

Giving Done Right, Season 6, Episode 4 - Protecting Democracy with Maya Wiley

Maya Wiley: It is literally using the power of government to dry up, to close the purse strings for people who are simply doing proven work, lawful work. It has been effective, and if any of us are wringing our hands about democracy, we have an easy solution. We can just say it's lawful, we're allowed to do it, and we will.

Phil Buchanan: Welcome to Giving Done Right. I'm Phil Buchanan. As the midterm elections loom, what can donors worried about the state of our democracy do as a practical matter? What actions can be taken to guard against threats to democracy and to civil liberties more broadly? How should individual donors and foundations react to efforts to go after organizations seen as threatening by the current administration? I wanted to address these questions, and I could not think of anyone better to talk to than Maya Wiley. She is a civil rights attorney and coalition leader who currently serves as president CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and its Education Fund. She has worked at the US Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, the ACLU, and the Open Society Institute, and she founded and led the Center for Social Inclusion, an organization focused on racial equity, and I'm not even doing justice to her bio. Welcome, Maya. So good to have you here.

Maya Wiley: And so good to be with you, Phil. Thank you for having me.

Phil Buchanan: So we're a, a little more than a month out from the midterms. Folks have a lot of anxiety about the state of our democracy, about threats to folks' ability to vote, about whether election results will be respected. What, in your view, can foundations or individual donors who have these concerns, these are not partisan concerns, these are concerns about our democratic process, what can they practically do?

Maya Wiley: I am so glad you asked me that question, Phil, because donors and foundations have major power of the purse to ensure that we have a functioning, safe, effective democratic process. Not about who wins, not about partisanship. It's fundamentally about whether people have power to decide who leads us. And right now, and it's not even just right now, let me say that, Phil, right? We talk a lot about the fact that right now it is shocking how much money has dried up just to help voters understand where and how to vote, and their rights to vote. To ensure that voters can distinguish between mis- and disinformation, and the facts about voting. To ensure that groups can help and support people's ability to get to the polls, and their motivation to participate without regard to how they will cast that ballot. And that is so fundamental to our democracy, yet we have never seen an election cycle where groups on the ground, where community-based work to do all the things I just mentioned, where the national groups that help confront the threats to the lawful process and the voting rights of people, has never been more dry. It's not just a desert, it is a full-on climate disaster of funding. So all I would say is this, you know, democracy is not a promise, it's a commitment. And how we give money is actually a

First Amendment free speech protected activity. So if we pair those two things, there's nothing more central to making sure we have a democracy, and I would be very explicit about a multiracial democracy-

Phil Buchanan: Yeah

Maya Wiley: if donors and foundations are not right now opening up the purse and spreading that money to national groups, to state groups, to local groups, and all the infrastructure, and particularly focus it where the threats are greatest, which is in communities of color. Can I give you a statistic on this, Phil?

Phil Buchanan: Please.

Maya Wiley: By the way?

Phil Buchanan: Yeah. Because I was actually gonna ask you, like, how do you know that the dollars have dried up? I mean, I'm sure you're hearing it from your network, but a little bit more data would be helpful.

Maya Wiley: That's exactly where I was going, because I'm not just stating this as an anecdote. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, as you know, is a product and a creation of the second reconstruction in this country, which was the civil rights movement of the '50s and '60s. And I'm saying that because we're 76 years old. We know a thing or two about election cycles. We know a thing or two about voting rights and protecting democracy. So we have over 240 national organizations. We did a landscape mapping. In fact, we did a couple of cycles of landscape mapping. We had 83 groups participate in our landscape mapping, and we asked them directly not just what were they doing, how actively they were engaged in voting, and not surprising to us, almost all of them said, "You know what? It's either primary or a major focus of ours. It's just to make sure voters can vote, know how to vote, know where to vote, and don't get blocked from voting." But what we also asked was, "Well, do you have the money? How are you doing on your budget?" 46% of our organizations said they were doing the work on 25% or less of the budget they needed to do it. 25% or less. Very, very few. I think it was only a handful that actually said they were fully funded. A handful. I mean, I could count them on three fingers. That's how little it was.

