

I know, I know, I know that I've been changed

CODA

Maven Leadership Collective
2024 Impact Report



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The 2024 Maven Impact Report

M.1

(14:58)

Perpetual Sabbatical

Corey Davis (he|they), Founder & Creative
Director, Maven Leadership Collective

Alexandra Martinez, (she|her) Producer

Corey Davis (00:00):

I am Corey Davis, the creative director and founder of Maven Leadership Collective. Centering respite and fortification and holding space for it in our social practice isn't easy. It is a fundamental restructuring of how we build power together, and for that, it will require a consistent daily practice of saying no, of pursuing an evidence-based approach, of really making space for rest, for getting aligned and not just these time-bound artificial pressures of action and doing and looking like we have it together. Instead of posing the question, do we have the capacity for this? How long can we take to figure this out in order to get it right? And if not, why are we doing it?

(01:32):

The existing way of operating is not working. The things that the nonprofit sector incentivizes are at direct odds with my body, with my health, with my relationships, with how I want to take up space in the world, and so it's just not sustainable. Reimagining really, to me is the only option, but it's so hard. It's like turning a cruise ship in a different direction in the middle of a storm, but it has to be done. I'm not completely sure what a perpetual sabbatical could and should look like, but I want to claim space for discovery and to think about it and to figure it out.

(02:16):

A friend of mine told me some years back that we should not have a life that we need vacation from. At the time, I really didn't know what he was talking about. Of course we need vacation. Of course we need a break. But what he was saying was something I really didn't understand until very recently that why can't we build a life that we don't have to escape from? So if that is true, then how do we build a career that we don't have to escape from? How is it that we always find time for nourishing ourselves, for learning, for deep rest, reflection, exploration, experimentation, all of the things that people look forward to in this sabbatical, but you have to wait years or sometimes never. Sometimes people don't get them. So how do we build a career and a life and a practice that perpetually nourishes us and that we don't have to save up and grind ourselves down to eventually hopefully get some kind of deep reflective piece.

(03:30):

In 2025, I'd really like for Maven to play and experiment with foundational elements of building a perpetual sabbatical as the core practice of how we achieve impact with leaders. I think it's time to have a radical departure from what we currently know, and that might be scary, it might be liberating, but I think a little crazy is what's needed in experimentation. In terms of health, I had heart failure in 2018. The doctors still are not exactly sure why, but I do know that what contributed to me ending up in Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, in the ICU with my heart functioning at 10% what it should be around the Christmas holidays, was that I just thought I was tired. I just thought that the work was so important as an emerging nonprofit leader and founder that if I just worked harder, that's what was required and I could rest later.

(04:35):

And I kept saying that for months. And in fact my heart had started failing several months earlier in September. The shortness of breath that I was feeling, the inability to sleep, the choking feeling eventually was all because I kept saying, I will rest later. Similar to this idea of either vacation or sabbatical or taking the professional development that we need, the nonprofit sector says, "But first, wear yourself down before you do any of that other stuff. Let us require your health as entrance for staying and being elevated in this sector." And that's largely for black and brown folks that have to pay that price to sit at that table. And then you get there and you realize you've just bought entrance into a burning building.

(05:35):

One of our mavens, Linda Chung, who is an artist and a deep thinker, said to me one time, "Corey, one of the satisfying things about being an artist is that people expect you to be a little bit different, a little bit

off, to think in a more radical way." And as an ideas lab, I think people have come to expect that from us as well. It has been a difficult journey as an organization being seen as doing things differently, that we will look to fix it even if something's not broken. That's just our orientation. So when we propose some kind of idea like a perpetual sabbatical, we expect that will immediately be understood or embraced. But our job is to innovate, to interrogate and to dismantle the things that are not working for us and find more creative solutions to failing systems. We are in a perpetual state of attack, of threat, of violence, and the more we do this constrict and release and constrict and release, that's not a healthy way of achieving any kind of peace.

(06:46):

In Maven's mission, we talk about providing greater ease for those we serve. And the concept of a perpetual sabbatical that we're experimenting with is its natural evolution. An extension of that. To be less encumbered in our social impact practice is not to be without responsibility. In fact, expanding the aperture of what respite is and what it requires, rigor, integrity, and consistent practice, actually allows us to double down on our responsibility, on our commitment on what some might say is a calling with even greater clarity. And so if we adopt strategies that realize we always have to be in a state of respite and fortification that paces the oppressive structures, the better off we'll be.

