

Season 2, Episode 3: The Unifier

Tony: Right now we need more unifiers. We need more people that want to unify across different bridges, whether it's rural and urban, whether it's Democrat/Republican, whether it's Black/white, male/woman—regardless of what the binary is, I think, it's so important as we move forward.

Grace: Welcome to *Giving Done Right*, a podcast on everything you need to know to make an impact with your charitable giving. I'm Grace Nicolette.

Phil: And I'm Phil Buchanan.

Grace: Hey Phil.

Phil: Hi Grace. How are you?

Grace: I'm doing well.

Phil: We're going to talk today to someone I think we both consider a friend and colleague, member of the CEP board, Tony Richardson. He's executive director of the Nord Family Foundation. I think I first connected with him about five years ago in Ohio when he was in a program officer role. And he's just a brilliant guy.

Grace: I'm so excited because every time that I'm in a room where Tony is speaking, I just come away learning so much. You're going to hear his incredible personal story. He's a really out of the box thinker, and I think that there's a lot of takeaways that he has for donors on how to be more effective.

Phil: Absolutely. Here's Tony Richardson.

Tony: Hey, thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

Phil: So good to be with you, Tony. We met a number of years ago in Oberlin, Ohio, and you were a program officer at the Nord Family Foundation at the time. You're now the executive director. I've heard you talk about your own story, openly and publicly, and how that led you to sort of the professional trajectory that you then launched into.

Can you just tell us a little bit about that? Who are you? How'd you grow up? How does that inform where you are now?

Tony: Absolutely. As we talked that summer, I remember mentioning never meeting my biological father, my mom being about three months pregnant when he left her and she decided to forge ahead and give birth, right? And so, I have an older sister whose about 18 months older than me. And we grew up impoverished, like, when I was born into poverty, I was born, my mom was collecting welfare benefits, and we sort of bounced around, we never were stable. As I got older and started to get into school, grade school and the like, I'd say maybe fifth grade, summer of '93, July 9th, July 10th, the front page of the newspaper: drug deal goes sour. And my mom's boyfriend at the time was murdered and my mom disappeared. And I remember that summer, it was around this time, interestingly, every year around this time, I have this moment, it's like this traumatic experience, the 4th of July, NBA Finals, right? Back to that moment. Well, my mom disappeared. We were living in an apartment on 32nd Street in Elyria Avenue in Lorain, really impoverished town, Rustbelt city, outside of Cleveland. I remember living in this apartment after this all occurred and spending that summer squatting, sleeping at different people's homes, going to the summer parks—in the parks they had the Summer Fun is what it was called. And they would feed kids, you'd play games. And so I had a whole routine, right? I'd wake up, I'd go to friends, we'd do different things, I'd go to the park and interestingly, some of those same programs from the parks were supported by the Nord Family Foundation.

Grace: Wow.

Tony: Right? And not even knowing the Nord family, but knowing back then I would go to these parks and they would have food and I would like take extra, right, because that's how it would get through the summer if I couldn't stay at one of my friend's homes. And then eventually I moved in with a friend, an aunt, stayed with another friend. And in school, it was around fifth grade, I remember going into school and just being really quiet, flying under the radar, doing my work, not getting in trouble because I didn't want anyone to know what was going on at home. And I started hanging with the wrong people, right? Our neighborhood was infested with guns and drugs and violence and gangs. I remember being in eighth grade, police come, I'm apprehended, arrested for a charge—I'm 14 years old—for a gun charge. I remember telling the officers, like, "Hey, there's no gun residue on my hands. Why are you arresting me? Let me go." and they're like, "oh, you're a smart one" alright? They just were like, "you're a smart one. We're going to put you in the back of this paddy wagon." And so I went downtown. They couldn't release me because I had no one to call. It was a juvenile, right? I was an unaccompanied juvenile. And I remember sitting in this cell at 14 years old just feeling just defeated, powerless. I was angry. I was mad. Nobody was there to help me.