Phil Buchanan: Yeah. That's shocking.

Maya Wiley: And nonetheless, the groups are doing the work despite not having the money, but remember the budget is not just about doing the work, which... And I wanna really stress this. Money started drying up in '22. There's been a long history of not getting sufficient resources into communities of color and into marginalized communities in general, low-income communities of all races, for a very long time, and the disparity in where the money goes has never, ever gone away as an issue. But we saw the drop-off in the midterm cycle in '22. And what we've seen is then a radical drop-off after '24, but it really did start beforehand. We started to see that shift. We could talk about why, but I would say what is stark to us is, of course, the

very attacks of this federal administration from Congress to the White House to federal agencies to the Department of Justice, that is literally using the power of government to dry up, to close the purse strings for people who are simply doing proven work, lawful work, it has been effective. And if any of us are wringing our hands about democracy, we have an easy solution. We can just say it's lawful, we're allowed to do it, and we will.

Phil Buchanan: And I wanna get to the why, but first, can you explain for folks who may not understand exactly what the work is? So what is it that organizations are doing in communities of color or in impoverished rural communities to ensure that people have access to the vote? What is the nitty-gritty of that work?

Maya Wiley: Well, I think your audience knows this well, Phil. The chaos that has been created from everything between how this administration, this federal government, has been lying about election cycles, how we've had state lawmakers already gerrymandering maps, or constantly introducing changes to how people vote, where they can vote, what do they have to show to vote. All these things have been chaotic because of the attacks on voting rights and because of the efforts to make it harder for voters to just get to the ballot and vote. But since '24, since this administration took office, since Congress became empowered to more greatly create more threats, there's been massive confusion because the Supreme Court has done what the Supreme Court has done, including the recent Calais decision and the fact that we've had to contest mail-in balloting. So one of the things that groups are confronting and what they do, first of all, a big part of what they do is make sure they're knocking on the doors, they're getting people engaged. A lot of these groups do it, and we forget this, and we shouldn't. They're doing it, and they're trying to do it all throughout the year, every year, whether there's an immediate election or an election in the following year, because voter engagement, voter education is not an overnight activity. It's not speed dating. And especially in low income and vulnerable communities that are stressed, under attack, and frankly struggling to survive. So I say that because we've always been short of that kind of funding, but it's been even more important because of the chaos and the confusion of even: What's your election district? Where can you vote? You know, a woman was telling me the other night who's doing some canvassing in Pennsylvania, and she said, "You know, there were people who were formerly incarcerated who had received letters. They were not official letters, they were not verified letters, but letters that said that they were not legally allowed to vote because they had been incarcerated." And she had knocked on the door and had this conversation with this gentleman who had, by the way, served his time and, you know, his incarceration was like a decade before. He was totally lawfully allowed to vote under Pennsylvania law. And what she was able to do is say, because he said, "I can't vote." And she said, "Why do you think you can't vote?" And they had the whole discussion when he told her when he was released and his backstory. She said, "You know you can vote. You actually are." And then he produced this letter, and she saw the letter, and she looked at it and said, "This isn't a lawful letter. This is not an official letter." And he grabbed the letter from her hand. It was not on official letterhead, it was not signed by an election official, and he started running down the street saying, "We can vote. We can vote." I mean, the power of that story alone just encapsulates so much about what this work is. But even the challenges just to understanding how the laws or

