

## GIVINGDONERIGHT-S4-EP3

**Vivian Long** - I think as funders, we often get distracted by this idea of scale or this idea of growth. And those two things are not bad. I think we need metrics and we need rigor to look at programs. But true transformation, I think, is a much, much longer term commitment than a lot of people in philanthropy are comfortable with.

**Grace** [00:00:25] Welcome to Giving Done Right, a show with everything you need to know to make an impact with your charitable giving. I'm Grace Nicolette.

**Phil** [00:00:31] And I'm Phil Buchanan. Today we are excited to welcome Vivian Long to the show. Vivian leads the Long Family Foundation in Southern California, which was started by her parents, John and Marilyn Long, in the 1990s. The foundation gives to religious, education and cultural exchange efforts.

**Grace** [00:01:05] Welcome, Vivian.

**Vivian Long** [00:01:06] Hi. It's so nice to be with both of you Grace and Phil.

**Grace** [00:01:09] I'm so excited that you're here. We wanted to have you on the show because there's a lot of talk in philanthropy about this great generational wealth transfer that's happening now from older generations to their children. And we hear all the time from high net worth donors that they're navigating some really complex family dynamics. And they would like advice. So knowing you, I wanted to talk to you to get your perspective as a next gen family member, because you've had to navigate what it's like to be in those family conversations, and you've had to figure out what it means to both carry forward a legacy for your parents and also chart your own path. So to start, I'm wondering, could you tell us a bit about your family? Tell us about your parents and what are they like?

**Vivian Long** [00:01:51] Sure. Well, thank you so much for inviting me to come share. I am a huge fan of the Giving Done Right podcast. I recommend it to anybody who is, thinking about getting started in philanthropy or even seasoned experts in philanthropy. There's always something new to learn, so I'm excited to be able to chat with you both today. My family is very special, and I just feel honored, really, to be able to talk about the legacy both of my parents, both my grandparents as well, who, are very dear to me, were Chinese descent. My dad was born in China, immigrated to the United States when he was really young, and my mom was born in Northern California in Salinas. But my grandparents have a really incredible story as well. My grandmother on my mom's side was born to very poor parents in rural China, had a really difficult upbringing, and my grandfather lost his first wife in childbirth and then went back to China, married my grandmother, and had seven more kids in addition to the two from his first marriage. So my mom is number three of those seven and grew up in Salinas, California, the salad bowl capital of the world. My mom and her siblings and my grandmother would bunch onions. I think she said they earned like one cent per bunch, and they would also pick strawberries. And that's, you know, how they earned their income and they worked from when they were very, very little. My grandfather on my dad's side was already in the United States working as a grocer. And so he was sending back money to China. As you know, that was how most Chinese Americans did to support their families. And eventually my dad and my grandmother came to the United States to be with my grandpa, and he didn't have any sort of wealth here in the United States. My dad told me that when he arrived, my grandfather was living in a dollar a day motel. So both my mom and my dad come from really, really humble beginnings. And they met, they got married, they had three daughters. I'm the

youngest of those three. And I think, you know the origin story of the foundation is really them wanting to express a family culture of generosity and service embedded in a very deep faith. And I think in an acknowledgment of all of the people that had helped them along the way to get to the point where they are now.

**Grace** [00:04:27] Hmhm. Wow. How did your parents build up their wealth? Like, what business were they in?

**Vivian Long** [00:04:33] My dad was a pioneer in commercial real estate, and so that was how he really developed the wealth that we now get to distribute through the foundation.

**Phil** [00:04:44] Vivian, I'm so glad to meet you. And I wonder as a child what your awareness was, both of the resources that your parents had, but also of philanthropy and giving. When did that start to be something that you knew was important to your parents?

**Vivian Long** [00:05:01] You know, growing up, I, I think one of the things I really appreciate about my parents is they didn't overemphasize the importance of money. And I think that's actually something that you can do when you're in a position of privilege because there's security. Right. And so I acknowledge that privilege and that upbringing that I had. But I think really when I think about my childhood and what these conversations were like, one comes to mind, which I'm a little bit embarrassed of, because when I turned ten, my parents very kindly threw me a birthday party. But they said, you're not going to receive any gifts, you're going to collect shoes, and we're going to send them with our church to Tijuana for the mission trip. And I was disappointed. That's the part I'm embarrassed about.