And I remember telling myself, like, when I get out of here, you will never see me again, right? I'm going to go do something. I'm going to be somebody. I'm going to go help the communities that I care about. I really didn't have a traditional childhood, so I wasn't sheltered from much. So I really understood what was going on in our community. I knew that no one retired from drugs, selling drugs, or just chronic imprisonment. And I didn't want that life for myself. And so I remember, you know, eventually turning things around, getting into honors programs, working my tail off in school, changing my friends. And that was difficult, right? Trying to like chart this path when everyone else is doing something differently and you're not seeing anyone around you that was quote unquote successful or saw themselves outside of our neighborhood. And so, got into the honors track, went through junior high school, a high school, college, and then law school. I was homeless through that entire time. And all during the times I was in school, I took internships that would provide housing and food, just because I didn't have anywhere to go, and my dorm was my home, right? And so I realized when I got out of school, like, this was bigger than me. I wasn't going to school and doing these things for myself. I was doing it because I ultimately wanted to help the communities that I came from. I saw myself as a person who had a story, who had some experience, and that could help younger people who were going through similar situations. And I just wanted to be involved in my community, wherever that community was, I wanted to be involved. It's all—this is what gets me up every day. Like, I don't feel like it's a job. Like I always tell people, like, I don't work, right? This is my *life's* work. I was going to be doing something similarly no matter what my title was or what organization I worked for.

And the Nord Family Foundation actually supported the Center for Service and Learning at Oberlin College and supported this program called the Bonner Scholar Program. It's for first generation college students, and the idea was to get first generation college students connected to service-learning projects. And I got into that program and now I'm the director of the Nord Family Foundation, right? And so like—

Grace: I love it.

Tony: It's just, it's just amazing, it's amazing how these things can happen. And I never spoke to the architects of the Foundation, but they were investors, right? They built businesses, right? And they betted on the long game. And so when you talk about investing in leadership, you don't know how that's gonna work out, but if you don't make that investment, you're not going to create the next leaders of a community, right? So I'm just always amazed by how thoughtful they were, how they invested. But for that investment, I wouldn't have been a

part of that program, and I definitely wouldn't have been sitting here today having this conversation.

Phil: And nobody could blame you for one second if you had said, "get me out of here, I'm going to go to Goldman Sachs or go be a lawyer at a big corporate firm, because I want to turn the page." And you didn't do that. I mean, you're, I think, still living pretty close to where you grew up. 10, 15, 20 minutes, something like that.

Tony: About a half an hour.

Phil: Half an hour, okay. And so you decided, you want to be back close to that community that you came from. And so tell us about what you do now, and what even is the Nord Family Foundation, and like, how does the work of the Nord Family Foundation today relate back to your own story or to the story of maybe people in the community today who are facing some of the same kind of challenges that you faced in the '90s?

Tony: That's a great question. The Foundation, it's seated here in Amherst, Ohio, again, which is about 35 minutes southwest. The Foundation does grant making in Northeast Ohio; Greater Boston Metro Denver; Columbia, South Carolina; and then a small region, the Finger Lake region—Upstate New York, Gates County, or Penn Yan, New York.

And the Foundation focuses on supporting projects that bring opportunity to the disadvantaged, strengthen the bonds of family, and improve the quality of people's lives. And that's been their mission since 1988. And within that mission, there are program areas that they sort of focus in—it's education, arts and culture, civic affairs, and health and social services. And I will honestly say that the work looks different in different communities based upon just like the needs of those respective communities, one. And then, two, opportunities to leverage other funds in those communities, learnings that we leverage from different communities, talent, just resources, talent being a resource that, again, we really respond to what the needs of the community are. And we really take this approach of, our partners know best and think about our work, not from "it's top down," but really as a true partner, that's authentically connected, and try to support the needs of our partners as they see it, not as what we see or what we think is necessary.

Phil: I mean, is that a value that you've brought to the table or do you think that because of your own experience or do you think that's a value that was there? You know, talk about that.

