

Podcast "Somos Filantropía": Transcripción

Episodio: HERE to Listen

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Invitada: Rachel Leonidas, directora de comunicaciones, ProInspire

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Bienvenidos al podcast oficial de nuestro equipazo en Filantropía Puerto Rico, Somos Filantropía. Estas conversaciones profundizan, visibilizan y amplifican los esfuerzos que adelantan la equidad dentro del ecosistema social de Puerto Rico. Nuestros invitados compartirán sus perspectivas sobre temas sociales desde sus experiencias y especialidades. Así que busca un espacio cómodo, sírvete un café, café de aquí, claro está, y danos oídos.

[00:00:22.16] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

Saludos y bienvenidos a otro episodio de *Somos Filantropía*, el podcast de Filantropía Puerto Rico y hoy tenemos un episodio súper especial y es un poco continuación de otros dos episodios que les comentaremos pero vamos a cambiar de idioma porque hoy tenemos una invitada especial de una organización hermana de Filantropía Puerto Rico y le contaremos de eso ahora así que hacemos el cambio. Welcome to today's episode of *Somos Filantropía*. We are super happy to have Rachael Leonidas from ProInspire. Rachael, welcome.

[00:00:58.20] - Rachel Leonidas

Hey, welcome, I'm so excited to be here. Thank you for having us. Yes.

[00:01:03.14] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

So Rachael is in Atlanta today, but we were in person not too long ago. And so Rachael, you are the communications manager for ProInspire, which is a sister organization, I would say, to us because you're also a Philanthropy Serving Organization, right? Yes. Did you say that? And we met, and I just want to give a context to... Oh, I'm sorry, for the ones that are not looking at us or just listening to us. We have Karla Vargas. Hello. Today. Who was in the video? They saw us. We're in family. So we met, it's been four years now, or maybe four years. So we've been participating in, I would say, a cohort or a community of practice of several organizations like us, Philanthropy Serving Organizations and started creating together to really learn about listening and having practices that we can share with our membership about listening practices. That has shifted a little bit more to or has refined into going into listening, responding, and shifting power. And guys, I know that if you follow our podcast, you've heard about this before in our other chapters that we talked about. But we wanted to invite ProInspire today to continue this conversation.

[00:02:40.12] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

And we were just in a trip not long ago in Savannah, Georgia, that we met in person, all of us PSOs, to really come together and check out tools and roadmaps, create roadmaps of how we can continue to work and leverage each other and all the learnings we've done. So, Rachel, I'm super excited to have you here and to get this conversation started. You participated in our annual committee, was it two years ago? I think so. From our team. It's been a while.

[00:03:14.28] - Rachel Leonidas

It's been a while. I need to come back. Yes, you do.

[00:03:20.04] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

Yes. But I'm happy to say that we've been able to work together. And for us in Puerto Rico, sometimes it's hard to have people, you know, that we can collaborate with just because maybe the context is different or our model is a little different. But we've been happy to be able to continue to collaborate with you guys. So I have a question. I love ProInspire's name. Where does it come from? What inspiration happened that it was ProInspire? What's the story there? Is there a story?

[00:04:00.05] - Rachel Leonidas

That's a very interesting thing. There's a little bit of story, but I don't know if it's so much so around the name, but around our founder, Monisha Capeela, who left us, she succeeded last year in 2023. As you guys know, organization is now led by two Black women, Bianca Anderson, Isabelle Moses. But I think if we were to think about the name, that inspire part, right? How do we professionally inspire people to activate their leadership to accelerate equity throughout the world? Though, yes, Pro Inspired focuses on racial equity as a way to advance equity overall. We are in that intersectional work broadly in equity. So, I would imagine that inspirational part was a big part. How do we professionally inspire? Personally, yes, But because ProInspire work with leaders, nonprofits, and in foundations, how do we professionally inspire people to activate their leadership to focus on equity? That is a little bit of the story behind our name. There's more. There's always a bigger story. There's always a marketing team. But our organization is 15 years old. I wasn't there when the name was first established, but I do know that there's association on how do we inspire inspire, or pro-inspire, if you will, folks to work on important issues of advancing equity here in the United States and spill over throughout the world.