**Phil** You were ten... yeah.

**Vivian Long** I was ten. I have some grace for myself now. But, you know, I think that they set an expectation of generosity from a young age, even if it was something that I didn't necessarily want to do. But then the other thing that I really remember and was really meaningful to me is that for several years, every Sunday after church, my parents would take me to a convalescent home that was right around the corner from our church. And we would go there, and my mom and dad would pray with the people that were living there. They would ask me to sing for them, and I don't think they really even explained why we were doing it. But now that I'm looking back on it, I see that it was just this pattern of service and just doing something for others that they really wanted to instill in me. And so, you know, I thought it was just fun. I remember being really fascinated by the beds that got to move up and down. But now that I'm looking back on it, I think it was just really meaningful to see the smiles on a lot of these faces and just the joy that was brought by looking someone in the eye and having a conversation with them, joining with them in prayer.

**Grace** [00:07:01] Vivian, you've shared with me that you and your sisters actually didn't know until you were well into college that your parents had a foundation. Can you tell us more about why they chose to wait to share the news with you all? And now, looking back, what reflections do you have on finding out when you did?

**Vivian Long** [00:07:18] Yeah, well, I think part of the reason my parents really made that decision was to shield and protect my sisters and I. I think that they were so intentional about wanting to make sure that didn't become part of our identity at a young age, and that wasn't how our family was seen in the community. But I think it was not a surprise when

my sisters and I found out and we all found out at different ages, because quite a bit younger than my sisters. So they were privy to the information before I was. I think because there had been such a long pattern and such a long commitment of giving. It made sense when they shared that there was this philanthropic vehicle with me. I think the bigger question was kind of, what do we do, right? I think we felt like Mom and Dad have this foundation, and that's cool. But, you know, what's our role? And so I think for the years after we found out about the foundation, my parents had those conversations with us. We were doing retreats every two years to talk about the foundation. I think my sisters and I really felt like we wanted to support them first and foremost, and I think we saw ourselves in a supportive and pretty passive role. And it wasn't until really like several years after we all started having those meetings together that we even started to explore what might it look like for the second generation to get more involved with the foundation and not just kind of leave it up to mom and dad?

**Grace** [00:08:46] So you're in college, what did you study and like, what were you thinking you were going to be doing after college?

**Vivian Long** [00:08:52] That's a great question. When I was in college, I studied at NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized Study, and so that allowed me to create my own curriculum. So most of the classes that I took were around human rights and particularly international human rights. So I did some really interesting coursework in international development, a little bit in psychology. So I thought I wanted to kind of go the path of working in either law or like anti-trafficking or international development. And then I got my master's in public administration at NYU as well in nonprofit management. And that's when I kind of decided that I would go the nonprofit route and still envision at that time working with a direct service organization, something within women's rights. And so when I finished my master's at NYU, I worked for an organization that was supporting survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence and just learned so much about policy work. That was what I was focused on there, but also just what it's like to run a nonprofit. I did not run the nonprofit, but there was so many really fascinating dynamics that I was not aware of. And I think that experience so early in my career, and especially before I entered the grantmaking side, really helped inform me on what funders roles are and the power dynamics that exist, the challenges that funders can unintentionally really exacerbate. And so I'm really grateful for that experience and all that I learned there.

**Phil** [00:10:30] Let's get into those, Vivian, what are those dynamics that you're talking about? What did you see when you were at that nonprofit that you carried with you? Maybe as, well I'm going to try to do that differently when I'm on the other side of the table.

**Vivian Long** [00:10:43] I think particularly at that organization and entering the nonprofit space and then the grant making space, one of the things that I learned is that there's so many different ways to practice philanthropy. And I think oftentimes the number one question we get asked as a foundation is, what do you fund? And I think one principle that my parents, maybe unintentionally, really encouraged us to think about is how do you fund? And so for us, when we talk about strategy, it's really two different approaches. One is that we have areas of focus, things that we're committed to, you know, issue areas or particular topics that we want to see change in. And then the other is how do we actually want to build relationships, and how do we actually want to engage with our nonprofit partners? So I think starting in the nonprofit space, our nonprofit partners, they have the opportunity and the challenge of meeting with funders who have different opinions about all of those things, what they fund and how they fund. And so I think for me, coming in as a young funder, a big question was how do we alleviate some of that pressure as a funder

and not make our partners feel like they have to jump through all of these hoops to even understand what our approach or what our funding priorities are?