(07:50):

In 2025, we will start to say goodbye to some of the things that we have come to know and cherish so much. Part of the reason why this report is called CODA is because we want to look at how to take a departure from the familiar refrain and introduce something new and unexpected before we come to the conclusion. In 2025, we will see the last edition of the Maven Leadership Cohort for a while. We have built a very strong community of learners in multiple states, in multiple disciplines, and there's not a need, one, for an impact lab that specializes in ideas to keep doing the same thing over and over again. It will be our 10th one in eight years, I think we've demonstrated proof of concept. I think we have shown how to create belonging and to invest in leaders who are usually left out of the equation.

(08:52):

After 2025, we will turn more inward and spark creativity and collaboration among the existing learning community, use our capacity to better support the existing mavens. The second way is that we will do less so that we can move deeper and we will move to a model in which all of our learning will be around intense topics for short bursts of time. We will travel to be with experts in their field and we will bring our resources and our community of learners to that place, and we will learn together.

(09:29):

There'll be four retreat style formats that will anchor our programming year. They will include wellness and well-being, catalytic funding, and they'll include space to learn in a more advanced way. So we never wanted to be leadership 101, but because there are not a sufficient number of organizations like ours, we've had to expand to be multiple things to multiple people. Black-led organizations don't get the luxury of being single-minded in their pursuit of the mission, that's reserved for white-led organizations because they are sufficiently resourced, because philanthropy still trusts white leadership more than it does Black leadership. So we had to expand our reach in order to sustain and in order to be truly supportive of our community.

(10:23):

But now we built a new community. What about them? They have scaled. They have invested. They have grown. Over eight years, we've seen a number of our mavens go on to achieve things that they never thought that they could. We need to revisit them and make good on our promise for a lifelong support. So that's what our focus will be moving beyond 2025. And I'm excited to experiment and play and learn from our mavens, learn from other people who are doing this work, other organizations who are committed to centering queer and trans social impact leaders of color about what that form and texture should take.

(11:04):

One time earlier in the summer of 2024, we were at Maven Camp in Costa Rica and we were thinking about one of these big ideas about how do we reimagine our social practice. The clouds had gone away and the sun, even though it was the end of the day, was peeking out in the most radiant fashion. And we ran down the street to the beach and all of us got our feet wet in the waves and just were embracing and laughing and giggling because there was a certain delight in this unexpected tree at the end of a very intense day. And one of our mavens turned to me and said, "I never knew that running a nonprofit could feel like this." At once I was feeling great that we could hold space for her in this way, but simultaneously, I felt a deep sense of sadness that he was a tremendously bright, generous person who hadn't even contemplated that we should be nourished, that we can work hard, but also have a place of being nourished and supported. Why isn't that just the default?

(12:47):

So many nonprofit leaders, our charge is to provide expressions of care to entire communities. Where is it written that we should not then receive the same level of care that we provide to others? Why do we kick that down the road? Why do we hold that out for other people, not ourselves, not for each other even? I really don't believe you can get to delight without facing the icky stuff. So people think I'm weird because I say, "How do we find delight in failure?" How is it that now I am thinking more about where do we have a place to talk about the profound disappointment that we carry with us at work? Where's the repository for that? We say show up and bring your whole shelf, but we don't really have a place to express disappointment in the integrity of our institutions or the values of our bosses.

(13:46):

There's no place for that and keep your job, but there has to be a healthy digestion of those things that we really don't want to deal with, like disappointment, like failure to be able to inhabit and embrace that full deep belly laughter that comes with delight. I think that we get to delight by planning for it intentionally or at least allowing for it to have space. And if we're moving too fast, we're doing too many things, we have too many commitments, there's no way that delight can sneak up on you, and delight does have to sneak up on us, but we can be intentional about moving in a way that it can sneak up on us. You have to expect it, and you have to make room for it. But if we're running at a million miles an hour, if we are doing things that we know we shouldn't be, being around people that we shouldn't be, there's no way for delight to come and tap us on the shoulder.