[00:05:42.03] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

I love it. I feel like now that you said professionally inspired, that even takes it to another level. But for me, it's very much like, or my interpretation was like, really act from the inspiration that is coming from these practices and what you're learning and what you're going through. Because I know a lot of your methodology, I would say, in working with funders, and you correct me, and I want you to speak more, is really looking inward from the individual self and going outward. So if you could share a little bit about things that you do and how you do it, I would love to hear that.

[00:06:26.17] - Rachel Leonidas

Yeah. No, thank you for that. And I love your interpretation because that's really exactly what it is. We do want to inspire people to work on issues. Part of that inspiration, inspiration comes, it starts with self first. That's a big part of how Pro Inspire feels. We have a self to systems model or approach at ProInspire when we train and when we work with organizations. This leadership model just talks about that there are levels of leadership and different practices that you have to embody and learn. They're very intersectional, so they're not linear, but it's the idea that you start with yourself. What is it that individual leaders need to do at the leadership of self? What are practices and behaviors and things they need to learn and unlearn to be the social impact change makers that they want to be? Then that should spill over to your relationship. So the windows go self, people, How are we equitable with other people from different cultures, societies that share differences from us? When we work with people, how are we equitable there? So we go from self, people and organizations. How does organizations live into practices, align their values so that the policies, the ways of being, the procedures that we adopt at the organizational level are also equitable?

[00:07:58.02] - Rachel Leonidas

That should all bubble up into the system. So self to systems, right? At every level of leadership, there are things that we need to do. And at the systems level, how are we reimagining different ways of leading, being, doing life, being in community that better serves our communities and make it a better place? Like, help us to address the issues we need to address and leave a better world for future generations and even right now for ourselves.

[00:08:28.18] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

Yes. I love how you say that. For ourselves. I agree on that one. What is that we always talk about learning in the social sector and learning how to do things differently.

[00:08:47.28] - Karla Vargas

But what I love is that you're always trying to push the unlearning side. And how do we listen there? And what are the lessons that we can take away from on learning? I mean, that word is actually, yeah, it's very interesting. And it's very interesting because it match with listening well, which is something that you always push. And we talked earlier in Savannah.

[00:09:15.09] - Rachel Leonidas

Yeah. No, when I was in Savannah, and even when I know we share space at the table, we talk so much, I think that listening undergirds this whole process of how listening, communicating, responding, shifting, all these things. Listening is one of those things that undergirds this process of, like you said, learning and unlear. When you start with self, the biggest blind spot sometimes we often have in our leadership and often have in practices is the fact that we don't make time to listen. We don't really think about the role of listening to ourselves, to others, to

community, so that we can be precise about the changes. The unlearning invites everyone to the table. Sometimes the learning, we say, Oh, certain people need to learn stuff, so we need to educate ourselves. But I think sometimes when we use the unlearning part, it's like, What have you learned that wasn't right? What do you need to unlearn that is different? How do we respond to the needs of now? Sometimes everybody needs to think about, What do I need to unlearn? Rachel, what do you need to unlearn in your leadership? And in order for you to really understand what you need to unlearn, Karla, to your point, that listening element is key because listening gives you what?

[00:10:41.00] - Rachel Leonidas

Feedback. It shifts your posture from always giving out, talking, sharing, but hearing. Then what we do with that hearing is what ProInspire helps to support leaders to do. When you start getting information or hearing things differently. How do you stay open to shifting to listening and hearing what you and unlearning the things you need to unlearn so that we can advance our missions and visions?

[00:11:11.14] - Karla Vargas

I see unlearn as a tool to be accountable to what actually I hear. I'm listening to the communities, I'm listening to the social sector, and the on learning side is actually how I'm responding to it. It's like an accountability. Mobility to the social sector and to our allies and partners and communities, because I'm listening to you. I'm trying to learn my practices, and I'm trying to learn how I do things, and I'm trying to implement and basically adapt to your reality and trying to search for best practices to engage.

[00:11:58.07] - Rachel Leonidas

Yes.

