

## Conversation with Adria Goodson

In this People First Talk with Adria Goodson of the Ford Foundation, we explored the leadership we need today and how to cultivate it. Watch the talk [here](#).

### Key ideas

- We need to increase leaders' abilities to navigate complexity, which means growing their capacity to make meaning of the world, navigate difference, and hold more perspectives.
- Ford Foundation's Global Fellows Program, which aims to disrupt inequality, is making an intentional choice to do this by investing in *co-design* of their fellowship to share power with fellows and to enable not just individual learning but also *collective learning*.
- Co-creation is different from input and collaboration; an input model means seeking feedback on an agenda you've designed; co-creation and co-imagination shift the dynamic so that those closest to the challenges (e.g., local leaders) are the primary architects of the design while others play an advisory role (e.g., global advisory group).
- Other lessons learned around co-design include: (1) Letting go of one's own ideas and being guided by those most proximate to the challenges (2) Being transparent upfront to attract people who are ready for this type of collective work (3) Going slower to fully embrace diverse perspectives (4) Recognizing that co-creation still takes a lot of work, but that it is a different type of work.
- To disrupt inequality in the world, we need to create a community where *everyone* belongs - those who are proximate to the challenges, as well as those who hold power.
- We can begin by creating "rehearsal spaces" where we practice being together in new ways across traditional siloes (e.g., funders, activists). This requires intentional work to not treat people from different groups as "others" but see them as humans first.
- We also need to get creative in thinking about measurement. For example, with their Global Fellows Program, the Ford Foundation conducts storytelling interviews where fellows share their stories with one another with a measurement partner present - this not only fosters learning but also strengthens connections within the community.
- It's also helpful to build support networks or a "kitchen cabinet of advisors" who can challenge and support us as we do this hard work (e.g., holding the pain of inequality, disrupting old paradigms) and who can help us grow at our own "learning edges".



**Adria Goodson**

Director of Global Fellows  
Program, Ford Foundation

“While we talk about colonization as if it’s in the past, it’s still being replicated in many systems today, so we need to explore this question of decolonizing our minds... and see the possibility for a community that can collectively imagine substantively different worlds and structures.”

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Our next People First Talk will be with **José Zaglul**, President of the **Global Consortium of Higher Education and Research for Agriculture (GCHERA)** on May 10 at 11am EST / 4pm BST / 8:30pm IST. Register for the talk [here](#).

For more information on the People First Community and effort, please visit [peoplefirstdev.org](http://peoplefirstdev.org) or sign-up [here](#).