris 12:16

What's your favorite? I had this conversation with one of our elected officials recently who has been particularly heinous on this issue, because they're also using it to other they will use these on house and say to black working class and black middle middle class folks whose communities are experiencing, still struggling with disinvestment. It's their fault that you don't have what you need in your neighborhood. No, I think you, sir, are more responsible for the deficit than the unhealthy person. And so talking to those folks and saying, and this particular elected official said, Well, you know, I talked to this guy, I talked to this person, and he didn't want to go to the shelter. That's not the same thing as

choosing to be homeless. Right. And so you've been to the shelter, right? He's like, Yeah, he because he's like, I would go, I would go to the shelter, but I was at position. I said, Well, how about this? Would you leave your mama there? And he was like, Well, no. He's, would you leave your children there? Well, no, he's someone's child. Why does he have to go? You're standing here and saying what you would do, and, and you, with all your chest puffed out lying through your teeth. But when I asked you, would you leave your momma there you can't, you can't even fix your mouth to tell that lie, to win this argument, to justify your hate because it's superficial. And it's easy. And so we spend a lot of time we have to know what we're talking about, right? We have to understand what's going on with these systems, how they are proceed, how they're actually working. And then when we talk to the intersectional partners, we've spent a lot of the last few years, talking about what solutions look like, what real solutions look like, and how they would and you have to, you have to be able to quantify that a lot of this is qualitative. Obviously, we're talking about systemic inequity, right? We're talking about breaking down being an anti racist. And some of that is quite quants, qualitative. But the way you know that systemic bias is the thing is you look at the numbers. And so the way you know that housing is victimized by this as you look at the numbers, and the numbers also, show us the path forward to let us know if we're at the solution and the path wrong is actually real. And so you can go to climate change partners, you can go to criminal justice partners, you and we can say this is how the failure to address housing is interrupting your success. You know, what, so for example, you you want to go to community either been plagued by environmental racism, petrochemical plants, that's something that happens here in Louisiana a lot, particularly where I'm from I work in New Orleans, I'm from a small set of communities up river that in the metro area that's called the we call it the river parishes, but people call it cancer alley, and, and saying that where they're all per capita, there's a, we actually have some of the most have the most tax exempt property in the country business property in the country. We have more tax exempt petrochemical companies, a property being used in my home parish of St. John the Baptist, than the entire state of Texas.

Monique Curry-Mims 15:40

wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Okay, so, I mean, this is not a climate change environmental conversation, but like they're exempt, and they're causing harm with no support, or like dollars back into the community. Is that what you're saying?

Andreanecia Morris 15:58

That's right. That's right. That's right. These are the parents and river parishes also have people have been trying to call a plantation country because they are funny. So these are the the large areas where some of the biggest plantations where the folks who live there, my family in particular are the descendants of, of the enslaved folks who were freed, my father grew up in. So this is very real for me, my father spent most of his youth are living on a street called cares quarter. And He is the former slave quarters of the care plantation, that's where he grew up, you know, so this, this, this is not distance. For us. It is very real. And so the plantation economy, that all of the things that it needed, in order to work being on the river proximity and things like that, the petrochemical companies came in and said, We like that, let's, let's move there. So you shifted from and so that's why so many of the people in the river parishes are African American. And that's why it's such a source of environment, obvious environmental racism, because it's like, we're just gonna drop all these plants here. And let them take advantage of this. And then we're going to give them tax breaks to incentivize them, to kidnap them, and have them

stay there. And then, and this is what this is where when you get climate justice, folks, we no longer have flat, what does this look like? That is usually people from outside, because now this is very much a homegrown movement. But initially, the conversations were y'all are being the victims of environmental racism. And there's somewhat blame, because so many of the people who live there work inside the petrochemical industry, right? And I can't tell you how many times I've had conversations with people who are like, you know, the petrochemical industry, they don't pay that, well, they only pay the average jobs are about like \$60,000 a year, and I'm like, That flag on the play. So do you have any concept of money? So \$60,000 is good money in Louisiana? That's a good money

Monique Curry-Mims 18:10

in a lot of places, especially when a lot of places don't even I mean, we're still at what 725 for minimum wage here like, yeah, and our

Valerie Johnson 18:18

poverty rates. And so we Yeah, 23% poverty rate for the last 20 years, right? Yeah, no, like, \$60,000 is a big deal to us.