[00:11:59.23] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

Yeah. It's not a matter of... I think we focus very much sometimes on adding, adding, and learning, learning, versus sometimes it's really just unclined or let go of some things like rules of beliefs that we individually have that doesn't allow us to listen or share in different ways. I'd love to hear, Rachel, maybe you talked about self and people and organizations and systems. So you have this framework, which I think it's basic and basic fundamental, what I meant. Where do you implement it Or where have you seen that it works? You see that within funders, within nonprofits, within collectives? Just wondering, have you had the opportunity to... I mean, I obviously I can feel that it goes everywhere, right? But I'm just wondering how people interpret from the self. So the people, who is it the people? Is it in the organization? Is it my family? Is it my community? Is it my organization? Then just wondering how you see that. And to another point, echo a little bit of what you said, again, from what I was understanding from listening to you. You mentioned clarity and listening. So I think listening to oneself really allows clarity of oneself to then when you listen and see any contrast or something different, and that you need to, instead of adding, you need to let go, then it's easier to notice that.

[00:13:49.04] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

Sometimes we're listening to ourselves to then, Oh, let's add, let's add, let's add. Let me learn, learn, learn. Instead of, Let me listen, let me hear me with all the good and the bad, and then I can start being open of what to go. Anyway, but I want to know a little bit more how you engage this model and how is it?

[00:14:12.25] - Rachel Leonidas

Yeah. Thank you for inviting me to reflect on how we're doing it at Pro-inspire. As you were talking, I was like, Let me think about the best way to communicate. We have our self-assistance leadership model that we believe helped to advance racial

equity throughout the nonprofit sector, foundation, philanthropy, and the world. But we see this model as a treatment, if you will. It is an approach. The way we do this is that that foundation, I love the word that you said there, when you clarify that word, that foundation serves as the lens that we apply when we work with leaders, with individual leaders. Even at Pro Inspire, our organizational structure, we have services at each of those level as well. At ProInspire, the way we support individuals, and we always put that in the self-bucket, self-in-people bucket. The way we support individuals is that we provide individual training on both exploring identity and managing people in power. Because usually, when we think about anything that happens in the world, the first thing is how people perceive themselves and then how people interact with others. That's usually where a lot of the issues and a lot of the successes.

[00:15:52.01] - Rachel Leonidas

A lot of the successes. Organizations are a collection of people, and the system it bubbles up into community in the world. So it's still a collection of people. So what we do at ProInspire is we provide individual trainings that people can just register for, which helps them explore identity. What has the world said about who you are? What do you need to learn and unlearn? We have this 3A model. Active learning and unlearning is the first A. What intentional actions do you need to take? The third thing, what is the process of accountability? In the leadership model, we have these three A's. When we work with individual leaders, we say, Let's explore your identity. What do you need to actively learn and unlearn? What are the actions you need to take as a leader to become a better leader? Once you learn, once you realize what you need to learn and unlearn, what are the actions you need to take based off of what you're learning and unlearning? And then how do you hold yourself accountable? And that's usually where it falls. What are the process of accountability to make sure that if healing is something, if coaching is something

that you need, if you have any internalized feelings about yourself, or if you have biases against people, we need to clean that up.

[00:17:20.04] - Rachel Leonidas

And so ProInspire has trainings around how do you support leaders to do that at an individual level. Now, how do you support leaders while they're doing that as an individual level, not to harm other folks when they're doing it.

[00:17:34.08] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

It's a different process also. It's not like you get to a place. I think it's a continuous process that it unfolds in a way.

[00:17:44.00] - Rachel Leonidas

I love that you said that, Lenise. It's a continuous process, and listening. Listening is a fundamental thing. As you are learning and unlearning and taking different actions, how are people responding to you? That is something you need to listen and take in, process and say, That didn't land well. What happened? Should I check in? We teach leaders, How are you equitable in your management? When you're managing different people, how do you manage better? Because when people and teams work better, then we can really work on the objectives of the organizations, if you will, or the things that we to accomplish as an organization. Once we move through equitable management, interpersonal relationships, that's what we're talking about, interpersonal relationships. You go from self to people. Then when we talk about... At Pro-inspire, we have those trainings at the self and people level. We have fellowships that we have for senior leaders to look at their individual leaders, leadership. We have fellowships, we have trainings. Then we do org work. Org work really talks about the policies that you have, the practices of an

organization. When we look at our model, when we work with organizations, we do the same thing.

[00:19:14.12] - Rachel Leonidas

We still take a self-assistance approach with the organization. We say, who are the leaders that should be part of this change work? Where are the board members? We work at all levels, even when we work with organizations. But what we understand about organizations is if we don't make sure they align their values to the policies and the practices, nothing at the organization will change, and the missions are not moving forward.

