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**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** Welcome to *Trust Talks*, Episode 24. I am Iona Calhoun-Battiste, senior director of collective power at The Chicago Community Trust. Chicago is one of the nation's most influential cultural cities, home to world-renowned architecture, a powerful museum ecosystem, and a vibrant, grassroots art scene rooted in our neighborhoods. From theater to public art, culture shapes our neighborhoods identity and fuels our economy. For more than a century, the Trust has stood alongside Chicago's arts community and our commitment to arts and culture remains steady and strong.

As our strategies evolve, we continue to honor the vision of our donors while aligning support with our mission to expand opportunities and prosperity across Chicago for all, this is about purposeful investment, recognizing arts as essential infrastructure that strengthens local businesses, connects communities, and drives economic mobility, especially in places where the investment makes the most difference. Today, we're exploring what it takes to sustain a thriving, equitable cultural sector and why investing in both legacy institutions and community-based organizations is essential to Chicago's future.

Joining me to explore this are Janell Nelson, director of the Englewood Arts Collective, David Feiner, co-founder of the Albany Park Theater Project, and Nora Daley, board chair of the Illinois Arts Council. Just take a moment to introduce yourselves. Nora, we can start with you.

**Nora Daley:** Sure. Nora Daley, I wear a lot of different hats in the city and across the state. I have the honor and privilege of being the board chair of the Illinois Arts Council among many other projects that I work on here in Chicago. I am thrilled to be a part of this awesome discussion.

**Janell Nelson:** I am Janell Nelson. I fashion myself a creative strategist. That tends to be the phrase that encapsulates the hats that I wear. I'm also a director at Englewood Arts Collective, a nonprofit and community organization of artists that work together primarily in the lane of creative place-making. I'm also an artist myself and a creative small business owner, and a child of Englewood, but a woman of Chicago. This entire city is ours.

**David Feiner:** I'm David Feiner, co-founder and co-executive director, alongside Miguel Rodriguez, of Albany Park Theater Project or APTP. APTP is a youth-centered theater company based in the Albany Park neighborhood on the northwest side of the city where teens create original theater inspired by the real-life stories of immigrant and first-generation Chicagoans. We draw an audience of 5,000 people each year to see the theater performances that the teens create. That audience comes from the neighborhood, of course, but throughout Chicago and beyond. We also run programs in Albany Park public schools for 750 students every year. Really glad to be here.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** I'm so glad all of you all are here. At the Trust, we work with a diverse group of donors who have deep, longstanding passions for Chicago cultural institutions. How can we honor those traditional legacies while also inviting donors to see how their giving can help improve economic stability today? Nora, I'm going to direct that question to you.

**Nora Daley:** Yeah, absolutely. I think the Trust has such a rich history. So, I think you guys have done a wonderful job of balancing that. Investing in the traditional arts and cultural organizations is just as important as investing in what's going on in communities. I don't think it's an "either or" I think it's a "both and". I think we need to support and have a world-class symphony and opera and theater. So much of those organizations tend to be in the loop in the downtown area, but I think it's just as important that we educate and just kind of bring to awareness of all the amazing things that are happening across our city.

These are just two awesome examples, and really when you go and you experience the art, it is transformative. I think it's really just kind of a call to action for so many of those very generous supporters and contributors to the Trust who are curious. They're curious about our city. So much of this is just kind of communication and opportunity, and letting them know about some of the awesome projects that they can invest in.

I do believe, like you were saying, I think arts and culture is essential infrastructure. It is the lifeblood of communities. They tend to be the first anchor in a neighborhood or in a rural community in Illinois. When you see kind of the downtown or the main street being revitalized, it tends to be artists and creative businesses that are the first there, and then more of the traditional businesses tend to populate the block, but they are really on the forefront. So, I'm really excited to be having this conversation for everyone to learn a little bit more about what's happening here in Englewood and as well as at the Albany Park neighborhood.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** Yeah, thank you. Tell us a little bit more about the Illinois Arts Council. What are you guys doing and how you're also driving economic development?

