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Welcome to Media Masters, a series of one-to-one interviews with people at the top of the media game. Today I'm joined down the line by Sarabeth Berman, chief executive of American Journalism Project, the philanthropic organisation which supports non-profit, local newsrooms. The project's first CEO, Sarabeth provides strategic leadership for the project's mission to accelerate the sustainable growth of non-partisan local news. Previously she was global head of public affairs at Teach For All, a network of social enterprises in 53 countries, where she led communications and public-sector partnerships. Sarabeth spent seven years in China, where she led fundraising and recruitment at Teach For China. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband and children and also serves on the board of the Mark Morris Dance Group. Sarabeth, thank you for joining me.

Thanks so much for having me, Paul.

It's a great pleasure. In fact, it's a great time to talk, is it not? Because it seems that nonprofit newsrooms are springing up everywhere across the states?

Yeah, it's true. Nonprofit news is really on the rise and I think it's really a pivotal moment for how we finance and sustain local news in this country. For the last decade and a half, we've been watching this kind of slow-motion crisis in local news in our country, thousands and thousands of papers have closed. And that crisis really accelerated in the last couple of years during COVID. And it's really because the business model that we used for a century and a half to finance local news has dried up, for a long time, we relied on advertising dollars to sustain local reporting and the rise of the internet has meant that advertising dollars really dried up.

If I had a bicycle to sell locally, I'd go straight on Craigslist, wouldn't I or something like Facebook marketplace. I remembered as a child selling a bicycle, you'd advertise the local paper and all of that advertising revenue

meant that they could fund local journalism. And that revenue just isn't there anymore.

Yeah, that's right. I mean, local newspapers are really the original microtargeting, but the rise of the internet meant that you could just get much more direct advertising and it made sense for businesses to move online. But the result of that is that the kind of public service that local newspapers provided, which is the service of original reporting for communities, has dried up. And so we really need to figure out a new way to sustain it. There's this really fascinating evidence about why it is that the decline of local news matters. I think it can be sort of easy from afar to look at the decline of local newspapers and say, yeah, that's terrible for journalists, that's terrible for newspapers, but it happens. Industries are disrupted all the time, but the reality is that our democracy is really founded on the premise that we are going to have informed citizens, that we're going to have communities that understand what's going on around them. And therefore people will be able to engage in democracy and that relies on a solid, free and local press. And so what we've seen is there's just very clear evidence that as newspapers have dried up, we're seeing that communities that lose a paper are seeing voter participation decline that detail, I think makes a lot of sense. Like if you didn't know what was going on in your community, why would you go and vote at the voter box? Like why would you get involved if you didn't know what was going on? There's also really clear evidence that government waste is increasing in communities that don't have a local paper and that the kind of transparency and the role that local orders played in holding the government to account was significant. We see in communities that don't have a local paper that spending goes up, that wages go up, that taxes go up. And then finally, and I think really importantly for the moment, there's really clear evidence that the decline of local news is contributing to polarisation in our country. Communities that have lost a local paper are far less likely to split their ticket. People are less likely to vote across party lines because they are sort of consumed with the cult of our national press. That's highly polarised, which means that issues that did not used to be partisan issues of local matters that were not partisan. We are now voting along party lines rather than just really grappling with the issues and who do we think could most effectively solve the problems that our local community is addressing?

I mean, as you say, it's also contributing inevitably, the collapse of local newspapers to a flood nationally of disinformation and fake news.

Yeah, it's true. I think the decline of local news has sort of left this vacant lot that allows for the weeds of disinformation to take root. There are a lot of dynamics that are contributing to the spread of misinformation in this country. No doubt. The fact that social media has sort of become a super spreader of misinformation and the

platforms really can't figure out how to get it under control. But there's also an issue that the decline of original reporting facts and people out there really fact checking, checking information, that is contributing to the spread of misinformation. A couple years ago, the country sort of watched this mayor in Stockton, California, Michael Tubbs, you might have seen some of the reporting around this. He was sort of a rising star in the democratic party and in his community, in Stockton, California, the local newspaper was basically gutted and this disinformation campaign took hold against him that spread rampant disinformation about around him. And it ultimately resulted in him not being able to get reelected and really subverting his political career. One that many had thought was a clear route to continued leadership. So we're seeing just the genuine implications that the fact that we're losing these kinds of first responders of fact and information in our communities is having on us.

