



Kerrin Mitchell:

Welcome to the Untapped Philanthropy Podcast.

Tim Sarrantonio:

We're your hosts, Fluxx's Co-founder Kerrin Mitchell and Neon One's Tim Sarrantonio. We've spent our career learning how to leverage technology and data in the social sector to better connect and serve our collective causes, constituents and communities.

Kerrin Mitchell:

In this podcast series, we profile leaders, public figures, philanthropists, and industry experts to explore the fascinating intersection of funding, technology and policy. We're here to analyze the most formative topics and trends that shape the present and future of philanthropy.

Today on Untapped Philanthropy, we are thrilled to have Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew. She's a visionary leader at the helm of the Soulstice Consultancy where she pioneers innovative strategies for philanthropy, community engagement, and leadership development. And bringing to us sort of this really dynamic blend of passion expertise. She pulls it together and really champions the power of relationships to transform individuals, organizations, communities, and really becomes this beacon sort of inspiration for things like women's leadership and social capital. So we are so honored to have her join us today. Dr. Booker-Drew. Welcome and thank you so much for joining us.

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Kerrin Mitchell:

And a lot of times when we start off, we like to just get people familiar with who you are. Do you mind sharing a little bit about your journey, how you started in the social and nonprofit sector?

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

Well, what's really funny is I had no intention of being in this space. I thought I was going to be a medical doctor. I knew from the time I was a kid that I wanted to help people. And in high school when I realized that I did not understand algebra and algebra 2, and that math was going to be the death of me, I realized I want to help people. I just didn't know what it was going to look like, but it was not going to be that. And so when I went to college, I got heavily involved on campus activities that allowed me to understand programming and budgeting. And from there, I had a lot of leadership positions on campus, but I remember thinking, okay, maybe it means I need to be an attorney. And I remember doing a paper for a conference and all these young law school students were there and one of them walked up to me and said, is this the life you want?

Look at us. And they looked miserable and they were there on a Saturday and I was like, yeah, this isn't it either. I want my life and I still know I want to help people. And throughout college I started working with these organizations like Girl Scouts and a number of community based organizations. And I fell in love with the ability to do something meaningful. And so it just really became this progression of working in spaces where I started off in case management, to moving into doing things around programming and ultimately getting into spaces of administration and fundraising. I've been really fortunate to have this career that has allowed me to experience the gamut of nonprofit management. And at the time, there weren't these degree programs for that. I see it now and I think it's amazing and I



get an opportunity teach in those programs, but there wasn't that pathway. And so for me it was really a journey of just having these opportunities presented and getting in this space and learning and growing from ground up to being able to do the work that I'm blessed to do every single day now.

Tim Sarrantonio:

I always talk about how there's so many people in our sector that find themselves on the island of misfit toys, is how I describe it. It's like we all have our own different journey. And when you even said algebra 2, I was like, oh, the sequel was even worse, right?

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

Yes.

Tim Sarrantonio:

So for me it was very similar. I thought I was going to be an academic and go into labor history. And really at its core, what I love about what you're talking about is it just comes down to people and it comes down to relationships both personally and professionally. What I'd love is to drill a little bit even deeper there with you and kind of understand what was the moment, if there was a moment you had that moment with looking at those students and going, but when did you know in the path that you're on now with Soulstice Consultancy and all the amazing work that we're going to talk about today, where you said, this is me.

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

It's been a number of those moments, but it really was working at St. Phillips, which is this amazing school and community center. And I was brought in to run the community center, and I remember seeing young people's lives change because of exposure. And that was the thing for me. And at that time I was a lot younger, but at 30 I just realized then this is the space that I really to occupy and be a part of because I could see in bringing all of these different people to connect and collaborate with to help these children who did not have access to a lot of opportunities in that neighborhood to be able to bring in things like fencing and all these other non-traditional sports, I mean lacrosse. And then to think that now 20 plus years later I'm gone, but that is still there in that community and young people can be a part of this.

And some of them have even gotten college scholarships in lacrosse just because I thought, hey, let's build a partnership and allow young people to have access to something that they traditionally would not even be aware of. And so I think it was in that moment of being in this space and having a boss who is still a mentor to this day, who allowed me to create and innovate and said, do whatever you want to bring. And I would listen to community, but I would also think about what are these creative programs that we could bring and just having that ability to make something special happen. That was the moment where I went, yeah, this is it. I don't know where it's going to take me, but I know this is it.