**Phil** [00:12:10] And the motivation to alleviate those pressures is, I don't want people dealing with unnecessary hassle because it's just kind of obnoxious? Or is it about actually trying to position them, you know, to be more effective?

**Vivian Long** [00:12:24] Absolutely. Yeah. I think, first of all, these nonprofit partners that we get to work with, their best and highest use is certainly not answering my questions. Their best and highest use is being in the community, working with the people that they serve, managing their teams. I mean, I can think of hundreds of things that are more important than answering a funder question, but I think oftentimes that's not the posture that honestly is perpetuated by traditional philanthropy. And so a big shift for me was, I came from being like mid-level in a nonprofit and then going into a position of grantmaking, and that happened in a matter of months. And the way people saw me, even though I had no additional skills, I was the same person I was a few months prior. But the way people treated me as a funder, the way people thought I had great suggestions, when in fact I knew very little. It was alarming, to be honest, and I was actually grateful that I had kind of the wherewithal to notice that that's not how it should be. And so I think from the very beginning, noticing kind of how people engage with me as a funder as opposed to prior months, like me as a nonprofit employee, that was, I think, the biggest wakeup call to some of the power dynamics that exist in philanthropy and something that I really wanted to not contribute to. And I think it's easy. I think it's easy as a funder to believe your own hype. So people will tell you all day long you've done so much. And the reality is it's all the work of our partners. The funding is useless unless it's activated by really amazing, committed, hard working, trusted partners that know what to do.

**Phil** [00:14:17] I've written about the fact that funders, foundation presidents will often describe this, and then sort of tell a joke about how, you know, everybody laughs harder at their jokes. And then I described how when I hear people tell that story, I laugh as if it's the first time I've heard it. When I've heard it like 100 times, thus proving the point of the huge shift in power dynamics. And I think it's something that you obviously held on to as a lesson and an insight that's informing your practice. And that's great. And I've seen people not able to do that.

**Grace** [00:14:57] Same here. So you're working at a nonprofit. And then you mentioned within a few months time you were leading the foundation. So tell us about that time. Like how did you think about your career? And I know this was probably a really big decision for you. And then your sisters are doing different things. So tell us more about some of those decision points.

**Vivian Long** [00:15:18] I think the hardest part of the decision making was to consider what it might do to my relationships with my family. The career I felt as though this would be an interesting opportunity, and if I wanted to go back to nonprofit work, and I still think this now, the door is not completely closed. But if I do want to go back to nonprofit work, perhaps there will be a different perspective that I can bring to being part of those teams. And so I think in that sense, the risk was lower, but the higher risk that I was more attuned to and concerned about was, you know, what if something went wrong with my family, if they felt like I hadn't done a good job in this role or, you know, they felt like I had tried to move the foundation in a direction that wasn't representative of the family. And so I think those dynamics were a lot more of a fear for me. And just the only way they were alleviated was by having a lot of conversations before I stepped into the role with

everybody in my family, and then honestly, having the conversations while I've been in this role with the family to make sure that we're on solid ground and that I think there's a commitment because one of my other sisters works within the family enterprise. There's a real commitment that family relationships come first. They are far more important than any thing we are doing when it comes to our careers or the enterprise, and so I appreciate that there's been a commitment to that. And I think because of that, you know, we've had hard conversations. It's required a lot of honesty. It's required a lot of humility, but encouraged me to grow in humility. But I think the trust has also grown because it's a risk, it's a professional risk, and it's also a personal risk. And oftentimes it's very hard to draw the lines and figure out how to separate the two.

**Grace** [00:17:21] Yeah. Tell us more about like, what are some of the practices or rhythms that you all have to make sure that you're prioritizing the family. Like what advice do you have if folks are like, oh, I would like to do that too.