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M.2

(6:50)

Over My Head

Maven Laurah Merisier (she|they), Vocalist
Jasmine Williams (she|her), Vocalist
Miriam King (she|her), Vocalist

Chauncey Riley (he|him), Drums. Muzelle,
(she|her), Violin. Joshua Walton (he|him), Bass

J'von Brown (he|him), Vocalist & Vocal Director.
Kendall "King" Friday (he|him), Keyboard & Music
Director. Maven Kunya Rowley (he|him), Artistic
Director, Hued Songs

Corey Davis (he|they), Executive Producer

MUSIC:

Over.

Over my head, I hear music in the air.

Over.

Over my head, I hear music in the air.

Over.

Over my head, I hear music in the air.

There must be a God somewhere.

Over my head.

Over my head.

I hear singing in the air.

Over my head, I hear singing in the air.

Say, over my head.

Sing your song.

I hear singing in the air.

Say, there must be a God somewhere.

Say, over my head.

Over my head.

I hear singing in the air.

Say, over my head, I hear singing in air.

Sing your song.

Over my head, I hear singing in the air.

Say, there must be a God somewhere.

Say, there must be a God somewhere.

You know I know.

You know I know.

You know I know.

I know, I know.

I know, I know, I know that I've been changed.

I know, I know, I know that I've been changed.

You don't believe that I've been redeemed.

You know, angels in heaven done signed my name.

Follow me down to that Jordan stream.

You know, angels in heaven done signed my name.

To get in the water, but the water was cold.

You know, angels in heaven done signed my name.

It chilled my body but not my soul.

You know, angels in heaven done signed my name.

They put my name in the Bible, they put my name in the book.
You know, angels in heaven done signed my name.
I got a reason to rejoice, a reason to rejoice.
You know, angels in heaven done signed my name.
You know I know.
You know I know.
That I've been changed.
That I've been changed.
You know I know.
You know I know.
That I've been changed.
That I've been changed.
I'm not the same.

I'm not the same.
I'm not the same.
I'm not the same.
I walk in faith.
I walk in faith.
I walk in faith.
I know, I know, I know that I've been changed.
I know, I know, I know that I've been changed.
I know, I know, I know that I've been changed.
I know, I know, I know that I've been changed.

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

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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

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.

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M.4

(5:19)

The Company We Keep Pt. 2 (board remix)

Jazmyn Beauchan (she|her), Narrator. **Diane Felicio (she|her)**, Board President Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art. **Maven Doris Parent (she|her)**, Chief IDEAS Officer, The Philadelphia Orchestra & Ensemble Arts | Board Chair, Maven Leadership Collective. **Maven Pioneer Winter (he|they)**, Executive Artistic Director, Pioneer Winter Collective

Corey Davis (he|they), Executive Producer

Jazmyn Beauchan (00:12):

The relationships we build and the company we keep define the impact we have and the legacy we leave. This is especially true for boards, which play a central role in shaping organizational culture and driving lasting impact. As you're about to hear from leaders and board members supported by Maven in Florida and New York, trust and strong relationships are foundational to effective board leadership. When board members' values align, there is greater cohesion, clearer communication, and a unified strategic vision, all of which are essential for consistent effectiveness and transformative impact.

Diane Felicio (00:53):

My name is Diane Felicio, and I am president of the board of the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art in New York City. The role of the board is to assure that the organization that you're serving is functioning in a successful way. You have to be able to hire a strong and successful executive director or CEO. That's the board's responsibility. I keep coming back to a culture of trust or a culture that is characterized by trust, and really, it takes time.

(01:32):

I don't know what it was during COVID that had people maybe opt out of board service, but it seems like organizations are really struggling with that. What is it that we want in our board membership, in our board structure? How do we focus on retention? How do we focus on building a pipeline so you have a robust board leadership team? But it is not something to rush in. It is not something to invite people on because somebody recommended them. It's certainly about shared values, shared mission of people who care about the mission and values of the museum.

(02:09):

Practically speaking, it's about people who are able and will make a commitment to dedicating time to being on the board, people who will show up in all the ways that you can mean that: time, talent, treasure. So I'm really looking for folks who will make a commitment and hang around for a little bit but also help us build the board and bring on other people.