Tony: That's a value that has been here and it comes from the framers of the Foundation who also had that same spirit around how they engaged employees of the Nordson Corporation. So what's amazing is that I get a chance to talk to some of these employees who have retired or who knew Eric and Evan Nord. And they talk about how much they listened to people and how they came down from the corporate offices and be on the manufacturing floor and would go to dinners and support in ways that traditional employers didn't. There's been this legacy of just being on the ground and connected to community. I mean, they served on city council, planning commissions, school boards, so they, outside of their monetary sort of contributions, they've always had this nonmonetary approach to giving that sort of even preceded the Foundation. And so when I came to the Foundation, it just so aligned and spoke to who I was, and that's why I came. And that's why I'm still here, because of that mirroring of my personal mission and my own constitution, and how they approach and do the work.

Grace: That's great. Tony, it's a family foundation and you have a multi-generational board and there's a wide range of ideological perspectives. How does a family with such diverse ages, experiences and ideological perspectives work together effectively? And how do you facilitate that?

Tony: Yeah, so I think all families have a range or a spectrum of ideological or even political ideals, right? We focus on the work and my job to facilitate that is tied to what's happening on the ground and bringing our partners into the conversation, bringing the people they serve into the conversation. So now it transcends personal politics to think about like the institution, the Foundation as an institution. And how do we make sure this organization is responding to what's really happening in the world and being that place where our partners, regardless of where they stand, can see themselves, and able to bring their projects, their work, what they're hearing, what keeps them up at night, and centering that in our work so that we don't have time to discuss our personal politics. It's like, we should be focusing on what's happening in our communities and what's real.

I'll give examples. We've recently just passed our board meeting, annual meeting. We do work and support organizations across this sort of wide spectrum of geographical footprint. We brought leaders of Latinx communities serving organizations from Boston; Lorain city, which, by the way, has the second largest percentage of Puerto Rican's per capita, behind New York City, right; and then Denver, a group from Denver, to talk about COVID-19 impact on Latinx communities. After that conversation, I received phone calls from my board, from different people on the board that stand, one could say, on different

sides of the political aisle, but again, they both spoke to the needs of those communities, what was happening, and how they so appreciated hearing directly from the people who were responding—

Grace: Hm.

Tony: —Who didn't shut down. Who are going through post-traumatic syndrome from dealing with being on the ground, contracting COVID, having workforce reductions, being asked and called to do so much above and beyond their mission because they work with a particular demographic but when crises happen, and they're always in constant crises, right, our communities in some cases seem to put those communities last. And so these organizations have to step up. And so what does that stepping up look like? How are we supporting their mental health and wellness? So our grantmaking, I'm pushing on just philanthropists in general, as we think about giving post-pandemic, how are we thinking about supporting and strengthening organizations in a different way? Do all of our partners have livable wage salaries? You know, do they have benefits? Can they take PTO? Right?

Phil: There, there's something really, really profound about just getting people to listen to each other and to connect as humans. And it's so difficult right now because we are in such a polarized place as a country. And we have experienced all of this focus and attention on racial injustice, systemic racism. And then we are experiencing this profound, pronounced, coordinated backlash with people orchestrating protests about critical race theory or whatever else. And if we could just break through and get people to speak to each other, I don't want to sound naive, but at least there is a possibility to open some hearts and minds and get people, like in your anecdote, on different sides of the ideological divide to see some of the same truths. And I just wish we could figure out how to do more of that.

Grace: I think, to me, it speaks a lot to your leadership, Tony, to actually create space for those conversations. So I want to double click on this for a moment. How do you think about bridging difference? You're located in a state, Ohio, that's very divided, whether it's red and blue, rural/urban, how do you find common ground and how do you think about the work in a state and a country that's very polarized and that polarization can affect your ability to get work done at the Foundation? I've heard you speak about this, and I've learned a ton from you about it. So I'd love for you to share a little bit more.

Tony: Absolutely. Just to be transparent prior to coming to the Foundation, I was a top vote getter, democratic primary than a top voter again, in a general

election, I believe has been years ago. But nonetheless voted, elected as a Democrat, served two terms before stepping down to come to the Foundation.