rules have changed, or whether the polling site is open or closed. And now we have the added threats of things like whether or not ICE will be at the polls. And whether or not they'll be there, it's unlawful. Litigators will go litigate. That's another side of the equation of the work. But it's also whether or not voters feel protected in their ability to vote, because the fear and driving the fear and the threats is intentional, in my view. Just even the mere mention of the possibility is a way to try to suppress votes in vulnerable communities. And so we have clergy who are active, multi-faith, actively organizing, we have at the Leadership Conference, we have been participating in the trainings to be at the polls, to be mobilizers for people's right to vote, to ensure that their flock is feeling protected to vote. And it ain't Flock cameras, it's flock in the true sense. And that if something starts to happen, there are people there who are trusted community leaders in the faith community that can help deescalate the situation, and ensure that folks are taking their cues from actual election officials, and ensured about what they can do in the situation if it happens. But there's also post-election threats. This is the other thing that's... Phil, you know, the question about whether or not we're gonna have a fight about who won an election, whether we're gonna have a fight about whether the elections were lawful, whether we're gonna have a fight about whether or not those candidates that won can be seated, is also part of the threat environment, and it's post election day. And there's also early voting, right? Because we're already in the early voting cycle in some places. So we're already in it, but it's not too late. I can't stress this enough. It is not too late, and the fact that we have post-election day threats and post-election day questions, it's all the same groups, and it's the same work. It's the same mobilization that also helps people feel empowered to have their voice to say their votes cast should count, and that they believe their nonpartisan election officials, and that the process and the system must work, and that is going to be crucial as well. So I could go on, but you get the point.

Phil Buchanan: I don't usually go to the place on this show of like, okay, specifically, what organizations should donors be directing gifts to, should foundations be directing grants to right now? But I think I do wanna ask you that. Is there a short list of those that you think are best positioned to act either on the election day threats to people's participation or on the post-election potential challenges?

Maya Wiley: The important question here is funding. I answer the question a little differently. I'm gonna give you the parameters because there's so many organizations and groups doing such critical work, and frankly, it's a disservice to all the work to only name a few.

Phil Buchanan: Yeah, yeah. I hear that.

Maya Wiley: Not because I can, although I will say some obvious things, like there are organizations that are under a direct, visible, and public attack, are under attack in order to prevent their dollars. We saw this with Ohio Organizing Collaborative, which battleground state, purple state. I can tell you from my conversations with some of those when 150 FBI agents fanned out across the state claiming an investigation on conspiracy, but it was very, very clear from the folks, we have relationships with folks. One of my leaders actually got the door knock from an FBI agent, not a target, but nonetheless, this is what they were doing. They were

intimidating this a coalition in and of itself, working on things like whether or not people can get healthcare, whether or not workers are getting paid, but they're also registering Black voters, and it was very clear by the questioning they were coming after and trying to even create the impression that work that was registering Black voters was unlawful and was somehow a conspiracy to steal an election. So I'm saying, I mean, I'm saying that anecdotally, but it was very clear to us, and we had been watching this for a while, of worrying about where and how they were gonna attack. Subpoenas went to multiple parts of our infrastructure that's doing lawful work on data gathering, on doors to knock, the whole apparatus of doing free and fair elections, and also ensuring that people of color and low-income people have a voice. So I would say where you know a group has been targeted, give money there, because the targeting is intentional to try to drive money out of their ability to get voters motivated, understanding their rights, and able to participate. Southern Poverty Law Center was another example. One of the things that they have done, we saw the active disruption of donors directing their donor-advised funds to send money to Southern Poverty Law Center because they did understand what the attack on Southern Poverty Law Center was. Southern Poverty Law Center has brought lawsuits, has brought legal action to ensure voters' votes are counted, so they do participate not only in voting rights, but in actual work to support motivation. So where you see an attack on an organization, I'm naming the ones that are very public, but any organization you know that's under attack that you know to do good work deserves funding. Unless they've been convicted of a crime, this is an administration trying to create the impression of crime for doing lawful work that advances multiracial democracy. But I would also say the other parameters are please fund groups that are on the ground, connected to communities that are most vulnerable to these attacks and threats. That is communities of color, that's low income communities. And as we know, it's a 50 state issue. You know, we see there are spots in California where we have to worry about this even though it's a state that advances voting rights. But that's because, you know, it depends on where you are, and where and how the administration is paying attention, and where and how the politics is playing out to try to interrupt voters from being able to express their own viewpoints. So I would argue you'd go to our website, look at our members. Our members are engaging and participating, but many of them are also in coalition and also working with groups on the ground. Critical to get that money to the ground. And I'll make a pitch for the Leadership Conference on Civil And Human Rights as well. Because one of the things we've had the need to do is, because of the resource issue, create new ways to support coordination between organizations. Because we have groups that say, for example, "We don't have the resources to do language translation." Well, we can help support and connect to organizations that have resources in 11 different languages without them having to recreate that wheel. And it's not just us. Many of our coalition partners are also creating hubs, and then we're connecting the hubs. So I'm saying that because we need to support the apparatus of infrastructure that is interconnected, and we must get money directly to the ground in endangered communities.