Kerrin Mitchell:

I think there's something really incredible about that idea of the activation of community that is something in terms of a lot of the work that I've read about you. And I know that the advocacy of social capital is something that really builds and fosters a thriving community. And you talk a lot about that and this idea of social capital. Do you mind elaborating on that and why it's so crucial in building those sort of landscapes for you and having those thriving communities build off of that concept?



Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

I didn't know what social capital was until I was working on my PhD, and it was one of those things similar to this theory, I love asset-based community development that I live by. I was doing this work but had no idea that's what it was called. And when I started learning more about the power of relationships and that so often we see them as being transactional and they can be, but how do we really begin to start seeing relationships as transformative? And so social capital is really about the networks, the relationships that we have. And we often focus on our currency being financial. And I don't think people recognize our relationships are a form of currency. And I often say to people, I don't worry about being broke because if you have the right relationships and you really invest in people, people are going to invest in you.

And even with the nonprofits I work with, I tell them that too about they don't have a money problem, they have a relationship problem. And so how do you become very intentional about building your networks? And I think for a lot of nonprofit leaders, they are so busy in doing the work that they really need to think about being intentional and stepping back and thinking about what are the spaces and places that I need to be a part of that I don't have access to but could help me in doing this work? It's thinking about those sympathetic sectors that you could connect to. And I think it's so important in our landscape today to realize that money is connected to people, resources are connected to people, and so relationships are so important. And I say this often, I've never been to a funeral where people talk about the job that someone had. They talk about relationships and how that person made them feel. So relationships are critical to anything that we do, especially in the nonprofit sector, because its about that.

Tim Sarrantonio:

I work a lot, especially with smaller community driven organizations, and one of the common complaints that I get from them is just like, I just don't have time for this. And it almost gets them into this cycle of focusing on the transactional because it's this almost reptilian response. It's like, but I have to get the money. I have to get the money. How have you found success breaking people out of that baseline focus on the money itself and to get focused back on the relationships?

Kerrin Mitchell:

I love that question.

Tim Sarrantonio:

It's not in the sheet. It's not in the sheet. I went off....

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

It's a great question. Recently there was a conference here in the Dallas area and I invited a lot of nonprofit leaders to attend. And I remember hearing that, oh, I'm too busy. And they missed out on such an opportunity to connect with funders and to connect with other leaders and share information. But for those who came, it was invaluable. And so what I typically do is I started doing, when I was at World Vision, these things called community engagement days, and I created these events where I made nonprofit organizations come and it was amazing to watch them build social capital. People were sharing programs and transportation just because they were in a space to connect. And so I think it's really helping nonprofit leaders understand what they're missing when they're too busy. You cannot afford to not be out in community. It's both the relationship, but it's the visibility piece as well.



And so if no one knows about the great work you're doing and you're too busy keeping your head down, how do you really sell that to a funder or get the resources that you need, even if it's in kind, if people don't know you exist. And so you have to figure out this balance of doing the work, but also creating space to be in community with people to learn what's happening. I often get irritated when I hear nonprofits say, I'm the only one doing this, and I'm going, you've had your head down too long. Because if you were out in community mapping assets and connecting to people, you would know that you're probably not the only one. But in finding that out, you could demonstrate the niche that you are feeling that yeah, this may be a group who's doing it, but this is how I'm doing it differently. But if you're too busy to get out and know that, you're siloed and you're missing out on building the work.

Kerrin Mitchell:

And there's a reflection in a mirroring that occurs in community, that is so important too. And to your point, there's shadows you may not know of that you put your head down so long in driving a specific direction that you're missing out on optimization opportunities on understanding resources that may be available, that are shared, that are a part of really that fabric. And I think that's something that we talk about communities. It's also the ability for communities to help in return and not only be able to give you insights that maybe you, I don't know, maybe the shadows you may not be seeing and help you run better too. So there's a benefit that comes and people want to help. So it's just such a activation of working those through and making that work.

Tim Sarrantonio:

What does real community look like to you? Because it's becoming a bit of a buzzword too in that you can see we're going to build a community around our new burger that just came out and we're going to hype people up about our burger community. There's this underlying attempt to turn it into a marketing channel in some places.

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

Agreed.

Tim Sarrantonio:

And so how do you fight that?