Monique Curry-Mims 18:29

going back to like, the intersection. So, you know, people are blaming the workers, because they're like, well, you're causing the issue. But it's also like, what they have the jobs that are allowing us to not be in poverty, and not have us to be homeless. So like, you mentioned earlier about, you've, you've come up with some solutions, what are some of those solutions that take into account all of those different kinds of factors.

Andreanecia Morris 18:55

So with an issue like that, so number one, let's have a real conversation about addressing climate change, and reducing carbon output, and, and addressing housing costs. So saying to this person, who you ideally is, one of the things is going to happen, if you get your idea and that plant goes, poof, that person's gonna be out of a job, right? That's a consequence of that. And instead of, you know, vaguely talking about green economy, jobs that you can go get that you can actually articulate, let's talk about meeting their basic needs. Let's talk about the fact that their life bill is sky high. Right, because their home is not well insulated, not well, not energy efficient. Let's talk about the fact that home produces a lot of carbon. And let's talk about the fact that that home has been rolled over by disasters. Their insurance is also sky high, and there's money coming to rebuild that home, their nonprofit to want to help rebuild that home. So let's talk about putting that money into that home, making that home energy efficient, making that home resilient to the next storm and reducing the carbon footprint and showing that homeowner that land that landlord as well. So that renter can get that benefit of how this all benefits them, how decarbonisation actually helps them, helps them, not the planet, them. So when you push, too, you prioritize them, you prioritize their needs. So if you do get your way, and they do lose their job, it's more likely that they can keep their home, because their utility costs are low, they're there, their home is healthier for them, they have to have other reduced costs. And they have seen that you actually care about them getting to stay in their community, you're not just here, talking about what's how you want to save the world, and how they really don't realize that they're a victim. And so it is at its core, what we preach when we say put Housing First, it's like you have to dress is this fundamental

inequity, this blind spot that we all have? And that the system's glossed over so many times, and say before you get to the really big, so if no one's saying those plants don't need to go, no one's saying, because they'll still people are dying. Those folks, they are on the front line. But you've also got to talk to them about meeting their immediate needs.

Valerie Johnson 21:33

Yes, it's in the lives and the long term needs, like, so correct. So intergenerational poverty is a big, you know, leading cause of homelessness, house lessness housing insecurity. So when you're coming up with solutions, if you're not addressing all of the other things through that have this person has inherited through intergenerational poverty, just giving them a home is still not going to solve the problem. Right, like, No,

Andreanecia Morris 22:07

that's right. That's right. That's right. What and that's part of when we say Housing First is that we're talking about the structure and the things that are necessary for you to maintain that home. Right, because, again, we're talking about the we can talk about the house you can talk about, because we talked about wraparound supportive services, let's say, particularly, when you talk about public housing and housing subsidies, Section Eight public housing all have again, the perception that these are this is the welfare queen stereotype, right? These are women with children who are laughing around and not just making babies, all of these hateful gender stereotypes, racialized stereotypes. And so then what happens? So you say, Okay, I mean, that's part of the reason why some people don't even want the government's help when there is a climate crisis. And they do, I don't want to be like those beggars. And you go, we know what happened was, is that there's not wraparound services, to make sure that you deal with it, the housing trauma, the generational trauma, and help folks navigate that and you go, everybody doesn't get a 2400 square foot McMansion. Everybody doesn't want that everybody doesn't need that. So you're talking about an equitable solution, and, and giving them the things that they need to be successful. So that if someone's renting, and they've got a voucher, and they're renting, and the thing about it is one of the really interesting parts around this is that there's a way to get to a win win that that to business owners, for example, particularly large scale landlords, people who own apartment complexes, they make more money when their units are occupied. Yeah. And so if and when

Valerie Johnson 23:54

they get paid consistently, so when you have that voucher

Andreanecia Morris 23:57

consistently, that's right. But if that person is struggling with trauma, and I've had large scale landlords say to me, they will accept what they call the permanent supportive housing program vouchers. And because they get that can't guarantee income. And they have to they're required to like you got to do the both and you can't just expect them to do it. They're like you show them how math is going to work. And then you require it we're giving you other things, you are required to meet this need as well. And then but there's one of the things that happens in at the at the end of it is that there's a institutional blind spot. People don't fundamentally believe that these folks deserve Yeah, and and ultimately can manage it. Right. And so when it goes sideways, it's kind of like well, we try. What's been interesting is the good property owners good landlords are the first one going no, no, no, no, no, not just not because they feel

bad about that person. Some of them do. But the big trigger is I got vacancy, I got vacancies on units that you guarantee me money on. And you need to fix this. And so it becomes this battle back and forth where they're blaming the person. But the program didn't have everything that it needed if landlords say to me, Andhra, Nika, I refuse to evict this person, because I was promised that this person would have a caseworker. And I know, the caseworker never showed up. When that person was in crisis. There were challenges. My property managers who are not equipped to deal with this. We're like we called the person never came, the crisis got out of control, as they're saying, we're not evicting this person, because they didn't get what they need. Right?