Phil Buchanan: Stick around. We'll be right back after the break

BREAK

Phil Buchanan: I wanna go back to Southern Poverty Law Center since you mentioned them. Perhaps I shouldn't have been, but I was stunned that just on the basis of an indictment, which as Fred Blackwell, who runs the San Francisco Foundation, said, "An indictment is an allegation. That's all it is," right? The major commercial DAF providers, including Fidelity Charitable, Vanguard, I should say Fidelity Charitable has been a past funder through its Catalyst Fund of this organization, past sponsor of this podcast, not allowing the processing of gifts to Southern Poverty Law Center by individuals with donor-advised funds that are housed there, which I just found shocking and very disappointing. I could understand a pop-up that lets a donor know before they submit their gift request that, an organization is under indictment, but the notion that you would just follow this administration, which has been open about retribution as an objective, and cut off donors' ability to give, I'm really worked up about it, and I wish that they would reconsider. I've been impressed by the community foundations that have stood firm. But how do you see that? What is your take on sort of the degree to which folks are almost doing the bidding of an authoritarian-acting, anyway, let's put it that way, administration?

Maya Wiley: What we saw with Southern Poverty Law Center was, first of all, something we saw coming. We saw it coming just like we knew that groups engaged in voting and voter engagement work would be targeted by this administration. Because part of driving the big lie that sadly we have seen come out of our own federal government was intentional to drive doubt about a system we should be really proud of. And that certainly was a global leader in elections, not because we were perfect, not because we got it all right, because we know we didn't. But because it was still a global leader in how you do these things and how you can have trusted elections. So undermining without facts has been part of that drumbeat that even preceded the current administration. But what they've been using that drumbeat for is intentional, and then picking organizations that they think if we create a threat for this organization, we can actually dry up resources for a field. And when we see what Vanguard and Fidelity and Charles Schwab did by denying donor... Remember, this is a public-facing indictment, meaning donors are making choices that are informed about whether or not they want to have a defended Southern Poverty Law Center, that they understand there's no conviction here. Worse, worse, was they're bringing investigations and prosecutions in the absence of proof, and where the public record itself demonstrates that it's actually the exact opposite of the claims. In other words, we have a Department of Justice that is literally weaponized. But what predated it was this administration starting by saying, "We're gonna come for your purse strings. We're gonna show you the power of federal government to hurt you in your bottom line if you're a financial institution, because we have oversight and regulatory authority." So the attack on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility through executive order on day one of this administration that said, "We're gonna come for you. We're gonna do oversight. We're gonna send threat letters," all of that, "We're gonna come after the law firms that do pro bono legal defense work for groups we don't like. We'll bar you from federal buildings so that you can't do your work for your clients." That's just us saying, "We know how to attack you in your pocketbook, that we will show you the power of government to attack you in your pocketbook through regulatory power in order to silence you in advance." So that work has been successful for far too many institutions from law firms to philanthropy and to financial institutions. And so what we saw was that