Doris Parent (02:34):

My name is Doris Parent. I am the board chair for the Maven Leadership Collective, and outside of Maven, I am the Chief IDEAS Officer, which stands for Inclusion, Diversity, and Access Strategies at the Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts.

(02:49):

One of the things that I find really appealing about Maven and knowing that when you're with a cohort, it really doesn't end when your cohort typically ends. There's just a beginning when you're first introduced to each other. I think that one of the things that is great outside of Maven is because I'm in a very specific niche within arts and culture here in Philadelphia, but we're worldwide, we're all striving for the same thing, and I think that I'm able to tap into a lot of different resources that Maven may not be able to and be able to help make those connections with other arts administrators. And it's just a beautiful relationship that continues to blossom and change and evolve in time.

Pioneer Winter (03:38):

Pioneer Winter Collective went a long time with really not having a very active board. It was a board by name, but not having any regular meeting, weren't really aware of what I was going through, what I was having to do to keep the company afloat. So when there was this opportunity to revitalize the board and spend some time focusing on that, Corey was one of the first people I thought of. I was just reflecting this past week on how incredibly held I felt by my collaborators to get the grants, to dream the dreams that keep you excited about continuing.

(04:22):

That's all 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, and finding someone that really understands the weight that you put on yourself, as a founder. I see Corey as being an alchemist in his own way with how he is able to create a sense of ensemble within a cohort, to push while also at the same time, center care and reflection and rest, that it doesn't have to be one thing or the other. I realized from Corey, it's not only the alchemy of the company you keep, but also how you are with yourself and can you treat yourself with the same empathy and love that you do the folks that you surround yourself with. And remembering that you can't be good to the company you keep unless you're also good to yourself. Like a constellation, it's all relationships.

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M.5
(4:07)

U-Know
(Over My Head remix)

Diego Melgar (he|him), Producer

Marty Quinn (he|him), Bass

MUSIC:

Angels in heaven, then sign my name.

Come on.

(singing)

I know.

(singing)

Come on. Break.

Come on. Break.

Come on. Break.

Come on. Break.

(singing)

Come on.

Angels in heaven, then sign my name.

(singing)

Angels in heaven, then sign my name.

(singing)

Come on. Break.

Come on. Break.

Come on. Break.

Come on. Break.

(singing)

I know. I know. I know.

(singing)

Come on. Break.

Come on. Break.

Come on. Break.

Come on.

I know.

Come on.

Angels in heaven, then sign my name.

Angels in heaven, then sign my name.

Come on. Break.

Come on. Break.

I know. I know.

Come on. Break.

Come on.

Come on.

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

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The 2024 Maven 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.

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Maven Leadership Collective

CODA

The 2024 Maven Impact Report

M.7

(3:22)

You Can Lead A Horse

Maven Iliana Santillan, (she|her),

Community Advocate

Maven Nadege Green (she|her), Producer

Iliana Santillan (00:00):

My name is Iliana Santillan.

Speaker 2 (00:03):

[foreign language 00:00:04]. You can come over here in the shade.

Iliana Santillan (00:06):

So I was really nervous. I haven't been horseback riding in I don't even know how long. And the one time I did it, I had someone hold the horse. So when we got there and I saw the horses, I was just like, whoa. Thank you. The rancher person, he was like, "You." And then I was just assigned to Bruna, and then the other caretaker of the horses was like, "Oh, her name is Bruna."

Speaker 3 (00:30):

This is Jama Breesa, Bruma.

Iliana Santillan (00:35):

Bruma. And when I got on her, I was just like, okay. And I was talking to her in Spanish and caressing her. I was like, all right, we're doing this. And just really trying to bond with her and figuring out how we were going to go through this journey. I didn't know what was ahead. I had no idea there were uphill, downhill.

(00:56):

I felt like my horse kind of absorbed a little bit of my personality. I'm an Aries and I lead, and I felt like Bruna was right away up at the front, but then there was a moment where we had to slow down. She went off, she was just going downhill, and she went off. It's time to scale back and pace. She stopped and I took a really deep breath and I was like, what, what was that? And it was just like an analogy to my life. I'm going at a pace that I can't go and I don't know the path and it's scary. And so understanding that it's okay to stop, and I need to stop and I need to pace, and I will still enjoy the journey.