And we're seeing partisan profit driven websites putting out propaganda, frankly, masquerading as local news as well.

Yeah, that's right. The New York Times reported on this a couple of years ago and it's really striking. There's now thousands of websites, they are profit driven websites that kind of masquerade as local news websites, but in fact our pay for play websites, PR representatives can essentially buy stories to either promote a candidate or to try to take down candidates. And as local newspapers are disappearing, it can be hard for consumers who are often getting their news through social media, to be able to tell what is fact and what is a partisan website that has an agenda.

I mean, readers often cut a difference because these sites are frankly deliberately very good at masking their purpose.

Yeah. I think that's right. It's really concerning, readers are getting this information on social media and I think it can be very hard for them to understand who's behind these stories. It's interesting because there's very clear data that people trust local news much more than they trust national news. So these partisan websites are capitalising on that. They know that if this is perceived to be a local outlet, you are likely to trust it more. I will say I tend to think that over time, local news, real local news, local news with reporters who are based in communities, local news with reporters who are really developing relationships with their audience, who are responding to what it is that their audience wants to read about, wants to learn about. I think that can be a really strong counterforce to this kind of partisan agenda driven websites, but that takes time and it takes financing.

Can you give us the American journalism project 101. For our listeners that aren't aware of you guys. Start at the beginning, who are you and what are you about what you're trying to achieve?

So we're a venture philanthropy, which means we take philanthropic dollars. We raise philanthropic dollars. And then we reinvest them in local news. Our goal is to catalyse the nonprofit news fields. We think that the nonprofit business model is a really promising business model to sustain local journalism across the country. But we also know that the path that's currently on is not yet on a path to really replace what's been lost from the decline of commercial journalism. So we see our role as to really catalyse the growth of the field. So what we're doing is we are identifying local news organisations across the country that we think have the potential to grow. We're investing in them and helping them build out their business operations. And we're working alongside them over a multi-year period to really help them strengthen their business operations, grow their revenue operation, and provide the fuel that powers the newsroom, the dollars that will ultimately pay for the journalists. We also are working with local philanthropy to try to really bring in significant capital for new nonprofit news organisations across the country. There are some philanthropists out there in the world who care about an issue. They care about climate change. They care about education, but there are also a lot of philanthropists who care about their place. They really want, say, Cleveland to be as strong and healthy as possible or Tulsa to be as strong and healthy as possible. And we're working with philanthropists like that to really help them understand why it is that having a strong local news ecosystem is essential to a healthy community. And so in those communities, we're doing market research, community listening and really frankly, holding a mirror up to community philanthropists and leaders and saying, here's the state of local news in your community. And in all cases, it's pretty breathtakingly dire. So we hold that up in front of them. And then we come up with a solution together for how we could solve the problem. And now in multiple markets, we announced a couple of weeks ago, a big investment in a new news organisation in Houston. We announced several months ago, an investment in a new news organisation in Ohio. And these are significant investments in the launch of new newsrooms that we will then help to incubate. And we hope it will really serve as a kind of new generation of anchor news organisations that are serving their communities.

Well, as you said, we can't have people voting on national issues locally because we need to hold the local politicians to account. And I was looking at your website on the scale of the problem, 2,100 newspapers have closed, 1,800 communities are without a local newsroom, and 60% of local journalism jobs no longer exist. Do you sometimes, I mean, don't get me wrong, what you're doing is incredible, but are you sometimes overall at the scale of the problem that you guys are helping to overcome?