authoritarian playbook playing out. And I think, and I'm saying this subjectively, I can only say very confidently that this is, in my legal terms, a specious indictment. It is not one grounded, and I think we've seen that in the public record. But having said that, the point isn't even whether or not you win the prosecution. The point is the capitulation. And if you go after a big group, because Southern Poverty Law Center in our world, although it works in five states, it works in five states with 55% of the Black population. It works in the states that are fundamental to multiracial democracy, and it works on the issues that so often other philanthropic dollars don't go to sufficiently in the South. And so to go after that group is really to try to put a proverbial head on a stake. To chill the investment and the dollar flow to other groups. And we saw it working with those institutions despite the fact, and thankfully, where we saw over 40 donors say, "I get what this is, and I wanna support them," and have their First Amendment rights to do that actually interrupted by banks whose policies did not require them to do what they did. They were not required under their own policies to do what they did. It was that the threats of authoritarianism were working for them. So what we need philanthropy to do, what we need donors to do, is to do what those donors did, which is challenge it. To do what we saw other collaboratives and other philanthropy do when it came together and said, "This is wrong. We're gonna stand up against these financial institutions capitulating." That's so important because if we're really gonna be concerned about democracy and whether or not we remain committed to it, it means this is the time when it matters most that we say, "Even if we're afraid, we won't be silent. Even if you try to make us fearful, we won't..." Because if we're standing together, and at the Leadership Conference, we've had everything to lose. We haven't been silent, and we won't be. But with principle. With principle. And the principles are, there's a difference between persecution and lawful prosecution, and this is persecution.

Phil Buchanan: I mean, the capitulation, I sometimes have to stop myself from talking about it so much because it makes me so mad in terms of, like, even just you referenced the DEI executive orders in the early days and the way company after company complied with something that they didn't have to comply with, right? And then obviously some didn't, and they were fine. They were more than fine.

Maya Wiley: Thank you, Costco.

Phil Buchanan: Yeah. Thank you, Costco. Thank you, Delta Airlines. You know, a number of other major companies, and they did fine. You know, that's what the data shows. But I think even more shocking to me was to see some foundations quietly walk away from racial justice programs. I wanna give due credit for those that doubled down and then also say the ones that walked away from, you know, racial justice programs, eliminated DEI roles that they had touted the establishment of just a couple of years prior, shut down climate change programs. And so this brings me back to kinda where we started. So you talked about money drying up, and is that what it's about or is it more than that? 'Cause you said it started in twenty twenty-two, even before the threats that we've seen since January twenty twenty-five. So can you analyze a bit what you think is behind less money going to protecting democracy at the exact moment that we need it more than ever? Like, why?

Maya Wiley: Well, let's sharpen this a little bit. That's such a great question, Phil, and I wanna narrow this question a bit. We have never in this country had sufficient philanthropic dollars going to communities of color and community of color-led institutions, whether Native American, Latino, Asian American, or Black. So we have a historic problem we've never addressed. I just wanna say that up front. But then we had George Floyd. George Floyd viciously murdered. It's still hard to even remember. And George Floyd's wasn't the first. I live in New York, where we had Eric Garner. But that video in particular, I say in particular 'cause we've had so much video. But that video in particular did something vastly different because we also had, by some instances, 25 to 50 million people demonstrating in the streets in this country after the murder of George Floyd. That movement that started saying we should do something about systemic racism, literally using the language, language I've used my whole life that was never normalized or... and suddenly we had, we had people who were white who had never participated in a protest before marching. So part of what happened is we had over 1,000 corporations commit over \$200 billion to address systemic racism. Within a year of that, we had an analysis that showed that 90% of at least the top 50 million was in loans and investments because they were from financial institutions. And a lot of questions about what happened, what was going on with the rest of the money. And then two years in, two years in, even Forbes magazine was saying, "Where'd all that money go? What happened?" And a lot of groups reporting, yeah, we didn't see... I say this because we know that there were institutions doing important work and actually making investments, so thank you for those that did, and some have continued those commitments. But it's a fraction of the dollars that were committed. I think there are multiple factors here, by the way. I don't think we should suggest they're simple, but certainly for the corporate sector, it's such a political calculus. I think donors, philanthropy, we started seeing the shying away in some instances because people were anticipating the politics. The rise in the drumbeat from right-wing nonprofit organizations that were attacking diversity, equity, inclusion did not start with the administration itself. I mean, remember we saw Project 2025 a year before also saying the quiet parts out loud. So I'm saying we were already experiencing the attacks in a different kind of way because it didn't start with this administration.