Monique Curry-Mims 25:51

There's more of that, that's not everybody.

Andreanecia Morris 25:53

I'm not gonna pretend to do. But it's some of it is, it's some of them. And it's also, like I said, part of the motivation was for them the money, right? You're like, I'm the units vacant. And they're still saying, I'm because their point is, they're like, also evicting this person isn't gonna solve this problem, because it's gonna happen again, because this isn't working. Exactly. And so there, there is a, there's a, that's a win win, like what you're talking about there, where you have someone advocating for something that is in their best interest that ultimately serves the needs of the other person. So instead of trickle down, you've got bubble up there, like, yeah, person needs, everything that they require to be successful. So I can get my money, not I can get my money. And maybe this person gets what they need. It's how you design it. And so you've spent a lot of time talking about every housing system, there is everything from for several ownership, to rental, to you name it, every system has been examined, and how you, how you, how you, how you manage it, how you layer it, and every problem that that comes up, we have looked at all of it. And we've also looked at it by those various intersections. So every vulnerable population, be it you know, a trans kid who got kicked out of their house, to a single mother with kids and people on how people would pack all of it with this is the solution. And these are the steps. This is the policy that has to be put in place. Because ultimately, this has to be systemized, it can't rely on these one off. And so that's the piece, right? And so you say to folks help us build this system. And that's why climate change partners, you know, are helping us with insurance. Right, because they know that that's going to help it lower insurance costs, means the homes have to be stronger means the homes have to be we have to have the resources for that. And getting the funding from the federal programs, the IGA and the IRA. And instead of doing what we typically do with those federal programs is trickle down, right? How do we invest and traditional infrastructure projects that we would trickle down, oh, you're gonna get a bunch of good jobs. And then you can pay for your own housing, except you can't, because this piece is missing the gaps in the financial markets like, again, the perceptions, right? You hear people talk about, well, when I was a young boy, or young girl, or just starting out, and I bought, you know, my mom and daddy helped me buy a double. And I'm like, invariably, this is a white person we're talking was afforded generational wealth that black and brown people would expressly deny exact

Monique Curry-Mims 28:43

And also like inflation is different, like I hate today, when they're like, Oh, well, you guys aren't working hard enough. I'm like, Yeah, your houses were like \$10,000. And now they're like, a half a million for the

same house. Yeah, that's right. inflation rates and tons of employment rates are not aligning. So we've got all of this, right, like, we've got all of these systemic issues and things that aren't aligning, you know, you have this triad that you oversee together, how is that triad working together? Or across all of these issues? But then also, how are you working with other departments, social sectors, like how's it coming together to really produce a solution at Alyssa community at that intersection?