[00:19:40.27] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

I'm writing down the agreements after you've done this process. It's like, let's manifest the agreement.

[00:19:48.12] - Rachel Leonidas

Let's codify this. Let's share it. Let's work on it for a while. I love when you said this is a process. Yes, this is not a checkbox thing. This is a commitment. Our leadership model has commitments at every level. This is a commitment to the work, because if we're not committed to this process, this ongoing process, and listening as a tool to do this, then I don't know what we're doing. We're just going by. We're just existing and making ourselves feel better. But are we really doing good work and are we maximizing on the work that we want to do collectively in the sector? And then philanthropy. Let's get to philanthropy real quick. Philanthropy is a really interesting place because- It is. Yeah, it's very unique, the power that foundations have. But at the same time, and understanding where they're situated in the ecosystem Philanthropy are big power players oftentimes in the ecosystem because of the resources that they can bring in. ProInspire really sees with our Hear

to Listen program, when we think about systems work, that is the reason why ProInspire works with philanthropy. We see individual, we have our trainings for individual, we do our org training work with foundations and nonprofits.

[00:21:26.16] - Rachel Leonidas

But when we think about the work of systems work, How do we re-imagine systems? We see philanthropy as partners in that, right? And we want to make sure they, too, are doing the work inside their foundation and them as philanthropic leaders so that when they engage with community, right? When they do the work of response, when they do the work of grant making, they're doing that in the most equitable way possible. And so, Pearl Inspired, with our Here to Listen tool, we really felt like listening was one of those pieces that are really critical in philanthropy because of the power that they have, because of the way they can resource differently and a part of our ecosystem that we depend on for change, for acceleration. Let's just be frank, in time of crisis, philanthropy is one of the systems, one of the sectors that can respond a little bit differently than government. Definitely.

[00:22:39.16] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

Clicker, more risky. Yeah, exactly.

[00:22:42.28] - Rachel Leonidas

Can be a little bit more risky, can be a little bit more daring. We see philanthropy as players and partners in doing this. We want to go inside foundations and say, How are you listening? How are you as a leader from self? And all the way through systems with philanthropy.

[00:23:04.28] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

Definitely. Do you want to tell us about the Here to Listen? I love these cards.

[00:23:13.29] - Rachel Leonidas

Yes.

[00:23:15.28] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

How do you call this deck?

[00:23:17.15] - Rachel Leonidas

I'm trying to see if we have the deck, the card deck, our Here to Listen card deck, which is a suite of conversational cards that has practices at all levels. I just went through the self systems, and we have these cards, and I can drop the link. I'll make sure I share the link with you guys so that you can hear. Because we have a virtual card deck for free, for free to anyone who wants to be able to download Yes. They have these practices and questions that you can work on yourself, but at every level. Self, people, organs, and systems. We have practices, we have questions that you can engage in these cards. Our Hear program is both a conversational card deck, which is a free virtual tool, and it's a training program custom-made for foundations, and now being also customized for nonprofits as well.

[00:24:15.22] - Karla Vargas

That was sweet.

[00:24:17.01] - Rachel Leonidas

Yeah, here is the acronym. Here is our listening model. It's a model for listening that we engage with philanthropy. H stands for honored lived experience. Our E stands for exemplifying equity. Our R in here stands for responsive, how we're responsive.

And E, how do we stay engaged. And so our Hear Model for Listening supports philanthropy, foundations, philanthropic leaders on better listening practices so they can shift and change. So they can look at the power they have and leverage equitable listening in order to do the good work that they seek to do.

[00:25:09.28] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

I love your names. At first, for me, when I heard about this initiative, it was Here to Listen, and now it seems that it's more Here, the name, which I love because I heard it and I felt like presence, right? I'm here. So to listen and to share experience and all this, you need to be here. I love your name.

[00:25:40.15] - Rachel Leonidas

It's a play on words. It's like you need to be here. And when you are here, you need to make sure that you are honoring lived experience, when you're exemplifying equity, when you are engaging with community, when you're present, when your experience is that you're having at convenings, when When you're talking to members of the community in your grant making, you need to be here. You need to be present. Then we feel like listening is one of the most powerful ways to make sure that you are shifting power. Not everyone always listening to you, but how are you listening to others in your response to community. I love it, and I'm glad that you got it. That made me so happy, Lenise.

