

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

*mf* *f* Maven Leadership Collective

# CODA

The 2024 Maven Impact Report

M.3

(9:28)

## The Company We Keep Pt. 1

**Maven Pioneer Winter (he|they)**, Executive Artistic Director, Pioneer Winter Collective. **Alyssa Nitchun (she|her)**, Executive Director Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art. **J. Soto, (he|him)** Director of Engagement & Operations. Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art. **Maven. Iliana Santillan (she|her)**, Community Advocate Maven. **Gaby Garcia-Vera (all pronouns)**, Founder, Flamboyant Consulting

**Alexandra Martinez (she|her)**, Narrator & Producer.  
**Corey Davis (he|they)**, Executive Producer

*mp*

Alexandra Martinez (00:02):

What does it mean to build relationships that elevate our impact as leaders? Across the country I spoke to Mavens, artists, organizers, founders, and board members about how the interconnectedness of their organizations has shaped their relationships and their work and how it has helped them achieve their goals as leaders in their fields. Whether you are an organizer, a founder, or a member of a board, one thing is clear, relationships and trust are essential. At the end of the day, you never really know where a relationship can go, how it can grow, how it can transform you, or how it can elevate your work.

Pioneer Winter (00:53):

My name is Pioneer Winter. My title is choreographer, artist, executive, artistic director, founder, dancer. In the work that I do, it's really hard to know whether or not someone is in your corner until there's opportunity to see what this person will do. I think to be creating art, especially art with such an unabashedly queer sensibility in Florida, is very difficult, and to sustain that, that's a lot easier when you feel held by the people you're working with, and that you aren't just there for them, but they're there for you. The company we keep is about the long term. It's about developing rapport, and it's about that rapport meaning something to everyone.

(01:52):

I got involved with Maven. I got invited to their inaugural, sort of for their first cohort. They were having an event, and I attended that. It seemed just like this really interesting mixture of artists, and change-makers, and just people that look at potential new futures for queer and trans, black and brown change-makers and their allies. I reconnected with a dancer, Hector Machado. At the time, Hector was one of the inaugural Mavens, and we started talking, and Hector asked me, "Do you need a stage manager?" I was looking to create a new way of looking at dance and how we organize, both off-stage as well on-stage.

(02:44):

So I invited Hector to join as a dancer. Even though it wasn't in the role that maybe they were seeking, I think it was a role that they have grown into. I think it's no coincidence that Maven and Pioneer Winter Collective share a lot of the same collaborators. We believe in the work of the other, and we want to make sure that we're introducing the best possible people to help each other reach our goals, and do it in a way that has integrity and rigor. In a field where it feels like all people care about is the product, you lose out on all the artistry it took to get to the product, whether that's a performance, or a book, or a panel discussion, or a retreat. It's all process. It's all choreography.

Alyssa Nitchun (03:34):

My name is Alyssa Nitchun. I'm the executive director at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art. One of the beautiful shifts in language that I have gotten from Maven around community is this being able to verbalize belonging, not just being included but belonging, and really understanding on a very profound level that belonging is what drives all of us, and how that can affect the community that we're building in real time. I do feel lonely doing this work. It can be lonely to be an executive director. There's a lot of pressure to care for my team, to care for the artists who are part of the museum, to care for the community that coalesces around the museum, which is our team, which is artists, which is people who come through our doors. Being the only queer art museum in the world, that has a real urgency. Everyone who works there is deeply invested in having Leslie-Lohman be a space of radical affirmation, a space of collective meaning-making, a space where art helps us understand ourselves and imagine what's possible. It's work that really is best done in community, and again, by community [inaudible 00:05:11] togetherness, vulnerability, inclusion.

J. Soto (05:18):

My name is J. Soto. I am the director of engagement and operations here at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art in New York City. As a trans man living in this world right now, for me, that's really feeling like I have a space to be human. I think there is a lot of pride in being this jewel, this central place where so many things have happened. I think in queer community, again, bringing it back to community, if you're in queer community, it's so hard to feel alone. That doesn't mean that queer people aren't lonely as individuals, that we don't deal with loneliness, and despair, and uncertainty. But I think there is just so much history and so many generations of amazing queer artists and elders. So I think in some ways, being the only LGBTQIA+ art museum, it's hard to feel lonely, because we're connected to this electrifying history.

Iliana Santillan (06:19):

Name is Iliana Santillan. I became a Maven last year, which was one of the most amazing experiences I've had. It has really shaped the way in which I lead, shaped the way in which I carry myself. Being a Maven has awakened something in me that I didn't know existed, and I feel a sense of belonging when I'm with the other Mavens, that we can talk about culture. We can talk about lived experiences and it doesn't feel like things live in a box. We can show up as our full selves and have experiences together. And that is not something that I've been able to find in any other community. Maven has definitely helped me in my leadership, and I've found community that I didn't even know existed, honestly.

Gabriel Garcia-Vera (07:06):

My name is Gabriel Garcia-Vera. I have been involved with Maven since it was an idea. I think sometimes we stand so close to things, we don't even really think about what it means when we are a part of an ecosystem that we just exist in. The thing about Maven is that community feels iterative. I think so much about the fact that I had met Iliana 10 years ago at a funder convening practicing somatics when we were both baby organizers, and 10 years later, we're reconnecting in her cohort, me talking about the future. That within itself led to the evolution of us doing more work in this major election year. And in that, knowing that we have each other makes all the world of difference getting to the other side.

(08:00):

We step in and out of mentorship. We are in deep community and reflection with each other. Sometimes, the most powerful relationships are the most iterative. We may not talk for six months, and then one day the phone rings and you're like, "Oh, hey," and it's three hours, or it's 30 minutes, but the impact of that conversation lasts for years. I think the thing that I frequently come back to in Maven is I really love to just come back to each other, always. We come back to each other over and over again because we want to, not because we need to. It's about joy and rest. Do we understand how we actually recharge our bodies? Oftentimes, the first things we sacrifice are connection, because we say, "Oh, okay," because we don't have time to connect. And in Maven, I think there's an understanding that without connection, we can't actually do anything.

Alexandra Martinez (08:55):

Building relationships that elevate our impact as leaders means showing up for each other. It means nurturing, trust, empathy, and joy. It means connecting, growing, and evolving together. Because in the end, the company we keep defines the legacy we leave behind.