Phil Buchanan: The vibe shift was already happening.

Maya Wiley: That's right. But once you have a trifecta That's when the power shift itself within the beltway of a trifecta just created the next level of drop because of fear. But the fear was clear because it was already clear what direction this trifecta was going to go in. And I'm not saying this to be partisan. I'm saying this to say what their explicit policy statements were and the things they said they would do. And then by January 2025, it's day one. So all of those things were a drumbeat of build that started before the November election 2024 and before this administration, because it's never about just politicians. It's about the financial investments from donors and funders that have very different views from those of us who believe in multiracial democracy and the demographic shifts of this country. I don't think we can understand the efforts to mainstream white supremacy and neo-Nazism, because that's what we've seen explicitly. Mainstreaming the great replacement theory, which comes for all of us in the end. The explicitness about a president that says civil rights laws, which protect everyone, that civil rights laws are hurting white men. And those

become policy statements. We've seen 2,500 grants in addressing health disparities and healthcare issues in marginalized communities that has impacted not only communities of color, but in particular communities of color, but in the end impacts a whole bunch of communities. Gone. Gun violence prevention money, gone. Food bank money, gone. Why? Because they care about serving everyone? They care about paying attention to communities that are underserved? But that drumbeat didn't start here, but it did get weaponized with the power that comes from the incredible power of federal government. And so I just think we have to understand that trajectory, but we can't understand the trajectory without understanding the very real angst and anxiety that was intentionally driving this country's changing, and it is significantly more diverse. But I will say this, in our fifth annual Civil Rights Monitor poll, because we look at the trends on viewpoints, and it is a representative sample of Americans, 92% of Americans value diversity, say it's a strength. 92%. It's gone up in our poll. It's always been popular. It's gone up in our poll. What we debate is what we do about it. But what this administration has done is tried intentionally to tell us lies about diversity, and then to try to drive a wedge between us rather than pull us together, even when it's plain what they're doing and why they're doing it, we've had far too many institutions capitulate rather than say, "You know what? 92% of us agree." It is about diversity. Most Americans are proud of our democracy, and most Americans want it to be better and stronger. So let's stop lying about it. Let's start investing equally in all our people. But we have not been investing equally in people of color, and let's be honest about it.

Phil Buchanan: Right. Right. Yeah, I had a conversation this week with a leader of an organization in a small Midwestern city that is the primary, if not the sole, provider of services to the formerly human trafficked and victims of domestic violence, and they lost a third of their funding, government funding. Not only that, they lost the opportunity to receive grants from foundations that objected to their continued use of the term LGBTQ, their continued reference to racial equity, their continued communication about the value of immigrant communities. And I pushed her on, like, "That really happened, each of tho-" "Yeah, absolutely it happened." You know? And so it is so sobering, and I hope that people can come out of this fever that they're in and get back to the values that you're describing and recognize we're stronger when we truly value everybody.

Maya Wiley: I'm so glad you raised that, Phil, because it's another example of this drying up of resources, and these attacks on organizations are intentionally attacking people who can be villainized more easily to the general public. So transgender too, we should name. It is critically important that we do not allow that because we also forget, you know, people with disabilities come in every race. People who are transgender come in every race. People who are LGBTQ come in every race. They also come in every ideology. And they live in every community. And so every time these things happen, sex trafficking, another great example where the news pays a lot of attention, rightly by the way, to the Epstein files and to the horrible treatment of survivors of Jeffrey Epstein, but too often ignores it's not just that. It's also that they attack the very funding to support victims and to try to prevent the sex trafficking. So I just say that because it's so important, and I just am very grateful for you naming it.

Phil Buchanan: Yeah. Well, I wanna just ask you about how you experience this moment that we're in relative to the arc of your incredible career, because I don't know, but I imagine, and you can correct me, tell me if this is not right, but that you probably felt like some of these battles have been won and that we could move forward and build off them and to see, for example, the dismantling of the Voting Rights Act. How do you stay positive despite these setbacks and despite having to see the kind of things that, you know, you've been able to build on in your career rolled back in this way? Like, I just think that it must be so hard given what you've given your life to.