(01:45):

I was seeing lots of trees. I was seeing the dirt, the rocks, and I was just in awe at the scenery and the complexity of the sea, and then it was the jungle. And just seeing it all together in once was really helpful. And then I also really enjoyed not leading. It was really cool to just be in the back and just waiting for folks and for once, not feeling the pressure.

(02:22):

I think I don't give myself permission. I feel like everything to me is fast-forward. Everything has to be fast-forward. I never really stop. Even for me to stand still, it's really challenging to just stop and pause and breathe and drink water. So I feel like it was just really challenging to allow myself to do that. And just that simple lesson, horseback riding one day has such a huge impact on what my future will look like. I know I have to stop. I know I have to drink water. I know that it will feel like I'm going to fall off, but I'm not going to fall off because I got this and I have control over it, and it's okay. Nobody's going to... And Bruna just felt like, I don't know, again, the universe works in mysterious ways. It was just like a beautiful match, and I felt like we understood each other and she taught me something that I really needed to learn.

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The 2024 Maven Impact Report

M.8

(3:58)

Eternal

Maven Laurah Merisier (she|they), Vocalist,
Founder, Miami Soundspace

Maven Arsimmer McCoy (she|her),
Multidisciplinary Artist

Corey Davis (he|they), Executive Producer

Kendall "King" Friday (he|him), Producer

A Place for You, courtesy of Melanie DeMore

Laurah Merisier (00:00):

Spirits made a place for you.

(00:09):

Love has made a place for you.

(00:18):

Grace has made a place for you where everything is new.

(00:18):

Spirits made.

(00:18):

Love has made.

(00:18):

Grace has made a place for you.

Arsimmer McCoy (00:59):

All these little deaths going to turn me phoenix. Going to make me immortal, turn me timeless. Look how these blades slide out my back to make room for wings, feet leaving Earth to burn and birth again, never as easy as the last time. Always as gruesome, always at the expense of an organ or a memory.

(01:28):

Shape-shifter.

Laurah Merisier (01:30):

Shape-shifter.

Arsimmer McCoy (01:32):

Transformer.

Laurah Merisier (01:32):

Transformer.

Arsimmer McCoy (01:32):

Skin changer.

Laurah Merisier (01:32):

Skin changer.

Arsimmer McCoy (01:40):

All these little deaths going to make me think I'm a supreme being, spirit favored and infinite. If I flat-line and make my own heartbeat again, does that make me surgeon, God, or witness? Year after year, a test and testimony. Every day, a vendetta to get my brain back, get me new vocal cords so I can prophesize to the dream killers once again.

(02:08):

Mutator.

Laurah Merisier (02:09):

Mutator.

Arsimmer McCoy (02:10):

Innovator.

Laurah Merisier (02:11):

Innovator.

Arsimmer McCoy (02:15):

There are dead bodies everywhere on this sphere. Dreading tomorrow because today felt like flood. Dead bodies waiting for water, looking like Lazarus dancing under dirt, clawing through peat to reach surface, punching through to sky, and screaming the dust from their lungs.

(02:38):

Dead bodies everywhere. Shedding habits and addiction. Lovers and poison. Dead bodies dropping doubt to adopt new systems. You will hear the unhealed ancestor in your left ear and your mother's prayers in the right. Heed them both. A dead body that listens will remember how to walk again.

(03:05):

All these little deaths just going to make me invincible, indestructible, enduring, eternal.

Laurah Merisier (03:53):

Eternal.

(03:53):

Spirit made.

(03:53):

Love has made.

(03:53):

Grace has made a place for you.

(03:54):

Where everything, everything, everything is new.

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The 2024 Maven Impact Report

M.9

(6:52)

All These Little Deaths/ Eternal Reprise

Maven Laurah Merisier (she|they), Founder,
Miami Soundspace

Aquira "Kiwi" Hall (she/her), Death & Birth Doula

Alexandra Martinez (she|her), Producer

Laurah Merisier (00:01):

My name is Laurah Merisier, and I am the Founder and Executive Artistic Director of Miami Sound Space. The song that Arsimer and I worked on started as a seed with this prompt, "All of these little deaths."

