

Conversation with Cheryl Dorsey

In this People First Talk, we learned how [Echoing Green](#) supports emerging social entrepreneurs to develop their leadership and address systemic injustice. Watch the talk [here](#).

Key ideas

- Echoing Green invests in social entrepreneurs early in their journeys, supporting them to grow their ideas and leadership at a key inflection point, in pursuit of a lifetime of impact.
- The organization selects leaders from a competitive pool based on: **passion** (the protective coating that keeps you going), **purpose** (the North Star that guides “why” you do the work), **resilience** (being able to respond to failure), and **identity alignment** (connecting the cause to one’s own experience & values, and understanding one’s own role in the larger movement).
- Echoing Green supports fellows in many ways to grow their leadership:
 - **Mentorship** through pairing emerging social entrepreneurs with seasoned ones, with a focus on reciprocal relationships where alumni give back to the community.
 - **Affinity groups** and informal networks that allow social entrepreneurs to support and learn from one another (e.g., Black Women Leaders, regional gatherings).
 - **Spaces to show up as one’s whole self** and speak with candor about challenges, as well as access to a secular chaplain who supports entrepreneurs to do the deep personal work required to weather storms, address trauma and navigate burnout.
 - **Access to external experts** on critical skills (e.g., fundraising) with a focus on “real talk” and learning from alumni social entrepreneurs.
- There is **an active focus on addressing systemic injustice & power**, noting that structures of *oppression* (systematic unjust treatment of certain groups) and *hegemony* (the dominance of certain groups) are often at the root of what stops more people from thriving.
 - Echoing Green leverages its network to **collectively advocate for and develop solutions to systemic issues** (e.g, unequal access to capital for Black entrepreneurs)
 - They’ve learned that **relational capital and trust is needed to get work done** and that building trust requires “*transparency, accountability, and space for all voices.*”
- **People first approaches are needed if we wish to build a global multiracial, multicultural and just society.** We need to invest in people who are able to forge alliances across lines of difference, and who can exercise the leadership needed to upgrade our institutions in ways that challenge hegemonic paradigms of leadership and instead enable “*all of us to be changemakers as the norm, rather than the exception.*”



Cheryl Dorsey

President,
Echoing Green

“ Unless we are explicit about having a **power analysis**, we’re never going to go where we need to go. There’s your individual responsibility to leverage your assets and power to support the whole. There’s also self-reflective work that organizations need to do to go on their own journeys around centering proximity, inclusion & belonging.”