Phil: And Tony, that was the Lorain City Council.

Tony: Yes, I was an at-large councilman, so I ran city-wide. Absolutely. And—good memory, Phil, that's awesome. Well, right after that, I was appointed by the governor and our superintendent of our state, which are Republicans, to chair an academic distress commission, right? And again, I think it's important to note that I think we wanted the same things: better academic outcomes for kids who were living in traditionally underperforming public schools that are predominantly students of color. So I've always been able to work across the aisle and I think sometimes what happens is that we get so caught up in partisanship that it's hard for us to see who supports certain issues and how do we work with that particular person and their constituency or their supporters to get what we need done. I always talk about these binaries, right? And it's like, if I'm a D, then I have to operate this way. If I'm a Republican, I have to operate this way. If I'm independent, then I stand back, right? But I think it's so important that there are things that we can't be neutral on, there are certain issues that we have to push on, and I think here at the Foundation, we've been really thoughtful about how we center our partners voices, who are also constituents of our elected officials as well. And when we talk about other iterations of public dollars, whether it be, you know, foundation funds, the governmental funds at the local, state, federal level, and just, leadership, right, and meeting the moment. It's hard to turn your back. And I think nationally, there's a lot of conversation that we see and it's really been hard for our federal government, but I think at the state, actually more at the local level than even at some of the state level, you see a lot of partnering a lot of community coalition building, but those conversations don't make national news. And so I think while we're watching and we have these crises around systemic racism and injustice and COVID, and all the different things we're seeing, we also have a crisis around media, and how we're reporting, and media literacy. Right now we need more unifiers. We need more people that want to unify across different bridges, whether it's rural and urban, whether it's Democrat/Republican, whether it's black/white, male/woman—regardless of what the binary is, I think it's so important as we move forward, and as we come out of this pandemic. I keep telling some of my colleagues that we're never going to see this type of investment coming from federal dollars into our community, so what's the lasting impact and how do we work together so that when we look back 20, 25, 30 years from now, we can actually see how those dollars impacted and then continue to impact, sustain the communities which we all come from.

Grace: Hmm, That's great.

Phil: You mentioned education, both the fact that the Nord family foundation has focused on education, but also that you were appointed to head this distress commission. Education has been a huge area of philanthropic focus in this country for both individual and institutional donors. But I don't think you could really tell a great success story about all of that funding that has gone into trying to shift public education. So what advice would you have for individual donors who care deeply about pathways of opportunity for young people, they care deeply about having really excellent public schools, they don't see it today—where do they even begin? How do they get started? How should they think about potentially lessons learned from some of the failures of recent decades, failures that include, you know, arguably the biggest, right, philanthropists in the world—Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation—were going to fix US public education. But I don't think they can claim to have done that yet. What should we take from all that?

Tony: I can't speak for other philanthropists or how they've approached the work, but I think, a lot of the work that has been done or the investments that have been made, they've been made without really centering families and students. So I'll give an example of a success story. And it was actually going back to our conversation, Phil, I'd just become the head of the commission. And I was talking about going into the school district: less than 20% of students had taken the ACT, no students had taken the SAT, more than 25% of the high school students were considered chronic absentee as well as kids in kindergarten through third grade, literacy—I mean, it was appalling what was going on. And then we looked at the amount of money that was going into the district. It wasn't a poor district, right? There was a lot of mismanagement of funds and we can get into the issues, but what we did very early on is you said, "hey, there's this organization called Youth Truth. You may want to consider looking into it." And I'm like, wow, yes, this is what we need. Like, let's go out, let's get students perspectives and perceptions on what's happening in school, culture, rigor, relationships with teachers. Other district started finding out about it, and then that's how we were able to expand that Ohio work, right, throughout Northeast Ohio and then ultimately through the state of Ohio. No one was doing that. I mean, you think about it, right? We're going to—it's like a doctor, right? If you go to the hospital and we're trying to diagnose you, but we're not going to ask you any questions, we're not gonna run any tests, we're just going to tell you what's wrong with you and start to surgically try to repair you.