**Vivian Long** [00:17:34] Well, one is what my husband pointed out to me, which was, you guys need to start talking about the family enterprise, the foundation or the business when we're having meals. So it's been a really good reminder because I think there's kind of this default, right? It's something we're connected on. It's something that we want to talk about with each other, we want to share with each other. But I think actually saying, hey, we need to draw boundaries, and this can't replace the family connectedness that exists has been a really valuable and important reminder. But I think our family culture is to work hard, especially for the things that we feel responsible for. And so when it comes to also blending that with family, and we're doing things on behalf of family, I think we all want to gut check with each other and share. And so, you know, what does it look like to create family connectedness outside of the enterprise? And that's a question that I really have about the next generation, because we don't want to prescribe or force or assume that the next generation will want to be involved with the family foundation, there will be an opportunity for them. We're planning for that. But there's no obligation. But we don't want involvement with the family foundation to be equal to being a loved and valued and treasured member of the family. So I think we're really considering right now, how do we build in a family culture that encourages generosity through this family vehicle of the foundation, but also, you know, you can be who you are, you can pursue the things you want, and you'll know that this is a safe space of love, even if you don't want to be part of the foundation.

**Phil** [00:19:18] So tell us, Vivian, a little bit about the foundation and how you have selected goals. Evolve those goals and priorities and approaches, and how you have blended or integrated the perspectives of various family members about those choices.

**Vivian Long** [00:19:36] When my parents created the foundation, they built it on four pillars religion, education, culture, and research. So, as you might imagine, pretty much anything can fall into those four pillars if you try hard. And so one of the first things I wanted to do when I started was to have a little bit more clarity on really what it was we wanted to fund. And so the first four years from 2016 to 2020, we just experimented. And I would say one thing I'm really grateful for my parents was – and I had trepidation about – was, you know, I think a lot of families and parents or previous generation say we want to transition to the next generation, but then when it comes time for actual decisions to be made and money to be allocated, there is, you know, some rightful fear there and some kind of like tension. And, you know, when I started in this role and started experimenting with some new grants, my parents were so encouraging. And in 2020, that's when we went through our first real setting of priorities. And at that time, we had five areas of focus.

And we decided that every five years we were going to evaluate as a board whether or not we wanted to continue these and that's so there's grandchildren and maybe great grandchildren, they are not beholden to what we set in 2020 was a priority. And so 2020 was the first time we did this and we set five areas of focus. Two were what we call legacy priorities. One was an intergenerational priority. And then we had two next gen priorities. You know, in my mind, I was like, okay, I'll work with Mom and Dad on the legacy priorities, and then I'll kind of build this portfolio. But what's been so encouraging and exciting for me to see is that even the next gen priorities have become things that my parents understand and care deeply about. So they really said, hey, we see why this is important to our family, and we see how the foundation is partnering with these organizations. We want to also understand that as well. So I think when it comes to just how we decided these priorities, it was really a gift that my parents gave us the freedom to say what we might want to pursue, and then just jumped two feet in and in saying, these are ours as a family. They're not just the kids.

**Phil** [00:21:53] Vivian, can you give us an example of a next gen priority that then your parents really started to care about?

**Vivian Long** [00:22:00] Yeah. So one of our legacy priorities is the relationship between the U.S. and China. And then one of our next gen priorities is the Asian American community. And to a lot of people, those have some overlap. But we decided to kind of separate them because our U.S., China work was very distinctly international and solely focused on two countries. Whereas our Asian American, Pacific Islander work was meant to be much more inclusive and solely domestic, but much more inclusive to include all Asian, ethnicities. And so when I even proposed that we might make that distinction, it took some education first from me, right to say, like, does that make sense? But then to explain to my parents, hey, we shouldn't just be focusing on Chinese American history or Chinese American needs. There's this opportunity for us to be a lot more inclusive. And I think at the beginning they were like, okay, sounds good, let's see. But, you know, over the years, they've really started to understand one, like the shift in language around the Asian American community and the distinct needs. And so, you know, one of the projects that we were really proud to support was with CEP and really uplifting leaders, nonprofit leaders of AAPI descent. And we had heard because we had gone on this listening tour prior to us making this commitment, we had just heard a lot of consistent feedback about how it was harder for them to fundraise. It was harder for them to feel like they were respected, and then to have CEP actually do the research and validate that, I think was so encouraging. And I think for my parents, who come from a background of really appreciating research, it was a way for them to see, you know, these stories that we're told, what our nonprofit partners are sharing with us is actually now something that we can share with other people in the nonprofit community, the philanthropic community. I think we were all really proud to play a small part in that effort.

**Grace** [00:24:07] Yeah, we really appreciated that support. I mean, that report, it's called Overlooked, there's two parts of it and we'll link to it in the show notes. We saw in multiple data sets, actually, that leaders who are Asian American leading nonprofits were having a much worse experience with foundation funders as well as Native American leaders than any other racial group. And it was just so stark that our research team was like, kind of waving a flag, saying, you know, we really need to report on this because no one else is talking about it. And was also in the midst of Covid when there was a lot of that anti-Asian violence that was going on. So that report, I think, was really powerful in lifting up those voices.

