

I know **maven.** now that I've been changed

mf *f* Maven Leadership Collective

CODA

Maven Leadership Collective
2024 Impact Report

M.6
(9:07)

The Equity Case: Variations on a Theme

Movement One: **Corey Davis (he|they)**, Founder
& Creative Director, Maven Leadership Collective

Movement Two: **J. Soto (he|him)**, Director
of Engagement & Operations, Leslie-Lohman
Museum of Art

Movement Three: **Maven Doris Parent (she|her)**,
Maven & Chief IDEAS Officer, The Philadelphia
Orchestra & Ensemble Arts

mp

Corey Davis (00:00):

My name is Corey Davis and I am the founder and creative director of Maven Leadership Collective. Maven works with some of our community's most trusted businesses, agencies and nonprofit organizations to help shift their culture. Over the past few years, what we've seen in the headlines are a number of organizations receding in their commitment to equity.

(00:30):

What we've seen anecdotally in our own work is that organizations that commit to equity are higher performing, morale is higher. They're able to achieve their missions more expansively and efficiently. It is our hope that by sharing quality, reliable information with practitioners, they too can build an evidence-based case for why leaders must have as part of their skill set an understanding and appreciation of how to build equitable cultures, how to develop all talent that is in their charge, and how to make sure that the way they are building systems, the way they are developing programs, the way they are conducting advocacy is in indeed something that is sustainable. The reason why we believe that equity should be seen as a skill set for every leader in an organization is because it allows us to get the complete answer.

(01:53):

I think that we've seen a receding in commitment to equity because it's hard work and it is an effort that requires daily practice. And I know that there was a lot of attention and commitment given just a few years ago, but people, I think, in our time of immediate gratification thought that we would solve racism, gender discrimination, all of the things that go into building inequitable situations solved immediately, and that's just not how it works. It is something that should be understood just as the necessity to read financial statements, or understand how to operate under certain regulations, that the values that undergird our decision making and the way that we build organizational culture are just as important.

(02:57):

So, I think too many organizations have pulled out of the game too soon before they were able to realize their full potential and to really demonstrate a clear commitment to equity. I have seen organizations that have stuck with it come to do really beautiful things that get beyond the very basic equity learning that you can do maybe by reading a book, or by Googling it to engage in really game-changing ways of reimagining how they exist, why they exist, for whom they exist. And they are thriving more today than they were prior to engaging in the work. That's why I think that everybody should be reaping the benefits of their investment in equity and that there's enough dividends for everybody to benefit from if they commit to engaging in the work for the long term ultimately. As the norms of society change, as the demographics change, it's the only way to ensure success.

(04:05):

The data shows that we need to look at multiple conditions and develop multiple responses in order to see queer and trans people of color thrive. It won't be one factor that determines whether or not folks thrive. The multifaceted approach that is suggested by the data actually aligns with what we believed in all along, that we have to build ecosystems of support in order for folks to thrive, and that there are multiple points at which you can provide support that changes the trajectory of someone's career and, therefore, their life and the quality of life.

(04:45):

I don't think that equity has to be something that people are afraid of and therefore feel that they must run from. I think the bigger threat to us individually and collectively is doing nothing. As things change, as expectations, especially from younger generations, evolve, the question is, how does our practice evolve? There's a certain urgency around this work that continues.

J. Soto (05:12):

Right around the time I joined the museum, we had been in touch with the DEIA task force and were really thinking about where it was in its history and its present. And we were in touch with Maven right around then and thinking about what might be possible for our future at the museum, but also connecting to other like-minded organizations here in New York City and beyond.

(05:39):

As a trans man living in this world right now, for me that's really feeling like I have a space of, I don't want to say comfort necessarily, but a space to be human, to be almost imperfect, where there's humor, where there's joy, where there's laughter, quiet. The full range of human possibility is a sense of unknowing delight. I know Corey always talks about delighting and failure, which is a question going back to our work with Maven. I feel like that's something that's been one circular question that we like with the staff.

(06:16):

I think in some ways it's not apart from pushing forward through an identity of being a trans-Mexican-American working-class person to just also being fluid with my identity and time. And I think trans folks are really pressed upon right now to show up in really big ways, and I don't necessarily know that we're all okay. So, I think finding spaces where you can not be okay, how am I going to show up so I can make sure that young trans kids can be themselves?

(06:53):

I think that in a time of immense change in this country and when the arts community really happy to consistently push for sustainability, and funding and all the things that arts workers and people who love and appreciate art deserve, I actually think that change is possible. I've seen amazing things happen in the arts in the last 10 years, and it's also been tough times. But I really believe that the work that Maven is doing and the work that our board is working on with Maven, I think there's also a lot of interesting work that's beginning to happen around donor cultivation. Things that are changing in philanthropy that are actually making coalition building across organizations like Maven, with the people that are on the task force actually shifting what donorship can look like and what long-term thriveability can look like, if that's even a possibility for arts institutions, and I'm excited about that.

Doris Parent (07:48):

I've been in conversations with Corey Davis and where we talked a lot about the what-ifs in an organization, and what if there was an organization that was present that was helped to empower and amplify the voices of queer and trans people of color. Maven is such a great platform for like-minded individuals to be able to support each other. One of the great things that Maven does is that it really takes a step back and really centers the voices of the leaders and amplifies those voices, particularly for queer and trans people of color and their allies. And I think that's one of the best things that Maven is really well-equipped to be able to do that, and to be able to share some of its strategies and approaches, not just for Maven and Maven's groups, but outside of Maven as well. I just think that Maven has so many offerings that it can share and other organizations could learn from.