[00:26:28.03] - Karla Vargas

You did It's perfect.

[00:26:34.18] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

I'm curious. You mentioned accountability, even in yourself to system model and even here in the here. But Carla, when we came back from our Savannah trip and our community practice trip that we spoke and did a reflection of everything we learned and how we were feeling. It was like our self moment of reflection, and we were sharing it together. We spoke a lot. I mean, we talk, obviously listening is the theme, but accountability is another big, I think for me personally, the important thing that we should talk about, because I think, and I'd love to hear your thoughts about this and how you see it and maybe how you practice it or bring it to be expressed. Because in that podcast, we were talking much about there's listening and there's Because there's so much, especially with funders, there's so much recognition that they have power. So it's like you have to listen. But at the same time, there comes responsibility within all this strong from both parts, the listening and the transmitter and the receiver and vice versa. So just wondering your thoughts and how do you put accountability within this approach?

[00:28:14.27] - Karla Vargas

Yeah. I was also thinking on that topic that this is something that I'm always trying to answer in my head. How does actually an organization that implements This co-leadership that you were talking structure and this here tools, I mean, all of these words that means here and this accountability besides learning and on learning. How does an organization that implements those tools in their structure looks like? I mean, what do you think about accountability, sharing the power, and also how actually an organization looks like by doing this? We have a lot of nonprofits and also funders and grandmakers listening to us, and I think it will be very good from your side to share how do you think about those terms and how actually in practical ways we can maybe put into practice.

[00:29:21.06] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

Do you use your deck internally without the control?

[00:29:24.18] - Rachel Leonidas

Exactly.

[00:29:27.01] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

Do you have a Monday meeting?

[00:29:29.05] - Rachel Leonidas

Okay. Listen, those measures- Here's the card of the day.

[00:29:35.28] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

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[00:29:37.27] - Rachel Leonidas

This is the card.

[00:29:42.03] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

That's a good idea.

[00:29:42.24] - Rachel Leonidas

It is.

[00:29:43.26] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

There's a slack A lot of stuff that gives a card every day.

[00:29:49.08] - Rachel Leonidas

That is a great idea. If they join our listserv, they'll start to get that. Accountability is a tricky thing when you have power, when you're in the seat of power. That is one of the reasons why Pro Inspire is dedicated to working with foundations from the inside out. Because if we're not changing the internal culture around accountability and the importance of doing this work and seeing it from... There's accountability from self to the system. When we talk to individual leaders, we ask ourselves, How are you holding yourselves accountable? Sometimes as an individual person, You need a coach or you need an accountability partner. At the individual level, we tell people, yes, you set out your goals as an individual leader, and then at the end of the year, you tell yourself, did I reach those goals? Yes or no? Sometimes individuals can be held accountable a little bit more easier than when we talk about organizations and foundations. When we talk about those who have a little bit more power are, especially when we talk about philanthropy, who they're in the seat of power. So if they say, Well, yeah, we're going to do it.

[00:31:06.29] - Rachel Leonidas

And if they didn't do it, who's going to be accountable? So that question around accountability is such a powerful one. It's such a hard It's such a hard question. It's such a hard question to answer. That's why we asked. I see Philanthropia- I don't have to answer.

[00:31:22.07] - Karla Vargas

That's what I'm asking you.

[00:31:25.01] - Rachel Leonidas

I see Philanthropia and other PSOs as one of those folks in the ecosystem of change that holds that accountability space. Psos who challenge and learn and work with and elevate and celebrate and push. Sometimes is how when you are in the network, this is what we believe at philanthropia. This is what we believe our funders should be doing. There's a North Star. Psos can play a role. We, ProInspire, always work adjacent because we are PSO-ish. We also work with your intermediary, so we work on both sides. The reason why we're always in the PSO space is because these convenings are in an important place to hold for accountability at the Oregon systems level. What are we doing? We ask the big picture questions and we evaluate, how well did we respond to this crisis? What were the mistakes? Who sits in the seats of bubbling that up? Psos are a really key player here. The second thing I think is community. Community. And this is why listening is important. We can have big picture goals. When ProInspire works with foundations, this is what we see. They set something out. They want to support their grant makers.