**Phil** [00:24:49] So, yeah, I think the other thing that we saw and documented is that, while there was this increase in giving for organizations serving certain communities post 2020 racial justice reckoning, Latino communities, African-American communities. That was documented by a variety of folks, including us. As we asked foundations what they were doing, we did not see an increase in giving to organizations serving Asian American Pacific Islander communities, despite the dynamics that you discussed. And to your point about the other report on native indigenous populations, we saw staggeringly high rates of Covid deaths in those communities. And yet those communities also did not see the kind of bump in giving that some did. So there was just a lot to see when you unpack the data in that way and segmented it. That was really sobering, actually, about maybe who was to the title of the reports overlooked.

**Grace** [00:25:51] Don't go anywhere. More after this break.

## **BREAK**

**Grace** I'm wondering, Vivian, I'm channeling some listeners here who I think you described your family in the beginning as being really special, and I think it really does come through in a lot of what you're describing. And I imagine some donors are like, wow, they've obviously put in a lot of work into the relationships. They've prioritized their family. They have these priorities now. We are not there yet. You know, like we are far from that. Maybe there's some work on relationships that needs to be done or other things. What advice do you have to donors, regardless of which generation they're in, if they would like to make some progress along this route, right? Like they want to build a stronger relationship between their family and the giving that they do.

**Vivian Long** [00:26:48] The best advice I would have is start having conversations. It really requires a series of conversations, and maybe the better way to think of it is just an ongoing conversation that never ends. I think there's so much opportunity for family growth to happen when you're doing any sort of shared activity, right? Whether it's camping, not something we do, but, I've heard, escape rooms also not something we do, but I think there's this bonding that can occur when you do things together. The other thing I also say to families that are thinking about starting a family foundation or any sort of family philanthropy is whatever dynamics exist in your family are going to be amplified when you bring in A, decision making together and B, decision making about money? Yeah. And so I would say there is no such thing as a perfect family. There's always conflict. And so is your family set up to navigate conflict together. And you know, do you have tools in place or at least resources that you know, you can go to if conflict arises? And so I would say it's more of a principle about family dynamics than it is about generosity or philanthropy. But I think from what I've seen and our own experience, that for us it's been a blessing because I think our family has a lot of trust within. But the things that we have disagreements about or that the tension exists, it exists when we're discussing philanthropy, too. So I think it's just a reflection, really, of who your family is. And to step into that and not be afraid of it is a piece of encouragement I would have.

**Grace** [00:28:41] Do you have particular advice on like how to navigate the moments of conflict, like were there particular resources or even outside help or, you know, if folks find themselves perhaps like stuck in different patterns of conflict, what advice would you give them?

**Vivian Long** [00:29:02] I think that my advice would be as a family, to return to a place of common ground. And for our family, that's faith. So whenever there's conflict, I think for us to really return to what we feel called to do, which is to love God and love each other, to serve God and serve each other. Can we do that and use that as the lens in which we interact with one another and try to make these decisions? So I think that if your family has a framework or has a set of shared values, that's a really good place to start. That's a great foundation to build anything, whether it's an enterprise or a family office or a foundation, to really come back to those values that you've all agreed on. And the second thing I would say is that shouldn't be assumed by anybody, right? Like, it's not just the parents saying, here are our family values. And then the kids kind of being expected to fall in line. What does it look like for you as a family to really have that discussion and ask each other, is that really what's exhibited in our family? I think those kinds of conversations are often where sometimes more tension and more conflict can arise. But it's that necessary conflict. So I think in a lot of families, the goal is actually to have no conflict. And I think that conflict is healthy, but it requires a set of skills and it requires practice actually to get through it.

**Grace** [00:30:33] Yeah. I think that there are actually different cultures that strongly believe in the let's not have any conflict. And also let's never talk about money. Right. And so it seems like you all have overcome some of those like very common barriers that folks just naturally have. So even like getting started on that can be challenging. But it seems like you all have been very intentional about it.

**Phil** [00:30:58] One thing where Grace and I work, we talk a lot about differentiating between...and it's someone else's concept.