So the problem is significant and I don't wanna underestimate it. However, if you look at other societal lows, the fact of the matter is that relative to those challenges, the idea of financing a core of reporters across this country is really not that expensive. We've done some sort of back of the envelope calculations to try to think about, okay, if we could build this industry from the ground up again, what would be, we call it internally viable journalism, what would be the minimum amount of journalism our country would need to be able to function effectively, and we've done some calculations and we get to an assumption that we think you could really build a kind of civic mind industry, where reporters are focused on covering the core civic infrastructure of this country for about a \$2 billion industry. And that would be an industry that would be financed through several lines of revenue, philanthropy, reader revenue, there is still some advertising revenue, corporate sponsored events, other creative revenue that actually is not that much money compared to so many of the other challenges that we're trying to solve. But what it's going to take is real focus from philanthropy, where I think philanthropy can make much more patient investments. They're not focused on getting returns in a short period of time. They can invest with longer time horizons in mind, it's going to take real operational excellence organisations, a new generation of digital organisations, really figuring out how to build diversified revenue. And it's gonna take real mission oriented organisations that are building trust with their community and genuinely providing valuable information and demonstrating their impact to their readers. And so it's going to take intentionality, but I think it is actually doable.

What's the biggest challenge in front of you at the moment? You've done a huge amount. You've backed a lot of these and created a lot of these local not-for-profit digital newsrooms . What's keeping up at night really? Is it scale? What is the sort of big ticket to-do item on your to-do list?

Yeah, scale is undoubtedly the biggest challenge in front of us, this is still early days for nonprofit news. There are some remarkable organisations that have been very successful. Our other co-founder, or is an individual named John Thornton who co-founded the Texas Tribune, in Texas, which is really hailed as one of the gold standards of what it looks like to create a nonprofit news model that is really relevant and providing value for Texans. We need to have many more examples of nonprofit news organisations across this country that are having some level of scale but I think another one of the real challenges is that for so long we did not look to philanthropy to fund local news. There was a very, very good business model that worked and was making a lot of people a lot of money and providing civic value to the country, which was the ad revenue model. Now we need to turn to philanthropists to really say, look, I know there are a lot of issues in this country, but one of them and one of them that's really foundational to being successful on many of the other challenges you're trying

to grapple with is making sure we have people who are informed. If you are worried about schools in this country, you should be worried about whether or not our school boards and our charter boards are being covered. If you're worried about healthcare in this country, you should be worried about whether or not there are reporters who are covering health systems and making sure that people have the information they need about this global pandemic that has rocked us for the past couple of years. And so we really need more and more philanthropists at the national and local level to invest and invest meaningfully in really rebuilding this industry.

It must be a challenge because I was going to ask you about how you choose where to direct your grants and resources? And, you know, I used to have a friend who was in the department for international development in the British government. He was a minister, George Falks. And he said whilst he really enjoyed helping worthy causes around the world, if you actually totaled up the number of applications inbound on that finite pot of money, it was like a hundred times more than the resources there were. So although he was doing it was great to give the grants were necessary. The reality of the job was that he was turning down a lot of very worthy people because they'd spent the money and allocated the resources already, which obviously he found very frustrating. Is that a big challenge as well? That the more money that you get, the more good you could do?

Absolutely. So we've raised a 50 million fund, which sounds like a lot of money, but frankly is a drop in the bucket against this problem. And we run a very competitive process. There are lots of organisations out there that are trying to make this work. And we look for individuals with the kind of leadership that are already showing that they're having real impact in their communities that are building the trust of their audiences and who we think have the kind of capabilities to build the scalable business model. And those are the organisations we're investing in, but there is no question that if we had more resources, we could move faster. And so we're working every day to try to raise and bring in more resources. And thankfully, a lot of philanthropists have stepped up in a really meaningful way. Night Foundation, which it has been really important to journalism funding in this country was one of our founding funders, Laine Powell Jobs who has a organisation called Emerson collective, which makes powerful investments in lots of sectors, including in the nonprofit news sector, Arnold Ventures Democracy Fund, a lot of funders who have really leaned in, but one of our mandates is to compel more and more people that this should be part of their priorities.