[00:32:57.00] - Rachel Leonidas

They have all these metrics and numbers in place. Race and how they're going to do their grant making according to their strategy. And then at the end of the day, we just have to look in community and say, is it changing? Is it getting better or worse? Are we regressing? Are we improving? Sometimes we can close our eyes and say or make something up to make ourselves feel better. But there's something around the community, the world, the people that you're working with gives you feedback around how well are your strategies. They are the accountability metrics, if you will. This is why at ProInspire, we do believe in working with foundations on how are you receiving your feedback? Because that is really the point of accountability. That question around how How well are you listening? How well? What is the feedback you're getting? Even when you disagree with the feedback, you have to understand

that that is the way it is being perceived and received. That is the way the community, your grantees, that is the perception that they're having. And so that feedback is important. I think we always have to continue to shift and push philanthropy to say, It sounds great, but we must do something different.

[00:34:29.24] - Rachel Leonidas

Friends. We keep hearing, for example, philanthropy, we need GNA support. We need more GNA support. We need more GNA support. So the more and more people are saying this after a while, it's like, are you listening? Are you listening?

[00:34:46.23] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

Do you want to change?

[00:34:49.13] - Rachel Leonidas

I think that the accountability is tricky. But one area of accountability I do see that we have seen that has been successful is when we work with individual leaders in foundations or in philanthropy, we do ask them, How's your well-being? Do you feel like you're accomplishing your goals? Are you thriving? What do you need? There's something about asking individual leaders those questions, and what are the things you have in place to make sure that you're checking in on those cards, right? That you're reading up on the latest things that are needed. What do you have in place? And Sometimes a lot of senior leaders that work in foundations or leaders at all levels, because Prontes by working leaders at all levels of leadership. Well, one thing we say is, get some coaching, get an accountability, get networked with organizations like Filantropía. Get network so that you can hear and assess your own leadership. In the area of accountability, we saw individual accountability, how we work with individual, how we coach them, how we talk to them about ways they

can implement and stay accountable. We've seen some progress there. Now, organizations, we press the button, we press the gas with them.

[00:36:12.18] - Rachel Leonidas

We go to the policy. Put it in your policy. Codify that we're going to increase our grant-making strategy. We're going to try a spend-down approach in one area right here. We want to see you write that down and make that public. I think that part around codifying your policy, moving things into your policy is a sure way that you hold yourself accountable at the organizational level or in side of a foundation. When we work with clients, we often want to say, what will change in your policy as a result of doing this work? Accountability looks different at different levels, but I will tell you now, it's not easy holding a can of.

[00:37:06.22] - Karla Vargas

We know. But I actually love that relationship of knowing your story. If you know the story and you actually recognize your identity and your position, you actually can strategize from there. I mean, we only understood the value and the power of listening and understanding the stories and recognizing our position and recognizing our identity and our decision to strategize with key players, even recognize the key players. Who are the key players in our decisions? Those are the questions that I'm trying to always answer on my mind. Who are the key players when I make this decision in the social sector? I mean, it's just the community or is the community the funders? What are the realities around that decision that you're going to make? It's all about that accountability. You have to recognize the key players, their identity, your identity, and actually their stories to actually listen well.

[00:38:24.20] - Rachel Leonidas

Yeah. I love that you said that, Karla, because I think leaders of color, especially, we hold ourselves accountable to our own lived experience. We know what we need. We see our communities. We love our communities. I love who are the key players that you could hold yourself accountable to. Sometimes that's in your faith as well. You answer to a bigger power. I love working with individual leaders when you process why do I care about this work is a really great accountability question. Why am I doing this? And that's why we love to work with leaders at the individual levels, with orgs and philanthropy, we just go ahead and tell you what you all need to do. But even individuals in foundations, in philanthropy, people who are working as individuals, we ask the question. That's a great way to remind people, are you accountability to your mom who raised you? Why are you? Are you accountability to your family? Are you an accountability Because they represent, why are you doing this work? Every leader asking themselves the question, why are they doing this work? Why this organization? Why this foundation? Why are we aligned with this mission?

[00:39:44.23] - Rachel Leonidas

So a great accountability metric is to always ask ourselves, who are the stakeholders? Why are we doing this work? Why are we in it? And sometimes when you're working as a leader, you get tired, you get frustrated. You got to remind yourself, why am I doing this? And as a Haitian-American, I'm reminded of my own community. I stay committed to the work that is still needed to do in Haiti, to the history of Haiti that still needs to be shared. And that's why I continue to fight for equity across because of our lost stories and our lost history. So I just love how you tied that in the identity piece and the asking the question. Sorry, Denise, did I cut you off, but I thought- No, no.