That's what we were doing for years and years in these public schools, right? Everyone, we're going to turn around this district. And one of the things we found was not only was we sort of suspended students at high clips leading to the prison to school pipeline, right, just continuing to like, support that pipeline by suspending, kicking kids out of school, there were really no true, intended wraparound services, right? So if I give a kid who's illiterate, a test or homework, and they're going home to families that are broken, in some cases chronically illiterate, what do we think is going to happen in that case when we talk about kids aren't turning in their homework? So when we think about schools, why aren't we doing a two generation model? We're allowing parents to come back to school, and it doesn't have to be like the GED, which has a negative connotation to it. But let's reeducate families. Let's educate families with students together in buildings. We don't have to do it how we've always done this before—because that way hadn't worked—so we had to create an experience around education. And that education isn't about just going to school to get a grade, to get certificate. It's about development. It's about human development. And because we haven't focused on human development, we focused on curriculum, we focus on grades—like, right, let's get rid of grades. Because all we do is, continue to perpetuate these divides between the "smart kids" and the kids who struggle.

If I'm a philanthropist, and I'm looking to invest in schools, I'm not investing in traditional schools that have constantly failed, if I'm looking to support students in urban communities. We've got to build new schools. We know that it takes eight years to turn around a district. You can't go back into that district. You have to create new schools. And so, for example, that people say, "oh, the charter movement is conservative." Well the charter movement was actually co-opted by Democrats who was interested in starting charters up in Minnesota and out in Denver, Colorado. But over time it's become this—so we get caught up in the partisanship of whose platform this is. And we forget that there are decades and decades on top of decades of kids that continue to struggle. So I just believe in developing talent, building leaders, I believe in school being a family-oriented/family-centric phenomenon, and it's not about just the individual student. So like, what does that look like? How do we rethink that? And create schools that, again, embrace the community. Like, for example, can you believe this? Like, we're going to teach a class on aerodynamics and space, but yet we got NASA down the street, but we can't bring in any of their scientists because they don't have a teacher degree. What? Like, how does that make sense? Right, or they don't have a teacher certificate. I don't know.

Phil: It doesn't make sense. That doesn't make sense. And let me just say, you know, you mentioned Youth Truth earlier, and I just want to explain what that is. And it's a program that's run out of CEP actually, and it's about hearing from

young people in schools. So it's a survey, it's elementary, middle, and high schools, and there's also a survey of families and staff. Tony, you've been a huge proponent of and ambassador of Youth Truth, which has grown very rapidly. But the notion that when we created that program 13 years ago, I guess it was, that there was nothing like it, is shocking, right? And in fact, I didn't believe it when the person whose idea it was, Fay Twersky, who's now the head of the Arthur Blank Family Foundation, said, "CEP should elevate the perspective of young people so that education funders can learn, and also the school districts and charter management organizations." I said, "well, surely that exists. You know, we don't need to do that." And she was like, "well, I'm not sure that it does. And you all know how to do good survey work," And then Youth Truth eventually came into being. So just this simple idea, which has much broader applicability beyond education, which is that we will be better at helping people if we actually understand what they are experiencing and what they think they need.

Tony: I mean, you captured it, right? And one of the things that I really appreciate about the tool is that, I mean, the customization, right? And how you can apply it to different scenarios. And we knew that in our city of Lorain, we had a huge transient student population, and we wanted to get at housing stability. So we were able to ask questions about: Where do you sleep? Who's in your home? Right? And we were able to learn a lot about and then connect and think about youth homelessness in a different way. So again, that tool just has allowed us to do a lot of different things. I think it's so important that we go to and hear the voices and perceptions and perspectives of the people we want to help.

Grace: Tony, it was really great to hear the out of the box ideas that you have around education that are not the status quo. And so I wanted to ask you a little bit about racial justice in the last two years, 18 months, where there has been higher interest from donors because of the death of George Floyd and Brianna Taylor and others.

What counsel do you have to donors and organizations that don't know where to start when it comes to racial justice? I feel like the mandate has now come for many, but there's still figuring out of like, okay, what does that actually look like to not just be tokenistic about it, but to really sustain change?