And is there a plan to get these organisations to wash their face, as it were? Because I mean non-profit news doesn't necessarily mean non-commercial does it? Ultimately, if they can have a commerciality to their operation,

obviously those profits will be reinvested. It then reduces their need to find money from yourselves, from other philanthropists, et cetera.

That's absolutely right. Nonprofit does not mean non-commercial and these are really sophisticated businesses. They're complex businesses and that's what we're helping them build. They're building multiple revenue streams. They're figuring out how to really effectively engage readers to get reader revenue they're running events that local businesses wanna help sponsor. Some of them are rolling out really great swag that people wanna buy. And they're building major gift programs. They're providing philanthropists with an opportunity to get involved in something that's really meaningful. And that involves these organisations being able to really make the case for their value in communities and demonstrate that value.

I know you mentioned that in a mature Western society, there are other problems as well, and you guys are a piece in the jigsaw, obviously paraphrasing, but I think it can be a matter of life or death can it not? When it comes to a global pandemic, coronavirus surely has made it even more vital to have trusted news and information locally?

There is no question of that. I mean this pandemic has really brought to life the market failure in local news. I mean, take yourself back to the beginning of this pandemic, where we're all in our houses, we're desperately needing information about our communities. And we saw huge surges in traffic to local news websites across the country. Because people wanted to know, are my hospitals prepared? What's the ventilator situation in my community? What's the policy on closing my community? What's the reopening policy? And then the summer of 2020, when we were rocked with a long overdue reckoning of racial inequity, people wanted to understand what are the policing policies in my community. And then later on in 2020, we looked at, excuse me in 2020 with the election and election security, people were trying to understand what is the voting situation in my community. And people were really desperate for information and yet the business model was failing, more and more reporters were getting laid off and more and more newspapers were shuttering. To me that just highlighted the fact that this really is a market failure, that this is a public good that people need and the market hasn't provided it. And so in those moments, that's where philanthropy can just be so powerful, because it can really help bridge when the market isn't providing this necessary good. And so this is why we're just so compelled that philanthropy can really help to solve the problem.

I wonder if I could persuade you to think like one of the villains in the James Bond movies where they're thinking global, cause I mean, what you're doing is amazing, the philanthropic model is clearly working, but I mean, could you expand this globally? Here in the UK, local news is dying as well. This seems

to me a very portable model that could solve a lot of problems around the world. Do you have a plan to scale this globally? Once you've fixed American local news, I should say, you could take this globally could you not?

It's funny that you say that because so prior to this role at the American journalism project, I was working helping to lead an organisation called Teach For All, which is a network of organisations in 53 countries around the world. So when I was calling my wonderful colleagues to let them know that I was going to this new job, so many of them from countries from Germany to Nepal were saying, oh, wow, okay, so when do you do the global journalism project? And because they see the very same dynamics playing out in their countries. And I do think there are aspects of this model that could be transported to other countries. There is an organisation called The International Fund for Public Interest Media that in some ways is sort of replicating this model for low and middle income countries. They're trying to raise multilateral funding. So funding from USAID and the governments to try to reinvest in news models. And we're collaborating with them and advising them on their model to help them learn from what we've learned along the way so far. But I do think there's a lot about this that is transferable. And I should say there's a lot that may not be, of course the philanthropic community in the US is particularly robust. Now there is really ample philanthropy in the UK and I think the model could be successful there as well. And I believe there are some local efforts that are trying to look at how they might transport this model.

I'd be very grateful. if you could walk our listeners through your career. I mean, you've had a fascinating career. I'd wonder where your passion for news came from, but also the many years that you spent in China and your previous life in dance as a former company manager of Beijing Dance, being on the board of the world famous Morris dance group. Personally, I like to watch people dance, but I don't like doing it myself cause I suffer from medical laziness, but clearly you are obviously a very driven, very passionate, very creative person. Are those the sort of values that have driven your career since the beginning?