[00:40:26.07] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

Am I going in my I'm following you and echoing everything you're saying. I see it very much there's an accountability to you and to your dreams as well and what wants to be expressed out of you, which goes into other Sometimes we're even accountable to us and what we really desire in our hearts to be created and experienced and manifested, which goes to the organization, to the system's level, and to all other areas. I love the approach. It's just very great. I remember when you guys presented in our convening two years ago that you began with an exercise of the whole group. Remember, we were in a circle and you asked something about the leadership style and they had to like, and buy it.

[00:41:28.28] - Rachel Leonidas

A metaphor, yes. Yes.

[00:41:30.11] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

I was like, This is great. If you listened carefully, you would learn so much about other people, which is amazing, just by such a simple example. Because sometimes we don't have to make this an academic thing of, Oh, let me listen.

[00:41:51.01] - Rachel Leonidas

Yeah.

[00:41:52.10] - Karla Vargas

Also, something that I like on that topic is that you always on that exercise and also in Solana, you were trying to teach something about listening is not always listening to a word. You can listen with your body. You can listen with your sensation. I don't know. You did something about a story when we were kids, and how do you feel

about this exercise? What do you remember? And most of us didn't remember a word, in a specific word, but we actually remember how that experience make us feel, how our body feels. And we actually put ourselves in our imagination, in that place, we can actually see. I saw ourselves in that scenario But we didn't remember the words. That was actually interesting because you always try to teach us that listening is not about words, it's about what it's in between or something like that.

[00:42:59.27] - Rachel Leonidas

Verbal, what you remember. It's all about listening. And we deploy so many different strategies to help people understand that, like you said, listening happens in 3D. And then more standard approaches, listening is someone says something, what I'm hearing is, and then we write it down, and then that is it. Maybe, hopefully, We shift from that. But there's so many different things, especially within communities of color that we listen to. We listen to who's not in the room, who wasn't there. We connect our feelings, and our feelings tells us something about what's happening. All of those things are important. And if leaders in the social sector dealing with all types of people in their management, in their grant making, in the way they do policies, if they're not understanding that different types of people receive messages differently. So we went to geo with Brittany and I did a session on, and Brittany is with Native Americans in Philanthropy. We did a session on cultural listening practices around the world, and it's different. There are different methods that are deployed based off of where you're from, what your family values. And that's why we do that exercise, because oftentimes leaders do not know.

[00:44:27.10] - Rachel Leonidas

And organizations are a collection of leaders and people. They do not know why they respond in a certain way. Why do certain things trigger them? I remember how

that made me feel. And we want to call that up. So when you're working with community or when you're working with a manager or when you're working on a team, you can understand how different people can have different perceptions. How do we work through that to accelerate. That's not a barrier to the work that we're trying to make.

[00:44:57.07] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

Definitely. At the end of the day, the receiving side is the one who puts meaning to what's being communicated. They should be accountable to that meaning, which is a very individual thing. I love it. It's an interesting exercise. I love it. What's up with you guys in this very interesting 2024 and maybe 2025? How are you looking at to the future?

[00:45:29.19] - Karla Vargas

I'm looking at 25.

[00:45:31.09] - Rachel Leonidas

Buckling our seat belt. That's what we do. We buckling our seat belt. Yeah, sitting and looking at how equity is taking a backwards, it's taking a second to turn. We know that the political season is coming up in the election season, and that is going to just impact a lot of what foundations can or cannot do, and what the government does and the legal actions that can take. We're not backing down from the work we are doing, but we are considering those things, and we are doubling down on our efforts of understanding, even in uncertain times, that work of equity is critical because if it impacts the greater society, how much more does it disproportionately impact other people? Decisions on climate change we know will impact Puerto Rico. What is going on? How are we investing? How are we resourcing and making our communities resilient in the face of environmental

issues? I know that's top of mind for anyone is seated in the Caribbean and even around the world. We are seeing the impacts of it. And so we're buckling our seat down and we want to say we have to take a look at equity.