Andreanecia Morris 29:31

We do a lot of research and we share that information. That is the big pieces. So we want people to understand how the systems are working, how they're not working, what the solutions are. And also we want to be in constant conversation there. When we have policy victories. We don't walk away and say, Oh, we got this one. We would monitor that situation and go back and say, Oh, this isn't working. It needs to be tweaked. But and so that we need community participating in that we need partners participating in that So we also organize. So that's at the core, right. And initially, we started with organizing organizations, and nonprofits, civic leaders, people like that. And we're also organizing people right at on two different tracks, right? Because folks need to understand what's happening in their community, what they can do about it, what the specific issues are, we also do an electoral work, one of the three organizations is a 501. C three. And while we don't endorse, we do grade elected officials on their past performance, and their commitment, and so we use, we're unapologetic about it use it about advancing the put housing first message. So politicians, elected officials get graded on whether or not they how well they do or do not put Housing First. So they get asked, they get asked a lot. And the fee for is saying, You shouldn't vote for people were failing at it usable for people who are actually good at it. And that's part of the work. And so there's a lot of data analysis, sharing that information with people in different ways we do campaigns around when it's time for a policy issue to is bubbled up or there's an opportunity, or we're trying to create an opportunity. And so housing Nola focuses on the city of New Orleans. That's where we've done the most work around the plans, the policies, the recommendations, we've actually got an annual report card that comes out talking about how all of the intersectional partners policy makers made commitments and said, I will do a and then we go, Yeah, you didn't do a that only the elected officials were appointed, you get a grade, you get a grade, we talked about this didn't happen. And this, this is why it mattered and having these conferences and continuing to have these conversations. And so we want to first and foremost help every every community do something similar and follow that as a roadmap. It's a way of prioritizing community sets the priorities inside that plant that housing all the plants and says, Okay, we can't do everything at once. Right? What has to go first, what needs to go second. And again, coming back and saying just didn't happen, or this did happen. And this is how it impacted. And this is what we need to do next. And being really, it's a lot of detail, it's in some and sometimes it's not that people don't care about, right. And so we're like, it still needs to be done. It still needs to be managed, we still need to engage around it. And so then the greatest one is Housing Alliance is the see for its regional. And so that's going to be the we're expanding into the rest of the region. That's the metro area. And again, continuing to work with those elected officials. That's the lobbying arm. So it lobbies at city, state of city, parish, federal, state, state, federal level, and there's a lot of that back and forth with that piece. So the New Orleans, the Metro New Orleans piece is is rock solid. from a design perspective, obviously, we got a lot of work to do. Yes, we're still doing it. Well, across the state, what we want to see is that replicated so there are eight other regions across the state. So housing, Louisiana, is a regional network. And it's always got eight other regions, nine regions in total, where we're looking to replicate

what we've done in New Orleans, that we have organized on the ground. And each of those eight other regions, we have staff who are helping stand up homegrown regional housing alliances. So again, those those those twin paths, community being educated and supported, and policymakers sitting at the table, talking about the data, talking about the research, talking about the policy, and talking about what they can do and what they should be doing and setting priorities and moving forward. So that's how we and obviously, what we want to see is those intersectional issues. So you want criminal justice reform advocates, you want health care advocates, you want education advocates, you want come in Liberal civil society advocate, all of those people are recruited to come and participate under the housing banner, right? Yeah. getting everybody to the table housing banner. Yeah, right, getting everybody to the table. And so we, again, that's how real community change. It's got to be, well, it's got to bubble up. Yeah, it can't be top down.

Valerie Johnson 34:40

I think you're doing a really great job of employing everybody to the table and like really helping folks get their voices heard. So I'm also curious, we, at my organization have started doing a work first program. So similar to the way that housing first removes as many barriers as possible to someone having access to something work first is removing as many barriers as possible. We're working a lot with people with opioid use disorders. So they're not the easiest population to work with, when they first re enter the workforce, they're, you know, still early in recovery, or maybe not ready for recovery, yet, they still have some challenges just because they've been out of the workforce for so long. So having an employer who's understanding and willing to work with people and meet them where they're at and know that they have that wraparound support coming from somewhere else really helps, you know, kind of what's your take on, you know, taking the model that you're doing, and applying it to other areas. So housing, going to education going to employment, you know, what, what can other communities learn from what you're doing? And how could that be applied elsewhere.

Andreanecia Morris 35:55

So we are unapologetically about housing first, because we think everybody should start there. But we understand that people have other priorities. And, honestly, work first doesn't ignore housing, I'm sure one of the things the population that you described, they have to have somewhere to sleep at night, right? They have to, you know, and you're not waiting for them to get enough money to earn enough money in this job to pay first last and security deposit. So that's Wackadoodle. So it's also you are also following our model expressly it is, it is if you if you start with education, if you start with health care, it doesn't matter what you start with, you will run into the intersectional issues, what you can't do is ignore those annex intersectional issues, because you got a blind spot about if you're going well, we're Housing First. And so this person wants to work, doesn't need to get a job. I mean, we don't think everybody has to have a job. But if this person wants to get a job, or they want to keep a job, right, we continue to focus on the stereotype. Right? On how transportation for example, that's another one of my good intersectional issues, how transportation prevents people from getting from their homes to resources, right. And so you can be talking about bus passes, you can be talking about a bunch of different things that also helps with with a workforce model. How does that person get from their home to their job consistently? It may be that yeah, the place that they can afford to live is a little far out the bus route, is that not not really great. So how does transit actually help that you're going to look at that issue, as well and close help close that gap? And so that is, I don't have a problem with it. Like, yes, I

would prefer everybody to be going around saying put Housing First. But as your work first, you are, in fact, intentional and committed to closing all of the gaps. You'll get to housing, you'll get to transportation, you'll get to systemic biases, and microaggressions and racism and sexism inside of the workforce, workplace. And you'll also get to the wraparound support services that are necessary to address the trauma that the folks that we are the most who are the most vulnerable deal with every day.