I've definitely had a very nonlinear career. And certainly if I had tried to chart out my career, I would not have imagined the path that I was on. I started my career in China. First I was in Hong Kong and then I was in Beijing. I went out to Hong Kong on this incredible fellowship called the loose fellowship. And at the time I was really interested in the performing arts. I grew up dancing, although I was smart enough to know that I was not meant to be on the stage, but rather trying to support dance. So I went out to work in basically arts management in Hong Kong. And along the way I met this guy named Willie Chao. Who's really hailed as the father of modern dance in China. And he invited me up to Beijing to come manage his dance company. They were about to go on an international tour and they didn't have anyone who spoke

English and they needed someone who could help them navigate through the west where they were going to travel. And so he invited me up for the job. And I moved up to Beijing to take the job. And a couple months in I met my now husband named Evan Osnos on this street. We were walking around an old pond in Beijing and saw each other and started chatting. And he was a foreign correspondent living in Beijing. And I essentially got really interested in news because I fell in love with him. And when you marry someone who's a foreign correspondent, their subject matter is the world around you. And so in a lot of ways, I kind of fell in love with him. And I also married journalism. He was a total workaholic at the time. And so I often joked I married him and I married whatever subject he was working on. At the time he was the bureau chief for the Chicago Tribune. And he actually closed down the bureau because it was around 2008 when the industry was confronting huge layoffs. And he, along with many foreign correspondent had to go home and as they shut down their foreign bureaus and he shut down the Chicago Tribune bureau, he thankfully was offered a job with the New Yorker magazine. And so we stayed on for many more years and I used to joke, he would start working on a new profile and I would be married to two people. I'd be married to Evan and then whatever of the subject of the profile was an artist or Mark Zuckerberg. I've never met these people. I never met Mark Zuckerberg. But yet they sort of moved in with us for a couple of weeks. So through that, I really saw just up close, what it looks like to really, really seek to understand a topic and really try to kind of reveal that back to your audience and to do it with as much integrity and with an adherence to facts. So alongside kind of falling in love with him and marrying journalism in a lot of ways, I was managing this dance company and then met some really wonderful people in Beijing who were launching an organisation called Teach for China based on the Teach for America model. And I was really, really fascinated with what they were doing. And they offered me a job to come join them. A lot of the kind of skills of managing a dance company, trying to figure out how to finance the dance company, were transferable to what they were trying to do at Teach for China. And so I joined them and helped them build that organisation. And it was a really interesting moment to be working in the nonprofit sector in China because there was incredible wealth. This was around 2008, 2009, incredible wealth, but not a robust philanthropic sector. And so the act of fundraising for this organisation, which is what I ultimately led for them, was both an act of compelling folks to believe in the specific organisation Teach for China, but also to understand why it was that they should use their dollars in this way. And it's been interesting as I've done this work with the American journalism project to take some of those lessons that fundraising for the American journalism project is both obviously making the case for why we have a smart model. And I think we do have a smart model, but also really to help people see why it is that this is a sector that they should even be using their philanthropic dollars for. In 2013, Evan and I decided to move back to the US and I took a job helping to lead Teach for All. And our mandate at Teach for All was to really support nonprofit organisations, to grow, to professionalise,

to expand their revenue, to expand their impact. And so that is really what led me to the American journalism project. I'd gotten to know one of the founders, Elizabeth Green, who I mentioned earlier through her reporting on education, and I'd been cheering her on as she and John Thornton had come up with this idea to launch the American journalism project and about a year into their operation she and I got together and she really spotted the parallels between what Teach for All had built internationally to support organisations to grow. And she thought that that was the sort of skills that the American journalism project needed. And she was also aware that I was personally really passionate about the mission. So after many conversations with Elizabeth and John, I took on the role as the CEO of the organisation in April 2020, just weeks into the pandemic. And it ended up being a really remarkable moment to step into the job because frankly the local news crisis just felt that much more acute. And so it really allowed us to, I think, sharpen our strategy and really get clear on the fact that we needed to really think about how we scale nonprofit news to rise to the moment. And that's what we're obsessed with.