**Nora Daley:** We are. That's really how I talk about is through an economic lens. It's investing in small businesses. It's investing in medium-sized businesses across the state. So, we have a very robust arts programming, really funding for artists and arts organizations. Our artists are creative entrepreneurs. One of the things that we've recently done, which I think has been really important and intentional, was our program team is now focused on regions and focused on communities in Chicago. Because you can be the dance expert say, or the theater expert, but I think it's much more important for us to know what's happening in these communities. Where are there investments? Where can we work with our sister agencies and say, "Oh, this is happening."

Or one of the goals for this year at the Illinois Arts Council that I'm going to be doing with the governor's team is really trying to break down those silos in government. There's money in the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and Department of Juvenile Justice and Public Health.

One of the goals for this year is for us to be able to really break down those silos and provide opportunities, more opportunities for public dollar investment to creative businesses across the state.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** I love that. And I know the Arts Council is very interested in weaving that public and private dollars together, so it really expands artists' understanding of where these opportunities live considering their funding cuts. That's amazing. That's amazing work.

Janell, sometimes you often describe art as infrastructure and not an ornament, like we talked about. Can you share how public art and cultural programming helps stabilize place, attract investment, and fold together the communities that have long been separated by race, class and perception?

**Janell Nelson:** Yes. Thank you for that question. As Nora was saying, art is a catalyst. I know this, I live it. I breathe, and I've seen it, and I'm seeing it currently. It is a catalyst for economic investment and civic cohesion, which also in turn drives economic investment. Art is a catalyst of these things, even before traditional market metrics catch up to it. The artists come first to areas that may be sketchy or have not so great narratives.

So, it's near and dear to me, and I'm very passionate about the fact that art is not just decoration. Artists are not simply folks that you invite in after you figured out what to do, and you just have them make something, "look good." Artists are creative problem solvers and can be leaders in their community by virtue of their skill and their talent, but also in the ways in which artists and creatives work together and within the community and of the community.

If I were to be more specific and less theoretical, I could speak to two examples. One, an artistic act or a piece of public art and a public art activation, helping to develop the corner of 58th and Halsted. That area was a "dead zone", and there was a public competition five years ago for someone to put up a mural. We applied; we won the grant. Right away, we knew while we could, we have muralists as part of our collective, what happens when artists, knowing the power of the art that they can do, mobilize? So we turned that mural making day into a day of celebration, and we used ourselves as a platform to invite over 10 different other community orgs that are already doing the work. It may not be necessarily a bunch of painters. It may be folks that are helping provide resources, and food justice. This was five years ago when we did it and it became our signature vibration of this is what happens when EAC shows up. It is a festival. This is so festive, this is joyous.

We gave away diapers, we had yoga on the lawn, and all of these other things. We had a drumming circle, and we had a live band. While that might seem like a lot of fun, and it was, we raised the vibration of the community, we started to shift the narrative. People started to trust what is happening when there is all this energetic love and energy, but it's also catalytically starting to change people's understandings and expectations. That site helped mobilize what was already happening with another community organization, Grow Greater Englewood, as a future site for the Englewood Nature Trail.

Englewood Arts Collective, we put a mural there, we beautified the viaduct. Now, when you drive down Halstead and you enter into the community, there's this huge visual signature. Because as a graphic designer, I always say that our lived environment is also a language, and it's also markers of not just quality of life, but who deserves investment, who lives here, what type of place this is.

So, from that one act, we have now started to change the look of the space, and five years later, I can proudly say that farmer's markets happen there regularly in season. I've also put up another sculpture in that space that has become a touch point for tours. People come there and schools and students and design students. It's become this hub, a frequent hub of economic activity, which also has health and safety outcomes, and it's mobilized. That's one example of how art can mobilize.

The most prominent expression of the EAC arts village for five years running has been showing up at the Englewood music fest. EMF, is the brainchild of the local aldermen, but there's power in partnerships. I cannot overstate how important it is for people from all, as you said, break down the silos, right, government and other entities to work with creatives. So, the alderman invited us a few years ago to, and I quote, just do what you all do, can you just come here and do what you do? So, we raised money and we showed up and we showed out. Last year was a great example because it was the biggest footprint in the festival. Over, I think, 20,000 people on Eventbrite bought tickets. There was a narrative, I will say was, in past tense, that, "you don't go to Englewood, because it's not safe", but people from all over made it a point to come to this festival, bring the babies, come on, grandma, come on, uncle, come and not just look at public art, because we also did that. We brought in and we partnered with Floating Museum, and the Shedd Aquarium partnered with us on our kids zone. So, we crossed these divides of Chicago institutions. I'm so proud to say over the years, we have employed over 300 other, my beloved "1099ers". Those artists that don't always get to shine, and so contract our artist friends and our friends of friends and people that we know are even sometimes afraid to call themselves creatives, because they have a day job. But it's like, no, you are an artist, too.