(00:19):

One of the great producers that worked with us on this project, King Friday, he's titled it Eternal. In Miami Sound Space, we have a chapter of Threshold Choir called Threshold Singers of Miami Sound Space, and these singers sing at the bedside of patients in hospice care, and palliative care, and other end-of-life services. And through Threshold Choir, the international organization, we have access to a repertoire of about 500 songs that are appropriate and have been vetted for singing at bedside in various languages that represent different spiritual and religious beliefs.

(00:54):

When I think of the little deaths that got me to where I am that have been kind of the catalyst for who I was to become or who I am to become, the things that come to mind first are the relationships that have come and gone. I try my best to honor the fact that relationships, these people were once intertwined in my life, and even if we are no longer in community or if they're no longer with us, honoring the role that they played when they were a part of my life. I think everyone that we meet teaches us something, even if it takes us time to process what it is that they've taught us. Those seeds that they've planted in us and through the relationship that we had shapes who we are in some way.

(01:42):

Two of my grandfathers passed away. In the last three years, I was witness to their withering away and seeing them transform into something else. That has inspired me to want to understand the process of dying, and then this practice of singing to my patients and singing with my fellow choir members has really helped me understand what living needs to be.

Aqaira "Kiwi" Hall (02:17):

So a death doula can take on many roles. You can be a death companion, which sometimes people just don't want to die alone, so you can be there with them in their final moments. You can do death meditations. In those, I help the person who is grieving their loss of their loved one. My name is Aqaira Hall. Most people know me as Kiwi. I am a death doula.

(02:45):

Beforehand, I like to take a nice herbal shower or bath, if I can. I really like it because it makes my skin soft, and it is a calming scent for me. Whether it's at my house or their house, I have this blanket, this blue blanket that I take, and I lay it out for the people to lay down for the meditation. I spray it with this lavender spray to help you calm down, and I play the love frequency, the 532 frequency for them, and then I guide them through a meditation.

(03:22):

After they go through the meditation, oftentimes, while going through the meditation, a lot of times, they cry, and that's completely up to them if they want to cry, if they want to yell. It's their space to do whatever they need to get through this process. So many people experience major deaths, and even I learned the term that people experience little deaths.

(03:51):

Little deaths are career changes, friendship endings. When you have to leave yourself, shed an old part of yourself because a lot of people don't talk about when you grow as a person and you have to leave the other part of you behind. Because of your growth, oftentimes, you grieve the old person that you were. I think we all need places of joy where we can reflect on how good life is, because even though we're going

through something hard and we are grieving through a process, a lot of times, it's hard to see the other side of it. And if you can go to a place that brings you joy, where you can say, "Okay. What's something good that's going on?" You're just going through a hard time, which doesn't last forever. You won't go unscathed of someone dying around you.

(04:39):

When you experience a little death, you should give yourself grace, because you are still a person who is growing and learning. If it's a big death, find something that gives you joy. Something that I learned to do ahead of time, I have a list of things that gives me joy, and maybe you want to tape it somewhere where you will have it as a random reminder that, "Hey, this and this gives me joy." It doesn't have to be a long list, just something that you know that you can go to always being have joy. Also, have two different happy playlists, a playlist of songs that just instantly makes you happy. That makes a big difference.

(05:24):

If you're going through a little death or a big death, just give yourself compassion. So give yourself grace and be compassionate to yourself because you need it. Why be hard on yourself when so many other things are already hard on you?

Laurah Merisier (05:40):

I think when people are passing away, our nervous systems are so heightened, and we are moving so quickly, and we are attending to their needs, that there isn't really enough space to let the feelings process in our bodies. And our songs give people the opportunity to sit in the transition and to experience all that is to be experienced, which is challenging, but important to the healing process that follows grief.

MUSIC (06:09):

Spirits make a place for you.

(06:09):

Love has made a place for you.

(06:10):

Love has made a place for you.

(06:27):

Grace has made a place for you.

(06:29):

Grace has made a place for you.

(06:31):

Where everything is new.

(06:31):

Where everything is new.