**Grace** [00:31:06] Adam Grant.

**Phil** [00:31:06] relationship conflict and task conflict and recognizing that task conflict is inevitable and healthy. And it doesn't have to morph into relationship conflict. Grace and I can disagree about who should be the next guest on the podcast without calling each other names. And then the other thing that I'm thinking, as I listen to you and I listen to your examples of escape rooms and camping trips, is that there's something about the larger goal, you know, whatever it is in your case, it's a it's really worthy goals about making a difference that can make the money, which is so often a source of conflict –like we all watched succession. We've talked about this on other episodes – where a fight over resources and who gets what and who has what power can tear a family apart. But the larger goal of trying to do good with these resources can, if done thoughtfully right, keep a family really connected and maybe even bring them closer in certain ways because it's about something bigger than any one of you, and so is your faith, obviously, which is a part of this. But also just the act of giving is about something that's bigger than any one of us, and that that can bring out the best version of ourselves, as opposed to the version that wants more for ourselves.

**Vivian Long** [00:32:28] Yeah.

**Grace** [00:32:29] Vivian, I'm wondering if you could share a story from a particular grantee or project that you're proud of.

**Vivian Long** [00:32:35] Yeah, the cornerstone of what we choose to fund and how we choose to fund is the pursuit of deep relationships. And really, that's been an evolution of our approach to philanthropy. But I would say, simply put, it's really depth over reach. And



so what we choose to fund – so I'll answer your question about a grantee that we're really proud of, but then also how we choose to fund and how we look at partnership – I think is really embedded in our pursuit of deep relationships. And again, that comes out of, I think, a strong faith. And that's how Jesus showed up to us and how we should show up to each other. One of our partners is an international enterprise that offers adult women who are being exploited a pathway to an alternative career by employing them at a jewelry company. And so while a lot of these women start by physically creating the products, quickly they acquire more sophisticated skills like design, accounting and marketing. And additionally, the organization provides holistic care for them through safe housing, counseling, spiritual development, medical care and community. And so I know I kind of mentioned this earlier, but I think philanthropy and to an extent, the nonprofit sector at times can unintentionally exacerbate or perpetuate this gap between the client or community served and whoever is serving. Yeah, but this organization introduced something called a survivor leadership model, and it really is grounded in two decades of work. That is a belief that these women, who would have typically been seen as having no or the least value in their previous jobs are not now part of this new team just to be served, but they're actually essential to the company's success and growth. And since the survivor leadership program started four years ago, the online sales for this jewelry company have doubled. They're now within the seven figures. But I think the true measure of transformation is the way these women see themselves, and also the potential that they see in women that were in similar positions that they were once in as well. And like hearing their stories, one of the women who started was introduced to the organization. She's now like their CEO. Another one of the women wrote their annual report that, you know, is given to all of their Western supporters. So just to see the way that they have grown and how they see themselves as contributing to this global jewelry line, that's the kind of transformation that honestly can't come quickly, right? Like this has been two decades of work. A lot of the women have been part of this organization for five, ten years. And I think as funders, we oftentimes get distracted by this idea of scale or this idea of growth. And those two things are not bad. I think we need metrics and we need rigor to look at programs. But true transformation, I think, is a much, much longer term commitment than a lot of people in philanthropy are comfortable with. And so I think for our family, we have the luxury because we get to decide together as a family that we're going to really stick with these partners for an extended period of time and see what that transformation looks like. And we are looking for partners that are similarly making that commitment to the people that they serve.

**Grace** [00:36:06] Do you mind sharing the name of the enterprise?

**Vivian Long** [00:36:09] Yes. It's an amazing organization called Starfish Project.

**Grace** [00:36:15] I was hoping you would say it was them because I love that organization as well. I buy a lot of my jewelry from them and I have visited their offices.

**Vivian Long** [00:36:24] Yes. They're wonderful.

**Phil** [00:36:25] The approach that they take, the sort of relational, empowering, you know, in respectful approach to working with people they're trying to help is sort of analogous to, it seems to me, the way you're trying to work with the nonprofits you support, actually. So maybe you could say a little bit more because you've alluded to it a couple of times, that your approach is really important to you. The how is really important. Can you just specify what about it matters. What's different? You're talking about long term support. Is it about that?