All of the people that help make events like that run, are small business owners and vendors that helped us build the mural walls, the fabricators, the contractors, the balloon lady, the drummers, the people that helped put together the stage and the skating rink. This is creative acts directly having economic impact.

**Nora Daley:** Janell, I think that's really important for people to know. They need to invest in these opportunities. Just because there's a partnership doesn't mean that everyone needs to get paid. They do. There's a partnership with the Shedd. Yes, bring your expertise, but no one can do anything for free. I think that one of the frustrating things there is this perception like, "well, artists can just do it for free." It's like, no, 1099, these are jobs. Talk about economic development, you're investing in people. I think it's important that we, like any other business, say what we need in order to make the organization or the event thrive. Because we tend to always try and figure it out. We just need to let people know that this is just as important as investment as anything else that you would be doing.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** Yeah. No, that's a great point. Speaking of investment, so investments can start early, right? David, the Albany Park Theater Project is legendary for its youth engagement. How does investing in a young person's creative education serve as a bridge to professional career paths and long-term economic stability for them and their families?

**David Feiner:** I love this question, and I'm really grateful for it. Thank you. I have a number of ways I want to talk about that. The first one is that when we talk about so many of the arts organizations in Chicago that are working with young people, are community-based organizations that are working with young people to create art that is about their communities, emerges from their communities or is about their city. What we're talking about is young people having an opportunity to look at the world, to represent the world as they see it, and also to think about and imagine the world as they think it should be or as they would like it to be. Those are two tools that are about developing skills that are essential for problem-solving and for future thinking.

Also, artists make something out of nothing, and I don't mean with nothing, right? To Nora's point, payment is really important, but artists are always sitting down, starting from nothing and you're creating something, again, incredible tools for whatever field a young person might go into eventually. I think arts is a great way to start for entrepreneurs. You talked, Janell, about being a creative entrepreneur, but I also want to talk about arts as employment. Many of our youth arts organizations in the City of Chicago are employing young people as artists. Albany Park Theater Project does that, I know Theater Best in Chicago, our friends at Free Street Theater, our employing young people, our friends at Collaboraction are employing young people, and again, those are three examples of organizations that are employing young people, yes, to make art and to be looking at their community and looking at their city, and making art in response to what they see and making art about how they want the world to be, and they're getting paid to do it.

Using Albany Park Theater Project as one example, in 2023, we opened a show called, Port of Entry, which is a site-specific and immersive performance that essentially recreates an apartment building in the Albany Park neighborhood where immigrants from all parts of the world live side by side with one another. This is a show created by teens about their community and performed by young people. They are paid for their rehearsal time and they're paid for their performance time. Since we opened that show in 2023, that show's resulted in more than a half million dollars in youth employment. I think that's a really important point.

I think another important point is, and this kind of ties into that sense of looking at the world, seeing the world as it is, thinking about the world as you want it to be, as it should be. Our young people from Albany Park Theater Project, yes, we have some who will pursue careers in the arts, but by and large, they're not coming in and saying, oh, I'm training to be an artist. Right? They're saying, I'm training to be the person I want to be in the world, and I'm training to be somebody who can make a difference for my family, who can make a difference for my community, who can make a difference for my city.

The number one profession that our young people go into is education. We have more of our alumni working as teachers than anything else. We also have an incredible number who've gone on to work for elected officials who are working in aldermanic offices, who are working as community organizers. So again, there's that sense, I think, that's just magical about a youth arts program and how it gets you to be seeing the world.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** Well, David, can I ask you this? Young people may not have that ability to express themselves through school and some of the academics. Talk about how you see this level of expression come out through young people, through the work that they do, and how does that resonate with the community?