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

Oh, wow. I always go back to Dr. King's ideal of this beloved community where everyone is participating in a part of it and has voice. That's the dream. The reality is, is that our world is becoming more polarized. And so people tend to stay in spaces that are very comfortable for them. And I think community has so many different looks. It can be the community of people that you're around because of proximity, but it can be a community of people that care about a similar cause. So I think it's community is where you land with a group of people that want to do something. And sometimes you have communities of people that are not. We're seeing that sometimes politically where people are not as engaged and involved, but I think it's where people get together. My hope is that people really are intentional by how community looks and who's missing.

I think we can get so hyper-focused on what we need to do that sometimes we forget that there are people who are not at the table who don't have voice, that we need them because our perspectives can be so homogeneous that we need to make sure that our blind spots are covered by other ways of thinking. And that's what I hope community will become, is that we start asking that question. We don't



have, and not to check a box but to go, we need these voices that are different that may disagree, but everyone has a seat at the table. That's the hope.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Here's an interesting inflection on that too, is that there is also importance in creating spaces, especially for under-recognized voices. And so we're recording this during Black History Month for instance. And so always the refrain of, but what about white history month? It's like that's every day, right? So the reality is that you have to have a nuance on power dynamics.

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

Yes.

Tim Sarrantonio:

So how do you guide organizations especially that might have white leadership in recognizing that we want everybody the see the table, but sometimes we need to have a VIP hour.

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

Oh my goodness, I'm dealing with that. You've got an Amen corner over here on that. I don't think organizations recognize, and people cringe when they hear this word now, but I don't think leadership recognize their privilege and their power. I think quite often when you're in a position of leadership, it's so easy to be disconnected from the people that are on the front lines, let alone thinking about community. I see organizations now where leadership is making decisions for people that are forward facing and community, and they're so disconnected from that. And it's like, well, how can you speak into something that you're not even directly involved with? So if that's happening in an organizational level, you know that you're going to have a challenge in community. And even in my work, what I am discovering is, I may be called in to help organizations think about their community engagement strategies.

And what I find out that I have to do is really start doing a change management strategy internally because the way that they seek community, even within their organization, they have silos and there's a lot of distrust. And so how do I help you go in community and think strategically about dealing with people that are so different and don't have representation on your team? And you've got this internal dynamic that is a mess. I'm spending more time cleaning up those situations and looking at leadership development and helping teams really think about what does community look like internally before we even pursue the external.

Kerrin Mitchell:

Can you give us an example actually, of one of those exercises or perhaps a primary challenge you face when you're taking that on and you're bringing in this idea of both awareness and action to say, look at yourself in the mirror. Here are the things we need to be changing. What would a tangible example of how you went about that look like

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

There is an organization, without saying too much about them. Because they would go, you're talking about us. There is an organization that I'm working with and I'm really pleased that one, the CEO is at the table and is heavily involved in driving this. I have discovered that when it's mid-management that's



driving these processes, it only goes so far and it stays within a team and it's not embedded within the organization. This entity is so committed to making sure that it is a part of every single process. But what I've had to do with this group was really start doing more education than actual strategy development. We really needed to go in and start talking about what does it look like for you to build social capital internally? Talking about things like cultural capital, what does it really mean for you to start thinking about the cultural pieces of storytelling and the historical backgrounds of your team?

Because if you don't have a real recognition and appreciation of what those folks are bringing to the table, how do you walk into these diverse communities and go, we want to work with you, but we don't really understand. We've read one book and we think that we've got the knowledge on you. So I really had to go in and create, really a syllabus, of these are the things that we're going to do to build your capacity internally. And while we're doing that, we'll still talk about what does strategy look like? How do you asset map communities to find out where resources are? How do we begin to start doing learning tours to see what's happening in community and listening to people and doing the same thing internally?

Kerrin Mitchell:

And one of the things I think is really compelling too is you do this obviously for different groups, demographics, et cetera, but you do have a lot of focus as well around female leadership as aspiring female leaders are looking to invaluable advice maybe you have. Are there things that you could say as people that are maybe in a leadership role, women are not actually in this matter? What are the things that you would give advice to them to say, to start this journey of looking inward? Here are the things that the first two or three steps you might want to do.

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

I believe you should always have a kitchen table. And that's a group of people who are going to tell you about yourself, who are authentic. So often we surround ourselves with people who are your Amen corner who are always going, you're great. And you have to be mindful of that because sometimes those people are in a position of not having as much power as you do. So they're going to say what you want to hear. You've got to find people who have no investment in that way, but their investment is you. And so for leaders to look inward, you've got to have people around you who can call you in and call you out when necessary to make sure that you are aware of some of the things that you're doing. So you got to have that kitchen table. Some people would say a board of directors or personal board of directors. That's important, but the kitchen table is a little more grittier and you need people who are going to say, what are you doing?