I mean, I'm fascinated as to what your day to day job involves though, because the book stops with you, your chief executive, there's a lot to focus on and everything you might focus on in any one minute, must come at the expense of the opportunity cost of something else. I mean, what do you choose to focus on? What does a typical week look like for you? Could you paint our listeners a picture of what a typical week in your life looks like professionally?

Sure. So we've built this really excellent team that comes from a lot of different backgrounds. We have former journalists, we have nonprofit leaders. We have folks who have led news organisations. We have folks who have been great fundraisers. We have people who have management consulting backgrounds. We've tried to bring together a really diverse group of individuals onto the American journalism staff to bring as much knowledge and know-how from other sectors and from the media sector to really grow the field. We are focused on several things. One is the obvious: we're out there raising money. I love raising money. The reason why I love it is because there are a lot of people in this country who have a lot of dollars that they want to invest philanthropically. And I think we have a really, really great cause and important cause for them to invest in. So it's a real pleasure to get to talk to people who are trying to think about how we address some of our society's most complex problems and really try to talk about, convince them that this is a place where they should be putting their capital. So that's a big part of the job. Another part of the job is identifying these organisations to invest in, and that's really hard. It's incredibly fun. We get to meet news organisations across this country, really innovative leaders who are really rethinking what local news should look like, who it serves, how to serve communities. We spend a lot of time out there talking to news organisations and trying to identify the organisations to invest in. We then invest in these organisations

for three years and we really come alongside them. So we give them significant investments. Our average grant size is about a million dollars. But the investments are over three years. Over those three years, we really work with them on developing strong business plans, building out their revenue strategies, strengthening their organisations, recruiting the staff to implement these strategies. And so we have a team that's working really closely with these news organisations to do that work. We have this team that is working with local philanthropy to do market research and we've learned a lot about the problem over the past couple of years. We often talk in broad strokes about the decline of local news as a series of papers across the country that have closed. But in fact, when you get really close to researching these markets, what you find is it's more complex than just a quote news desert problem. There are many communities where these newsrooms are now so diminished that they're struggling to provide civic value to communities. And so what we're seeing is that even in communities that still have some local newspapers, communities are really missing a lot of the information that they need so many important bodies within communities aren't being effectively covered. And then also we've come to really understand that the problem is not just a geographic one, but also in terms of different kinds of communities that are not being effectively served, specifically communities of colour. There's just no question when you look closely at the research that communities of colour and communities that have been historically marginalised in our country have not, and are not being effectively served by local news. And so all of that research is helping inform how we're investing in local news, the kinds of news organisations we're supporting to take this opportunity to not just save what's been lost, but to really rebuild it in a way that is more suited to the country that we have today and the country that we will have over the decades to come.

What keeps you up at night? What are the challenges in the job like any leadership position of any organisation has obstacles that you need to overcome? Are there any obstacles to growth? What's the stone in your shoe?

I think the thing that keeps me up at night is the fact that I really genuinely feel fear for the future of our democracy if we don't solve this problem. And it feels like we have to solve it now, and yet I am aware that it takes time. It takes time to build organisations that really have the trust of their communities. It takes time to really change mindsets in philanthropy, to see this as a priority. It takes time to identify really great talent to lead these organisations and build out the sophisticated business operations that can power the newsroom. It takes time to recruit journalists who have to take a bet on new organisations. And I think what keeps me up at night is how do we really both focus on the urgency of the moment? I really don't think we have a choice but to solve this problem. So I guess I find that incredibly motivating. I think my whole team finds it really motivating. Like we wake up every day just being like, we gotta do this. I don't spend much time sort of allowing myself to think, okay,

well, what if this just doesn't work? And we have a democracy. I don't know if we would have a democracy, if people really just have no idea what's going on in their communities. And we don't have reporters who are really holding people.

Who are there. Who exist. Holding local decision makers to account.