**David Feiner:** Yeah, I really appreciate that question. It actually gets to exactly what I was thinking about. Which is, if you talk about developing agency in young people, if you talk about developing a sense for a young person who maybe grows up in a divested neighborhood, a neighborhood where it's easy to think that you don't matter to your city, that you don't matter to your country, arts is all about agency. If you are working as a young person in the arts, you are making something that can matter to your community. If you're a young person and you're involved in a mural project and that mural stays up and becomes a hub in your neighborhood, every time you walk by that mural, every time you drive by that mural, you can look at it and say, I did something that people care about.

It's not about developing future leaders, it's about developing right now leaders. The young people who are involved in Port of Entry, we have people coming from all over the neighborhood, but also all over the city, flying in from around the country, who are coming in to study this show, who are coming in to look at what these young people are doing. Next week, we have the cast and the crew working on the immersive show at Theater of the Mind at the Goodman all coming for a private showing of Port of Entry as a way to see how immersive theater is being done.

Our youth are an example to people, and this gets at that question that you were asking earlier about the relationship between the mainstream legacy downtown institutions and the neighborhood institutions. There is a beautiful reciprocal relationship there. When a young person is involved in making something and somebody comes up and says, this is so memorable, I've been going to theater for 50 years, and this is one of the most memorable theater experiences I've ever had. That catalyzes something inside of a young person who can be starting to think like, oh, okay, I have value. What I have to say has value. My contributions have value, and again, that transcends the arts. Whether that young person then goes on and says, I have value as an artist. I'm going to pursue my art making professionally, great. It may just be, my experience has value, my culture has value, my voice has value, and I'm going to take that into my future and I'm going to believe in myself.

**Janell Nelson:** I just want to piggyback on something, or broadly to everything you said. But I just have to state, historically through policies or what have you, there's time and time again, this country will cut its nose off to spite its face. I think that's the phrase. But basically, racism and systemic inequality have hurt everyone. Investing in the arts helps

everyone, investing in the youth, using arts and creative solutions directly serving the people where they are in all communities, especially divested ones, but also incredibly pouring into the youth or populations that have been historically overlooked, it helps everyone.

But it's also that data that doesn't always get uplifted. It's having an impact that isn't always acknowledged, because too often the negative impacts are what's seen, a salacious news story about teens downtown being teens gets more coverage than what didn't happen, because the teens were doing something that was passion-fueled, and also put money in their pockets and into their households.

**David Feiner:** I think the other one thing I want to mention related to this is that so many of the organizations that work with young people in the arts are also working directly with them to imagine their futures post high school, college is not the only way to a future. We know that it is still true that a college education typically means a million dollars more in earnings over a lifetime, that college educated folks are more likely to have health insurance, which also results in healthier life and longer life.

Many of our peer organizations, including Albany Park Theater Project, we have post-secondary counseling programs that are doing that. We are a culture that when you walk in to us as a seventh grader or an eighth grader, you're surrounded by other young people and by alums of the organization who are thinking about and demonstrating that this future planning in ways that are bold. Our former board chair, Samir Mayekar, calls our young people at Albany Park Theater Project, distance travelers. Because there is this sense, you're looking at this culture of, and Miguel Rodriguez, my co-executive, talks about people leading choice-filled lives, that you come in as a young person and you see other young people around you, just a little bit older than you, who are making choices about their futures.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** Yeah. This is also great, and something I've heard all of you all talk about are the legacy organizations. What I'm seeing more often now is the legacy organizations are starting to be a bridge, using artists that bridge to more community-based arts organizations. Talk to me a little bit about that. How can we encourage that? How is that beneficial to Albany Park Theater taking young people, not only like, hey, we're going to take all these kids down to downtown to the Goodman. How is the Goodman coming to you? Talk to me a little bit. Do we see that? Can we see that?

