

Democracy For the People with Jennifer Ching

Jennifer Ching is the executive director of North Star Fund, a social justice fund that supports grassroots organizing led by communities of color in New York City and the Hudson Valley.

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I'm Jennifer Ching. I'm the executive director at North Star Fund. I'm an East Asian woman with black hair and I'm wearing glasses and a blue shirt with a scarf.

So many times when people talk about democracy for the people, they're really focused on election cycles. They think about democracy in two-year cycles, or four-year cycles, or six-year cycles. But democracy is really an engine that runs year round, 24/7, all the time. And when we think about what it takes to move people to the polls, we learn time and time again that people are really moved to participate in democracy when they are really engaged in their daily democracy.

And what does that democracy mean? It means people are organized. It means people are coming together and they're thinking about whatever might be troubling them or bothering them, or whatever injustices they happen to be experiencing, at the most hyperlocal level. People who are involved in their schools, in their local hospitals, in their neighborhoods, around housing issues, around the care of their neighbors, or building a community garden.

These are all the myriads of ways in which people can come together, and they can build a different future. And when they see that future and their own collective futures intertwined, even at the smallest levels, that's what really moves people, then, to begin thinking about changes at a larger scale, and at a mass scale.

It's about me saying to you, "My future and my children's future is also dependent on your future." And so it's really important for us to come together and find a common way to build our democracy.

[The Ford Foundation logo is stacked in a bold black serif font, then transforms into a single letter "F" set inside a black circle.]

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