**Vivian Long** [00:36:58] Yeah.

**Phil** [00:36:59] What else?

**Vivian Long** [00:37:00] I think for us it started with this question of what does true partnership look like. And I think many philanthropists use that word and it's the correct word. But I think when it comes to actually practicing partnership, that's a little bit more challenging. And so part of the question was who are we here to serve as a foundation? I think sometimes we can get a little bit confused in that we as a foundation are serving directly the community or the audience that we're trying to reach, but in fact, it's our nonprofit partner that are the ones doing that work. And it's more than likely that unless we do a site visit, the clients or the community has no idea that there is a Long Family Foundation contributing to the work. And so then who do we interact with? Who are we accountable to? I think is the question as a partner, and that is our nonprofit leaders. So our own journey of trying to play a small role in helping organizations transform was to start giving multiyear general operating grants. And that was a decision we made out of a lot of first and foremost feedback from our partners, but also backed up by a lot of philanthropic research, some of which CEP has authored, but really the trust based philanthropy movement as well. And so if we were hoping to see transformation in people's lives through the work that our nonprofits were doing, we needed to be a stable, a consistent and a committed partner in the same way as well. And I think this is actually an area where I've seen some of my peer Christian family foundations really excel, and I've learned a lot from them.

**Phil** [00:38:42] Vivian, some people will suggest that somehow that's at odds with strategy or impact, that either your trust based or your strategic and impact focused. Do you see it that way, or do you think that's a false binary?

**Vivian Long** [00:38:57] I think it depends on how you are looking at strategy and impact. I think for us, because our number one goal or metric is to see lives transformed, the only way I think actually we can do that is to make a long term commitment. I think in one year you really have a limited view of what can be done. And I think actually this is probably very counter to what you're asking, Phil, but my hope is that we actually will have no idea in our lifetime what the funding that our foundation provided, what the resonating effects will be, right? Like, I think about my grandmother and I'm sure somebody gave her a helping hand when she came to this country. I'm sure there was a nonprofit or a funder who gave her a helping hand. That person could have never known that my grandmother would have seven kids, 16 grandkids, all graduated from college. You know, I just think that those kinds of stories, like, we can't track that in a grant evaluation report every six months. And so I think some of it for us is also releasing this idea that, like, we are going to know for sure what our money did in this period of time. So that doesn't work for everyone. It's something that I think is embedded into our family's legacy, and that allows us to take a different perspective of how we think about impact, how we think about strategy.

**Grace** [00:40:19] That's so powerful.

**Phil** [00:40:20] Totally. And it's... folks get so hung up in what is sometimes an impossible challenge, which is to draw some causal connection between their funding, when they're one of many funders of the things that they care about, and the end impact. And it can't be done in a precisely measurable way. So it does require a different kind of faith that if the

organizations have been vetted and you know that they're effective, then you can support them.

**Grace** [00:40:53] Yeah. I mean, I think that sometimes we equate good stewardship with having the certainty. And what I'm hearing you say is that for your family, good stewardship is actually the humility of knowing that you may not know the true impact of all of it, and that's still good stewardship. You know, you don't have to track where every single dollar was spent, which is such a burden oftentimes for nonprofits. There's a way of trusting, and there is a way of getting the impact information that you need. And that is good stewardship.

**Vivian Long** [00:41:24] Yeah. I think there's also been such a joy for me in collaboration with our nonprofit partners, certainly, but other funders as well. And I think it takes some of that pressure that you're alluding to Grace of, you know, I need to know exactly what my money did. And we are a small family foundation, so we are limited in even our dreams of what we could do. But I think that there's such a joy in finding other people who are also excited about this space, or one of your partners, and seeing really a team get to come around and push a nonprofit forward. That's been something that has been really encouraging. And I think for us as a family foundation to find like minded funders in different spaces and really try to help build community around that has been something that's been really fun for me.

**Grace** [00:42:21] Well, Vivian, this has been a tremendous conversation. You bring so much wisdom and reflection and thoughtfulness. So thank you so much for joining us today.

**Phil** [00:42:29] Thank you. Vivian.

**Vivian Long** [00:42:30] Thank you for having me.

**Phil:** There are a ton of resources about effective giving on The Center for Effective Philanthropy's website, [cep.org](http://cep.org), as well as [givingdoneright.org](http://givingdoneright.org), where you'll find all of our episodes and show notes.

**Grace:** You can also send us a note at [gdrpodcast@cep.org](mailto:gdrpodcast@cep.org).

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