**Nora Daley:** You take it first.

**Janell Nelson:** I'll kick it off. You all jump in.

**David Feiner:** You go ahead.

**Janell Nelson:** One of my favorite things that I like to do is "bully", whether it be a city department or a partnering organization, and I say bully in quotation marks. It's all love and

friendly. But I leverage the fact that, for example, DCASE, Chicago's Cultural Affairs Department, in past years has partnered with Englewood Arts Collective on a few occasions. I have worked as a project manager for a large-scale mural initiative where I was able to bring on board some prominent names in the Chicago art scene to erect some murals, but also hire a lesser-known, Black woman-owned tech company to do a value add to the murals and create augmented reality to the murals, which as a theme isn't new, but that was not even part of the scope of what they were asking for. So, by bringing in an arts group and letting us do what we do, it's like, hey, we can make this really pop. Let's go. DCASE is an arts department, so maybe that's an easy lift. But I say all the time that institutions that think they want to bring an artist to the table, needs that artist more than they know. I encourage folks to bring them to the table before the project is cooked, before the idea and the budgets have been totally planned. I think it's about reframing the expectations of what can come when you work with artists and when you really invest in creatives. It's not always about getting a mural in the office of say a legacy institution. It might be about said legacy institution wanting to increase their foot traffic. Maybe that museum has had a slow day, maybe they want to have better outreach in a particular neighborhood, maybe they really want to see themselves as a Chicago institution, but they're not really getting all of Chicagoans to be a part of their audience. Work with the artist or an artist group to help you meet those metrics. I think a lot of beautiful things can happen when we kind of expand our understanding.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** Yeah. Nora, I'm going to punt it to you for-

**Nora Daley:** Yeah.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** Go ahead.

**Nora Daley:** It's like a new definition for partnership. I think what is really important is that it's the artists, it's the creatives, the organizations in the community that are saying, we are interested. I'm sure it was little people that wanted to see the Shedd, or maybe not, maybe I'm wrong. But where are those really creating authentic partnerships and making sure it's not what they want, but it's what the community wants.

**Janell Nelson:** Yeah, it's not just extractive. It's in transactional and respectful ways.

**Nora Daley:** Yes. Yes. And they're the experts, bringing in their expertise, but also understanding that it's a two-way street. I really love this example of the Goodman, David Byrne and this really big spectacular thing that's going to be happening in River North, and they know they need to learn more. So, what other better theater immersive project in Chicago? There is none other than the Albany Park. So, I think that is just an amazing story. I mean, the Goodman has been around for a hundred years, understanding there's more to learn and we can learn from artists, young artists, and a community-based theater company that is really doing extraordinary work.

**David Feiner:** I'm thinking of a couple of really good examples. I think that the Lyric Opera did some really interesting work under Anthony Freud and Cayenne Harris when she was there, which was not just about, how do we get young people in Chicago to fall in love with opera? Right? It's not about how do we get them to appreciate operas that are hundreds of years old. They were looking and building relationships to say, let's make some operas in communities in Chicago about those communities with people from those neighborhoods. Let's bring our expertise in the form, but also, let's stretch the form. Let's stretch the definition. Let's not be afraid to say that opera can be made out of folk songs. Right?

I think that's a really wonderful example. For several years in the early, what the 2010s, Goodman gave Albany Park Theater Project a slot every summer in the Owen Theater, and we were there for three to five weeks performing our shows, because I think the Goodman and John Collins, who's now the executive director at the Goodman, John was really a good friend to us and really launched this and backed this saw oh, there is a company that is doing something that isn't being done elsewhere, that we're not doing, that our theater isn't doing, and let's expand the audience for that. Let's bring that to our audience and also let's bring their audience down and introduce them to the Goodman, because Albany Park Theater's audience is going to come down to see their company here, and it might be for many of them it's going to be their first time walking into the space.

I think there are these novel ways of thinking about that, and I think when we talk about, going back to where you started this with the Trust's, donors and their intention, I think maybe a message is the reality is we have to increase the pot of money. I mean, we have to not be thinking either, or. We have to not be approaching this from, is the money going to the legacy institutions or is the money going to the organizations working in the neighborhoods? We have to be creative and clever and bold and generous and find enough money, not thinking that scarcity mindset, but thinking that abundance mindset and find a way to fully invest in both types of organizations.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** So we're going to do a round-robin real quick. We'll call it love it or leave it. So, name one Chicago-based art tradition that you'll love, and one terrible stereotype about a starving artist that we want to leave behind.