Why are you thinking about that? So that's one. I think for leaders, you said a key word, reflection, is so how do you create spaces to reflect on your leadership? Because if you're always in this mode of doing, doing, doing, and you really don't take the time to sit back and process your day and think about what's happened, you don't get an opportunity to course correct. And leaders don't create spaces for that, both in their organization where their feedback loops. I see that a lot. It's usually when there's a crisis that people create the feedback loop, but they don't do it in their personal lives either where there's opportunity to reflect and get feedback and then course correct without waiting for a catastrophe to do something like that. So that's the other piece that I would encourage leaders to really think about is what does reflection look like and how are you getting the input to be able to then course correct.

And I could go on - reading. I think it's always important to get different points of view and educate yourself. And so how do you continue to feed yourself information that's going to help you? Being around wise people, that again goes back to that kitchen table. Wisdom is critical and you need people



in your life who've also been in similar spaces who can guide you and help you make sure that you may not make the same mistakes and you can learn from their experiences. So that's just a small, I could give you a list, but we'll stop there.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Well, what are you reading right now?

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

I am actually reading, I'm going through the Bible this year because I have made this commitment of wisdom and I am just intrigued with the book of Proverbs. And so I'm reading the entire book, but that is really one of the things that I am spending a lot of time is trying to get a very different way of wisdom. And so that's one. There are a couple of others that are laying around the house that I'm looking at going, okay, you're next. But that has been really the primary focus.

Tim Sarrantonio:

I believe there is, at least this is very evident in my house. There's a Japanese concept that talks about just the anxiety of all the books you have bought that you will not get to read.

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

Oh my God, yes. Yes. And for me, when I finished my PhD program, which has been some years ago, I remember looking at books and wanting to go after I finished, I was like, I don't ever want to see another book as long as I live. I was so sick. I was like, if you showed me a book or an article, I was sick. And the other piece for me, now, if I'm honest, I'm writing a book, so I'm having read...

Kerrin Mitchell:

I was just going to say, you're a prolific writer.

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

And so I'm writing another book right now about women of color and leadership. And so most of my reading is a lot of research related. And if it's not the Bible and trying to get that in at night, it's researching for this book. And that's making my hair white too.

Kerrin Mitchell:

I'm an audio book person. I have the joy of the ADHD. I'm like, if you held a gun to my head instead of read this book and one day I'd be like, Nope, can't do it. So I very much appreciate all that into the degree that all the audio books are in there. I am always a big fan too. So I'm with you on the reading thing. It's a little hard for me.

Tim Sarrantonio:

And I'm more of a Luddite. I won't read unless it's a physical book. And I just love it.

Kerrin Mitchell:

Well, you have a writer, your dad was a writer, a published major writer, like an actual major, major writer.



Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

But isn't it something about touching the pages? And maybe that's a thing, but it's something about holding the book in the pages and listening to the pages turn. It's just something about it.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Let's give the young people credit. There is very good evidence that shows that Generation Z and Millennials actually prefer direct mail, at least for individual giving outreach.

Kerrin Mitchell:

Oh, interesting.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Let's draw that out and go, they'll read books too, perhaps.

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

Okay, we'll give them some credit today on that.

Kerrin Mitchell:

Alright.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Well, okay, so let's think about that. Let's think about not just generations but futures as well, and that we want to build and envision the world we want to live in. And so where are you seeing different approaches in philanthropy, in governance, in revenue generation, in building community? I know for instance, that you're focused on things like giving circles as an example. So where are you seeing really interesting forays in what the potential future could look like?

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

That is an amazing question because you're seeing people get more engaged and not leaving it to foundations. When we started Heritage Giving Circle, it was because we wanted women, especially Black women, to know that they were philanthropists. And I think that the term philanthropist has always been associated with someone that's a Rockefeller or the Eli Lilly family and those kinds of people that are historic who left all this money behind. And it's not thinking about the day-to-day giving that we do, whether it's to our houses of worship or if it's seeing someone in need that's a friend and we're giving money. And so I think for me, it's been amazing to watch people who did not see themselves with that kind of power now own it. And beginning to say, I'm a philanthropist. I really have the ability to make impact. And so I think you're going to see more of that as giving circles continue to increase.

