

FORD GLOBAL FELLOWS

Ford Global Fellows: The Big Juicy Question

Great leaders ask big questions. It's one of the most powerful tools they have — and social change agents throughout history, from Socrates to Paulo Freire, have known this. The Big Juicy Question is a practice developed by Global Fellowship director Adria Goodson that pulls from this powerful lineage. It gives fellows a practical tool to create and explore the questions that matter most to them. Rather than following a fixed curriculum, fellows use their questions to shape their own learning journey across different geographies with peers who are doing the same. The result is a leadership experience that is both authentically personal and genuinely collaborative, and supports leaders who are taking on the world's most pressing challenges.

Transcript begins.

NARRATOR: The **Ford Global Fellowship** invests in leaders who are fighting to end inequality, protect and expand democracy, and build a more just and inclusive world.

The fellows collaborate across issues and borders—to build a powerful network that extends into their communities as they work together to create their fellowship experience.

How do Fellows do this?

By identifying and exploring their own big juicy question.

The Big Juicy Question is more than a phrase; it's a personal compass and a tool for fellows to drive their own learning in places and spaces with their peers.

[The words “place-based learning” appear alongside footage of the fellows in locations like Colombia, South Africa, and Brazil.]

And it builds upon the "Deliberately Developmental" framework that balances three essential qualities:

[The footnote “An Everyone Culture: Becoming a Deliberately Developmental Organization (2016) by Robert Kegan, Lisa Laskow Lahey, and others” appears crediting the origins of the framework.]

1. Reaching the "Edge" of Knowing

When leaders reach their “learning edge,” they begin to sit with uncomfortable truths and move beyond what they already know.

FORD GLOBAL FELLOWS

2. Disrupting the Status Quo

When leaders shift to forward-looking questions like "What if?" or "How might we?" they can expose the hidden biases and systemic barriers that sustain inequality.

3. Strengthening Self-Authorship

Leaders no longer just react, but develop the internal clarity and agency to design solutions to transform the status quo.

Aisyah Ardani, Co-Founder, Majelis Pengajian Difabel, an Indonesian woman wearing glasses and a dark blue headscarf: It's a really great community when I can interact with many amazing leaders. But it's not only about that, it's also about the environment and ecosystem that this fellowship creates.

Adria Goodson, Director, Ford Global Fellowship, a light brown woman with grey hair, brown eyes and glasses: When leaders operate from a place of curiosity instead of fear, they change their own neuroscience. They change how their brain is operating and what they're able to see. And when they do this and they move into a place of curiosity, they have the possibility to change our world for the better.

Murendeni Mafumo, Founder, Kusini Water & Filters, a Black man with short black hair wearing a black shirt: Most of the things that come before me, I see them as a problem, and I see them as something we can build a solution for. So, the intention, the vulnerability, the love, and the openness to take in and co-design with the fellows is what makes this fellowship different and special.

NARRATOR: When leaders ask questions they don't already know the answer to, they signal their willingness to be changed by what they discover, modeling the same adaptability they seek to inspire in others.

Keamogetswe Seipato, Social Justice Activist, a young Black woman with short brown hair and glasses: Being a part of this process and being really a part of trying to shape what's happening has been amazing for me as a leader. The solutions are within us, and when we bring our different perspectives together, it not only gives me hope, but it excites me because I'm able to see that it's possible to connect the dots, and we're already doing that.

[Footage of the fellows interacting in places like Brazil, South Africa, and Colombia are montaged with the tiles resembling a quilt]

NARRATOR: Asking questions isn't just a method, but a way of leading—one that honors uncertainty, treats not-knowing as strategic positioning, and recognizes that the questions we ask shape the futures we imagine.

FORD GLOBAL FELLOWS

[The colorful tiles reappear and fill the screen.]

Ford Foundation logo