[00:46:57.08] - Rachel Leonidas

Listen, we can't ignore that because different communities that are going to feel the impact of different things, disproportion and different things. Some exciting things that we have coming up is we have a report coming out on conditions for thriving. We're going to share that with Foundations. We're taking an asset frames approach on what allows leaders to do well. We're tired of always looking at what's wrong and what's going on. Now we're going to be releasing a report in August on conditions for thriving for BIPOC leaders so that philanthropy can take a look at when they're funding, fund what's going well. Fund what will actually support thriving. We're excited about that part. Then we have a learning series that's free to the organization, sorry, that's free to everyone that can be a part of. We have a foundation open house. I'm not sure. It's June 20th, so probably by the time this comes out, it will be, but we would have a recording. Yeah, we have a recording. Perfect. People can reach out to us at [proinspire.org](#) to learn more about what we do. We have some exciting things that are happening. Stay tuned with Pro Inspire, and I love you all.

[00:48:21.15] - Rachel Leonidas

Yes.

[00:48:22.07] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

We have one more question, but be sure we're going to share all this and your contact info in case somebody wants to reach out to Pro Inspire and learn more of the services and things that you offer. I think you answered it, but I'll ask it. We

always end up asking, how do you advance a more equitable Puerto Rico? Obviously, in your case, I know you don't directly work in Puerto Rico, but I'm sure you work with others that in some way might trickle down to Puerto Rico. So just wondering, and I know we've talked about this, but how do you advance an equitable society, an equitable world?

[00:49:11.04] - Rachel Leonidas

I think one of the big ways that we do it is that we believe in partnering with people and getting practical about ways of doing it. I think that we always share high-level things. We're always sharing data, we're always sharing information and practical practices through our leadership model and through our report that's coming up on Conditions for Thriving. We help to contribute to advancing a more equitable world because Pro Inspired partners with people and walk the journey out with them, and we want to walk the journey out. The second thing that may tie to Puerto Rico is Pro Inspired is dedicated to elevating the fact that leaders of color around the world, from all different places, can contribute greatly. They have the answers. With this report on Conditions for Thriving, what we're saying is too many times we take a look at different places around the world who it's like, Oh, they have a negative lens. How can we How can we support? There's always a deficit framework. And so Crosby want to surface the assets. And we know that the people of Puerto Rico, we know philanthropia. We know there is a story.

[00:50:47.17] - Rachel Leonidas

There's a powerful story. There are powerful contributions from leaders that come out that foundations can partner with real people, nonprofits in Puerto Rico, and in the Stateside with those in the diaspora. We work with those in the diaspora to say that they've made powerful contributions and that there are great things that we can contribute to the world. It's not always a response of how you can help, but

how can Puerto Ricans help us? Because there are things that we know there's contributions that are being had. When we talk about the work of racial equity, we think about How do we surface the amazing work and leadership in Puerto Rico, in the United States, and around the world of leaders. How do we resource? When we think about resourcing, so this is what we share with philanthropy. When we think about We're sourcing all anywhere. How do we resources conditions that continue to help these leaders thrive? It's the both and. Yes, there are challenges, but also there are wonderful contributions that are happening. How do we surface both? And I think that that's how Pro-inspired contributes to a more equitable world when we're not always looking at people by the total of what's wrong in their communities, their deficit, the gaps.

[00:52:13.11] - Rachel Leonidas

But they are first What are we approaching out on that every community have contributed greatly to the world, to the environment, to their communities. How do we source and fund both things? Both, what can they do to thrive, and what do they need? Because we don't want to ignore the problems. What do they need to support? We don't only want to focus on the problems. We want to resource the stress, because that's how we accelerate growth. So I think that's what Pro-inspired contributes to society, to the ecosystem, to nonprofit, to foundation, and in some way, right there in Puerto Rico as well.

[00:52:56.27] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

Absolutely. I like it. Thank you so much. I appreciate you. I appreciate Pro-inspired and the relationship we've created in these last couple of years. So thank you. Thank you so much for your time.

[00:53:10.22] - Karla Vargas

Thank you so much for your time, Rachel. You're not having me.

[00:53:13.11] - Rachel Leonidas

Until next time.

[00:53:14.29] - Glenisse Pagán Ortiz

Yes. And thank you for all the ones who listened to this episode. We're back with more. So see you, talk or hear you or see you soon. Bye. Bye.