I'll go first. So, one neighborhood-based art tradition that I absolutely love is the Chicago House Music Festival. I just love that. We are dancing, we're free. Everybody's just vibing. It's a point to just sit. Everybody's bringing food. It's a huge picnic with this amazing art of music. So, I love that. One thing that I'm going to leave behind as a starving artist is that starving artists have no business.

**Nora Daley:** I think that Chicago is a global leader in investing in public art. I think it's something that I'd like to see more of. I was going to do the starving art, the business sense because they're entrepreneurs, many artists are entrepreneurs and they have smart business sense. That narrative for sure, that needs to be flipped. Many are creative business owners themselves. I got to pick something else that I'd want to leave. I'm going to have to think for a second.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** Okay. We'll come back. We'll come back.

**Nora Daley:** Okay.

**Janell Nelson:** Love it or leave it. I love, and I know this is not necessarily unique to Chicago, but nobody does it like Chicago. I love our storytelling, and the way we do tours. Shout out to everyone's favorite TikTok historian.

**David Feiner:** Yes.

**Nora Daley:** Agree.

**Janell Nelson:** So we've partnered with Dilla a lot, but also I'm going to ask folks in the audience wherever you may be, if you're a funder or not, Dilla might be booked, but you can figure out your own tour. Reach out to an organization like Albany Park, like EAC, and ask us what we've got going on. Maybe someone can host you to a litany of things that happen to be happening in that timeframe. I think it's a way to educate yourselves. We are a very historic city. We move with history. Everything we do is connected to something else, and we're so proud. We are a city of 77. We're proud to rep our neighborhoods, but it's very powerful when we cross-collab respectfully. I think that I love that and I want to see more of that. Because I think that is also a way to mitigate harm, to mitigate parachuting gentrification outcomes. So yeah, I love tours. I love a good tour.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** Okay, Janell, what are we leaving?

**Janell Nelson:** I'm leaving behind traditional definitions of arts. I think nail techs are artists. I think barbers are artists. We know that foot workers are a legitimate form of dance, and that's artistry as well. I think that sometimes folks that make plates in their apartments are artists, too, culinary artists. Let's expand to include more of those homegrown neighborhood creative expressionists, and let's start calling them artists, too.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** David?

**David Feiner:** I like that. I'm going to cheat and do two. There's Flavors of Albany Park, which Kay Villaman and her amazing team at North River Commission do every year. It is a food crawl through the neighborhood. There are like four or five different pathways, and you're going to actual restaurants from the neighborhood rather than food trucks being brought in from outside the neighborhood. It's amazing, and it is just joyful. The other is the Ecuadorian parade that happens every year on Montrose, straight through Albany Park. I live right off of Montrose, and that is just a joyful day to see the floats and the dancers and the music and everybody who comes out and lines Montrose to see that, and are walking along and it's bringing people out to the businesses along Montrose.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** What are we leaving?

**David Feiner:** Leave it is the sense that artists are not serious people or that because, and I think Janell or Nora, one of you said this earlier, or that because artists are doing something that they love, they don't have to get paid for it, or they don't have to get paid as much for it. The number of times that we'll get asked to do something by a business for less money than they would get out of bed in the morning for because, oh, it's arts. It doesn't have to be, you can just make it happen. Just come in and do a little skit for 10 minutes. Right? I'm going to leave that.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** Nora, did you figure out your leave it?

**Nora Daley:** I didn't. I am more additive. I like to get more investments, more money, more opportunities, because truly, if we invested in the community arts organizations like Albany and Englewood Artists Collective, you would see transformative change happen. You are already seeing it, but with real, true investment, you would be seeing change that is bigger than any developer coming in and redoing a block or a neighborhood.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** Yeah. Nora, Janell and David, thank you so much for being my guests.

**David Feiner:** Thank you.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** I am so happy you all said yes when we emailed and asked you. It really brought a lot to light for this podcast, so I'm really very grateful. So, thank you so much.

**Janell Nelson:** Thank you for platforming us.

**David Feiner:** Thank you.

**Nora Daley:** Yeah, it's great.

**David Feiner:** It's wonderful conversation.

**Iona Calhoun-Battiste:** Yes.

**Nora Daley:** Good way to kick off 2026.