You've got groups like Philanthropy Together who are helping create this movement of building more and more giving circles around the world. That's exciting to me. I think the other thing that's been exciting is watching how philanthropy is collaborating. In the past, it was always crazy to me to watch funders say to nonprofits, you need to work together. And yet you're looking at funders who would not do that. And to see that change now, and people are talking, I work with a group of funders here in the Dallas area and helping them think about their investments in a particular geography that's been under resourced. And it's been amazing having these meetings bimonthly and watching these funders talk



about doing site visits together. Hey, if you're going to visit this organization, I'd like to tag along with you, or how can we be strategic in our investments and collaborate together to solve for an issue?

That for me is exciting to see that there's the term always being thrown out about Trust-Based Philanthropy and seeing that happen where funders are starting to do that with each other, but also beginning to change some of how they interact with nonprofit organizations, especially those that are grassroots. I've always been one who's been frustrated about there is such an expectation for these organizations. And again, accountability is not the issue, but the expectation can be so unrealistic that you end up harming these groups and communities because you don't create spaces to bring them in and understand their challenges and not just talk about building capacity, but understand the barriers that you've created that make capacity building difficult. I'm really getting excited to see how funders are starting to change the way that reporting looks or the way that they're interacting and how they're working with these smaller grassroots nonprofits. So I'm expecting more of that to occur as well too. I'm hopeful.

Kerrin Mitchell:

And I can definitely attest that there's an incredible momentum around that right now. And the lens more than ever for funders has, and I come from sort of the grant making side of the house, Tim's the grant seeking. But I can tell you that's really at the crux of so many discussions. The other is around from the experience of the grantee, it's not just about gathering that information, but it's doing it from the lens of the grantee, which makes me infinitely happier because it's like, let them tell the story that is relevant to how they're moving things forward. Stop asking them a thousand questions that are specific to your arc and your lens because that is influenced only by the things, not by the things that are in the community. So it's very interesting to see people have that self-awareness, but of course everyone's all over the spectrum on that. But I am happy to admit and sort of put forward that I have seen a sort of tectonic shift in the way that people are thinking. And to be honest, there's, there's a community pressure amongst those people who are remaining siloed in their own way that saying, look, all boats rise together. Figure this out. We got to do this together. Let's make it easier together. I am warmed by that too.

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

And when I was a funder with the State Fair of Texas, one of the things that I started asking was, what doesn't work? I want to know in your programming, what failed, what did you notice that could have been better? And not to reprimand or make it difficult for them to get funding next, but I wanted it to be a learning opportunity to figure out, okay, how do we support you better. Funding things like grant writers were important to me because it got to a point where some of the groups that we were funding, they didn't need me anymore because my money wasn't big enough there and they found other funders, but we were able to support them and give them visibility with others. And so even being in that space gave me a very different way of seeing how philanthropy could be and the possibilities because there's so many great organizations that are doing amazing work. What does it look like when philanthropy truly collaborates with these nonprofit organizations?

Tim Sarrantonio:

Alright, we are going to end this podcast, this fantastic conversation on a bit of a rapid fire note. So usually we're going to ask some fun lighthearted questions. We're going to change it up though. I'm going to do a word association game for I think Kerrin, we're going to try to stick with this season. Let's try this season. This is the game.



Kerrin Mitchell:

That was the theory. Yeah.

Tim Sarrantonio:

So what we're going to do, Dr. Froswa', is I'm going to just give a word and it's going to relate to your work at the very least. And I want you to have the word or phrase that pops into your head relating to things that are going on with you. So are you ready? Are we good?

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

Ready.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Okay. Circle.

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

Heritage Giving Circle.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Community.

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

A group of people.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Texas.

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

Big and crazy.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Okay, I'm going to fight the urge to unpack that and stick the format. Okay. Generosity,

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

Love.

Tim Sarrantonio:

2024

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

More in 24.

Tim Sarrantonio:

More in 24.



Kerrin Mitchell:

That was awesome. That was awesome. This was so fun. It really was. Thank you so much for joining us today.

Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew:

Thank you for having me. I had a really good time. Thank you all.

Kerrin Mitchell:

Well, we appreciate you very much, and our listeners can learn more about Dr. Froswa' Booker-Drew and Soulstice Consulting at drfroswabooker.com. All the information will be included in the bio, so check it out. And thank you all for listening.