Monique Curry-Mims 38:25

like what you just said about the being intentional about closing the gap. Because I think that, yes, there's there's gaps, again, that don't actually deal with housing directly. No, it does. But you're not thinking about it, cuz you're only dealing with let's get this person to a house. Yes, we're coming up on time. But I want to just I want, I want to close with this last question, which is, how do organizations determine what those gaps are? In order to create a I'll say, first model, like what should we be looking at, to say,

Andreanecia Morris 39:05

this is an intersectional issue? Well, we've got to understand what those gaps are. And those other things are so that we can actually get to a holistic solution. I think it's gonna start with talking to the people who are actually the victims and ours are actually the folks that you want to help, also need to have good data, right, you need to be able to this qualitative, which is being respectful and equitable and engaging with community, then there's quantitative, you got to be able to back the numbers up and you've got to have a dialogue. One of the most complicated parts of our work and it's one of the reasons why we move this way is, as I mentioned, so many people except the biases and the inequities and help perpetuate the stereotypes around housing. So you got to be able to have a conversation with someone who is struggling with the housing issue, and still still saying I Those people are trash. And I'm not those people. And I'm like Uber, what the heck are you talking about? Good example, after one of the last most recent hurricanes here, we had a community that wasn't New Orleans that was directly impacted. My hometown was part of that as well. And you had a lot of people getting on the news saying, I don't want to do it, I don't want to go to a hotel, I don't want any help. All I want is the sleeping bag, and I can sleep on my land, will you get destroyed your government should be helping you. So talking to that community member, if you're not being intentional, if you're not being equitable, if you're not being straightforward with them, would be to indulge them. I have partners call me and say I'm thinking should we be doing stuff to get people sleeping tents, sleeping bags, and now we need to get them hotels, we need to get on trailers, we need to get them housing. That's what are you doing? You're leaning into the rugged individualism nonsense. You're talking about meeting them where they are, we want to meet people where we are where they are, but we also want to help them up. Right? It's getting down in the dirt with people. It's called ruinous empathy. That's not what we're supposed to be doing. Right? You need to be respectful you that's when we talk to the I mean, that's what happens when you talk to the homeless, and you come away from the conversation and say, This person didn't want to go to the shelter. That must mean they want to be on house, no, talk about where they traumatizing the shelter? Is it because they won't accept their pet? Is it because they feel like they're not going to ever get out of the cycle? Is the issue deeper than that? You don't dismiss it. And it's one of the things that we do with these interests, that is in the data helps you see that class we give you are intent.

Valerie Johnson 41:50

we did a focus group recently, we had like 20 participants in a room who are all part of the housing first program. And we said what do you most want people to understand about you? Like, what's the most important thing that you want people to understand about what you've been through? And he every single one of them said, I am not lazy. Everyone thinks I'm lazy. Everyone thinks I'm not willing to work. Everyone looks at me and thinks that it's my fault that I'm here, because I didn't do enough. And it's so much like they're right. They're absolutely right. Like the general public is like, you are too lazy. You don't want to do the work. You don't deserve to have a house. And that's just not true. Like they they just got dealt a horrible hand and a horrible intergenerational hand that like never get any help.

Andreanecia Morris 42:38

Can they make better choices? Sure, when they're actually afforded better choices.

Valerie Johnson 42:45

Exactly. But you're choosing from several terrible choices, like do I have this terrible choice or this terrible choice? So the evils exactly like just the lesser of the evils. So we have, we're hitting our time and I love chatting, I want to keep chatting, but I also have to wrap us up. So Andrea, you have been so amazing to talk to, especially, you know, going into the intersection of all of the different things that go into social services, Human Services, supporting your community. All of that is it's not a single issue problem for anyone. And you know, being able to shift that power back to the community, and help them to have a voice and have a say and be able to help drive the solutions for their own community is a massively important thing. And you're doing it so well for the community of New Orleans. So thank you so much for sharing with us.

Andreanecia Morris 43:41

Thank you for having me

Monique Curry-Mims 43:43

No, thank you. Thank you for nothing. And we were crazy and for taking the time to speak with us then and for joining us. Now. This has been a tremendous help and insight to our listeners and to us. So thank you. Thank you, everyone for joining us for another episode. If you didn't know now, you know, this has been beyond philanthropy.