Tony: Absolutely. I think it starts internally. You have to sort of do the personal work, right, before you can go out into the world and do very complex, deep, deep work. So I always preface with that like this idea of making sure that you do some self-discovery, self-learning, and whatever that looks like, I can't

prescribe that. But I can say that when you think about the work around racial justice, racial equity, one has to keep in mind that this is a part of a larger movement that has been going on forever, right? Since people of color have come into the Western Hemisphere—Africans or people of African descent, there's always been people of color in the Western Hemisphere. The people of African descent that came into the New World, so to speak, as they called it. There's this book by Ivan Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus*, right? And I think what we can't do right now is that when we focus on our work around racial justice, which is so important, we also can't lose sight of our allies.

We just commissioned a racial disparity audit in our county because we didn't have that data. We had a lot of national data, international data. And again, let's talk about what we know, and let's use real data to organize and convene around issues in a particular community. Right? And so, I think sometimes what can happen and just speaking to my own, you know—African-Americans, sometimes we can use that information to weaponize and create and alienate groups that want to help. And so I'll always speak to that and the importance of that because no civil rights were won, no movement can be won just as a subgroup or sub-pocket, right? So we have to be very thoughtful and purposeful and intentional about how we go about this work. If we want to sort of move conditions forward and raise awareness and really work toward these equitable communities that we envision—we can't do it alone. It's like sometimes. By default people think of racial justice as a zero sum game, it's like one group wins and another group loses. But that's really not how it works. And I know, for the Asian American community, not that I speak for them, but this is something I've thought about a lot. It's like, all of the civil rights benefits that I enjoy have been because of the Black and brown brothers and sisters who came before. And we're seeing in some of our data here at CEP that Asian American communities are overlooked in certain ways. And that doesn't take away from other communities, right? It's a both/and, like, you know we need to expand the pie to look at all kinds of needs and see ways that we can be addressing them.

Tony: I agree with that. Phil, were you gonna say something?

Phil: Well, I was just going to say, I mean, and I think that in this moment of orchestrated backlash to a focus on racial equity—because I think that's what is going on, right—there is a campaign underway to try to convince people that it is zero sum, right? When the data and the facts, I mean, I'm just starting Heather McGhee's *The Sum of Us*, right? The data and the facts suggest the opposite. People's fortunes are linked in ways that they don't understand. You look at things like Obamacare, you know, and not to get too political here, but who did it help, right? I mean, it helped poor people across racial groups. There's so

much to be gained by folks recognizing that it is not zero sum, that their fortunes are connected. And it's like the ultimate form of patriotism to kind of try to expand that inclusion. But right now there are a lot folks telling donors not to think about it that way, that if you focus on racial equity that comes at the expense of rural whites, you know, so it's a question of how to counter that and sustain this momentum that started in 2020, where we saw unprecedented, crowds of people, including many, many white people, protesting for racial justice.

Tony: Absolutely. And I think, to that point, right, I, as individual philanthropists think about their giving and sustaining their giving, I think is so important to think and name and just understand and appreciate the reality that police reform doesn't mean anti-police. And that racial justice activists aren't anti-American or DEI doesn't mean anti-white male, right?

So what's happening is, again, these are those binaries that we subscribed to. and we think in terms of either/or as opposed to and/both as you mentioned, Grace, and that's part of the issue. And when we think about these orchestrated campaigns and movements to silence racial justice activists, it's deeper than silencing racial justice activists. We're trying to protect institutions that don't necessarily create opportunities for everyone to enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, right? There are people being murdered, you have a gun problem, you have a violence problem in our country. But as long as we can continue to keep that conversation around race, which has always been a tension and things that we can't deal with as Americans or as people in around the world. But if we keep it couched there, we're going to never get to the bigger issue, is that, you know, state actors are committing atrocities against citizens. If that was happening to some third world country, the United States and our allies would invade those countries, there'd be a problem, right? We'd have the International Criminal Court involved, the UN would be involved. We'd be trying to people for war crimes at the Hague.