Maya Wiley: Oh, it's hard.

Phil Buchanan: Yeah.

Maya Wiley: But the hard thing is, is staying in the fight and in the work. It's emotionally devastating, but it's not dev- I, you know, I think it's a complicated thing. So-

Phil Buchanan: Yeah ...

Maya Wiley: the thing about being Black in America is we had never quite yet arrived. So yes, the progress was real. You know, I was born in 1964. I was born the year of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. My father was a civil rights organizer sending buses to the March on Washington in 1963, and himself staying in Syracuse, where he was organizing, because he was literally laying his body down. They were literally blocking bulldozers from bulldozing Black housing. But what I was very aware of in 1989, when I graduated law school, was I was entering a legal environment where our rights and wins were already under attack. So on one level, it's because we were always having to fight. That needing to fight did not stop despite the progress, and the progress was real. But the way I've stayed in it, you know, there's a reason this administration attacks history. There's a reason there's an attack on books. There's a reason there's an attack on teachers. There's a reason there's attack on the African American Cultural History Museum and the Smithsonian. And the attack is they don't want us to know our history because it creates great power. So part of what keeps me going is if I sat in my parents' shoes in 1964 when I was born, they were not feeling very positive, and yet we got the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965. They moved on into economic justice, which was one of the demands of the civil rights movement. We had the War on Poverty at least for a few years. Didn't last long enough, but the point is they never stop, and I'll never forget my mother, who constantly would say, "I'm not an optimist." She's like, "I think this country's racist." By the way, she was a white woman. That's why she said it. She's like, she grew up in a racist community. She said, "No, that's like deep in the soil." She said, "What matters is the fight."

Phil Buchanan: Mm-hmm.

Maya Wiley: And that's why I go back to the words I live by from John Lewis, which is, you know, democracy's an act, and we have to keep acting or we lose it, and we

have to keep acting or we don't make it better and stronger. And so that commitment is a lifetime commitment and needs to be for all of us. So even in these dark days, I just think about my forebearers and how dark their days were, how impossible the fight looked, how much they weren't sure if there would be any light at the end of that tunnel, and the threats were there for them, too. And in some places, and increasingly again now, even physical But this is the point, they didn't stop. So I look at all they've given us as a generation, as a country, and I just think our job is to pay it forward. Not to expect the promise, but to make the demand for the future.

Phil Buchanan: I think that's a great place to leave it, and so powerful. And Maya, I appreciate your leadership and what you're fighting for, and appreciate you spending time today talking with me. Thanks so much.

Maya Wiley: Well, I appreciate you, Phil, because we need to have this conversation. I'm grateful that you create and continue to create a platform for it, so thank you.

Phil Buchanan: Thanks, Maya.

There are a ton of resources about effective giving on The Center for Effective Philanthropy's website, cep.org, as well as givingdoneright.org, where you'll find all of our episodes and show notes. You can also send us a note at gdrpodcast@cep.org.

We want to thank our sponsors who've made this season possible, including Sobrato Philanthropies, Prebys Foundation, Stupski Foundation, and Colorado Health Foundation. And a note that any opinions expressed by our guests on the show do not necessarily reflect the view of CEP or our sponsors.

If you liked the show, please leave us a review... or invite a friend to listen.

Giving Done Right is a production of the Center for Effective Philanthropy. It's produced by Cold Italian.

Our original podcast artwork is by Jay Kustka. Special thanks to our colleagues Sarah Martin, Molly Heidemann, Christina Tran, Chloe Heskett, and Naomi Rafal for their marketing, research, writing, fundraising, and logistical support.

CEP provides data, feedback, programs, and insights to help individual and institutional donors improve their effectiveness. CEP is a nonpartisan, tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. We do not endorse, support, or oppose any political party or candidate for public office. Our research, programs, and public communications are designed to advance our mission and serve the public interest without regard to partisan considerations.