I think we're sort of the frogs in the boiling pot, we haven't really fully looked around us and thought this isn't gonna work. Like we can't just have no idea what's going on around us. I think part of the dynamic here is that we're living at this moment where people feel like they're getting plenty of news. In fact, people feel like they're getting way too much news, but the issue is they're not getting the kind of service that newspapers played, which is original reporting. The public service of reporters out there, trying to find information, dig into things, ask questions on our behalf, on our public's behalf. And that is really terrifying. I think it is a solvable problem, but it's not just gonna happen. Like we're gonna have to be really intentional. And when I say we, I mean like the collective we, like society, we are going to have to really make sure that we're holding up this stool, this leg of the stool in our democracy. That's gonna mean readers saying, yep, I should pay for this. I know this is important. I'm gonna pay for it. That means philanthropists saying, yep, I'm gonna invest in this. I recognise that this is an issue that needs investment, and it's going to take talented people saying, I'm gonna commit my career to this. Even though it may not make a lot of money, I think it's valuable to my community.

How optimistic are you generally that this ultimately will be fixed? Because it's a serious problem as you say, and don't get me wrong, you're doing a huge amount. But my worry is that it's a tsunami, isn't it? You guys are sort of standing there and holding the tide back. But is this too big a problem to solve quickly enough?

I am actually optimistic. I think this is solvable. Partially because like I said, I just don't think it's that expensive for society to do it. It's just that we gotta do it.

When you're hiring people. What qualities do you look for in people that are joining your team? Because a lot of young people are listening to this, who are sort of starting their career. They're studying journalism at college. And I imagine many of them would be very interested in terms of what you're doing and how you got there. But are there certain attitudes, qualities you admire? What should a young person be doing that ultimately might even want you to hire them? What do they need to go about doing to sort of get them on your radar in a meaningful and impressive way?

I mean, one is the people who we hire and who work at the American journalism project, but also work for a lot of our grantees, these are mission oriented people like these are people who are in it because they believe that this is valuable and they wanna serve their communities. That is an orientation and a mindset that drives a lot of action. It drives people to work very hard. And I do believe that you gotta work really, really hard. And that an issue that is this tenuous and this uncharted really takes folks that have real grit and are gonna work very hard. So that's one. Two is I think we're looking for people who can look at this issue from a lot of different angles. You know, the rise of nonprofit news was largely driven by journalists. Many of whom were laid off during the layoffs in the two thousands. They took buyouts from their companies, but they wanted to keep doing this work and they wanted to be reporters. They wanted to dig up information and write pieces and give it back to their community. But they weren't business executives. They weren't social entrepreneurs. They didn't know how to run an organisation. And this industry needs that too. And so we are very focused on identifying people who have that kind of business know-how, who can be really intentional about how to build smart businesses. How do you build excellent fundraising operations? I'm a big believer that fundraising can be a source of really sustainable revenue, but it takes building an excellent fundraising operation. That's stewarding donors, that's identifying donors, that's getting donors really fired up about the work. That's making them feel a part of the work and then compelling them to donate. And so we're looking for people who are both passionate about the mission, but who also really bring a kind of rigour to how we build these businesses?

Suppose you could say the answer to this question is none of my business, but do you have any plans beyond what you're doing now? Don't get me wrong. You're very busy, but do you have any sort of unticked boxes on life to do lists the way you might do something completely different in a few years from now? Or is this something where you've signed on and this is gonna take decades and you're gonna be there decades from now delivering.

I have never had any kind of long plans for my career. And I think that's why I've had this very manuring career from performing arts to education to now journalism. It's because I've always sort of stepped into a job that I was really excited about that I thought was really fun, really interesting, and that I wanted to work really hard at. And then I did that and focused on that and then other opportunities fell into my lap. And I think they fell into my lap because I was working really hard and trying to really meaningfully support whatever cause I was working on, but I've never sort of had a roadmap for where I would head. I personally can't imagine doing anything but this right now, because I think it's the issue of the time. And it's exactly where I need to be putting my energy and where I think a lot of people need to be putting their energy.

Sarabeth, that was a hugely interesting conversation. I wish you and your colleagues at the American Journalism Project the very best of luck, you're doing a great job and I appreciate you taking the time. Thank you.

Thanks so much, Paul. This was fun. I really appreciate it.