Phil: Can I make sure I understand what you're saying? You're not suggesting that we look away from the data that suggests or demonstrates that Black people are more likely than white people to be killed at the hands of police. You're suggesting that we broaden it and note that also too many white people are being killed the hands of police.

Tony: Yes, yes, yes.

Phil: And that we can hold both thoughts in our head at the same time and embrace that nuance.

Tony: Absolutely, absolutely. But if we continue to focus on fighting that battle where they're comfortable fighting it, we're never going to move the needle. You have to start talking about gun violence. You have to start talking about the government and the police agents being agents of government and them killing American citizens. And that when you have that conversation, I find that you rally more people.

Grace: Tony, at the end of every episode, we ask each guest a question. Giving done right to you is about: fill in the blank. How would you answer that?

Tony: Thoughtful, engaged philanthropy, that isn't stale, that's responsive, that's intentional. And as I think about giving done right 25 years, 15, 10 years from now, that's going to be participatory grantmaking. Really thinking about how you engage in communities and that your grantmaking, whether you're an institutional foundation or individual philanthropists, you're asking the right questions so that you can have a deeper impact.

So that's what I think about giving done right. That's the right way to do it.

Grace: That's great. Thanks so much for joining us today.

Tony: Hey, thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

Phil: Grace, what are your reflections on our conversation with Tony?

Grace: I thought that was an excellent conversation. You know, last year I had the privilege of actually speaking to Tony's board. And so I got to meet folks virtually and, you know, I saw firsthand: he really is able to bring together folks from all across the country who are from really different political backgrounds together to focus at the task at hand, which is the foundation's work of helping people in these different communities and he's able to do it with such grace and it really is a lost art.

I also feel really hopeful. Like, I think that, you know, he's someone who's on the ground in Ohio, you know, being a part of different political coalitions to actually get things done. Sometimes I think I can lose sight in all of the partisan rancor of, like, how work actually gets done. And, you know, apart from all the sound bites and painting the other side as, you know, as a monolith or broad brushes, he is working with people of really different persuasions to actually get stuff done.

Phil: Yeah, and I thought it was interesting that one of the ways that he does that is to orient people to the data. What does the data tell us what's going on at the community level, how it's impacting different people? And when you do that, it's hard to then just fall into the predictable, ideological soundbites. And Tony's not the kind of person who wants to do that. I mean, he wants to understand what can we learn from this? What's a solution that a lot of people can get behind so we can actually make it work?

Grace: Yeah. He's a really exceptional leader who, you know, does not think in the normal categories and therefore is able to really bring people along and really get stuff done.

Phil: I'm so curious, I mean, he's a relatively young person to be in the role that he's in, and I'm just so curious to see where he goes from here. I think we're going to see a lot of Tony in the next 5, 10, 15 years, and that's going to be really good thing for the country.

Grace: So Phil, where can people go for more information about effective giving?

Phil: Well, there's more resources about effective giving on cep.org and, of course, givingdoneright.org has all our episodes and show notes. I also want to highlight youthtruthsurvey.org. It's a program that Tony talked about that's actually run out of the Center for Effective Philanthropy and you can learn more about efforts to bring student voice to school leaders and education funders.

Grace: You can also find us on Twitter. I'm [@gracenicolette](https://twitter.com/gracenicolette) and Phil is [@philxbuchanan](https://twitter.com/philxbuchanan). You can send us a note with any suggestions or comments at gdrpodcast@cep.org.

Phil: As always, I want to thank our sponsors, the Walton Family Foundation and the National Philanthropic Trust.

If you liked the show, please leave us a review on apple podcasts. It really helps.

Grace: Huge thanks again to Tony Richardson for joining us today.

Giving Done Right is a production of the Center for Effective Philanthropy, it's hosted by me, Grace Nicolette, and Phil Buchanan. It's produced by Sarah Martin with mixing and engineering by Kevin O'Connell and additional editing by Isabel Hibbard. Our theme song is from Blue Dot Sessions and original

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