

Episode 28 - Pooja Bhatt & Anthony Castaneda

Rafael's Daughter: [00:00:00] Welcome everyone. This is the Early Link Podcast. Thanks for listening!

Rafael: Big thanks to our special guest opening the show today. That's my daughter and she's in third grade. I'm your host, Rafael Otto. As usual, you can catch us on the airwaves on 99.1 FM in Portland on Sundays at 4:30 PM or subscribe and listen wherever you find your podcasts.

Today, I'm talking with Pooja Bhatt, who is the co-founder and managing director at SeeChange, a consultancy focused on people-centered change, and Anthony Castaneda, the policy manager at Latino Network. We'll be talking about early childhood advocacy and what that looks like from the perspective of a number of organizations in Portland.

Pooja works as a facilitator for The Early Childhood Equity Collaborative, which we'll learn more about, and which Latino Network is a part of. Both Pooja and Anthony are participants in Oregon's Early Childhood Coalition. Welcome, and thank you to both of you for joining me today. It's great to have you.

Pooja Bhatt: [00:00:58] Thank you. It's great to be here.

Anthony Castaneda: [00:00:59] Thank you. I'm happy to be here.

Rafael: [00:01:02] Pooja, I thought we could start with you, and if you could just give us a bit of background about the collaborative that you work with and how the organizations involved are approaching advocacy.

Pooja Bhatt: [00:01:13] Sure. Great question. So The Early Childhood Equity Collaborative actually came together in 2018, because at that time there was no systematic public support for culturally specific services in the early learning field, at a time when our state's population of zero to five-year-olds is the most racially and ethnically diverse it's ever been.

So on one hand, we're growing in the diversity of our young children and families, and at the same time, we're actually investing a lot more in early childhood. But at that time in 2018, there wasn't a systematic support and acknowledgment of the need for culturally specific services throughout the state. So the reason that this collaborative came together was really to help advocate at the state level for legislation and investments to invest in culturally specific services.

So the collaborative partnered with culturally specific organizations, philanthropy, and community-based organizations throughout the state to really build awareness about the need for these services, these culturally specific services, and mobilize advocacies for communities of color and immigrant and refugee communities. And the real purpose is really to shift power dynamics in our state, where communities of color are actually being able to self-determine policy and budget priorities. So that's the real power of this collaborative, is that a lot of times you see foundations investing in direct services, which is of course very important, and at the same time there hasn't been historic investment in the

ability of culturally specific organizations to advocate on their own behalf, on their own communities behalf, for statewide legislation and investments in culturally specific services. So the partners around the table are Latino Network, who really helped to begin convening this conversation, with KairosPDX, Black Parent Initiative, NAYA, and IRCO. So they were the original five culturally specific partners, but many more partners, other culturally specific organizations around the state, have been engaged in the past. We've had the support, generous support, of our foundation partners and our fiscal agent of social venture partners, and my role is really the contract facilitator for the group.

Rafael: [00:03:25] Anthony, I know Latino Network is part of the collaborative. Can you give us just a background overview of what Latino Network does and its role in the community?

Anthony Castaneda: [00:03:33] Sure. Latino Network is a culturally specific organization serving children, youth, families in the Tri-County area: Multnomah Clackamas and Washington counties. We provide services to thousands of Latinos in the areas of education, mentorship, leadership development, and family stability. And one of the reasons why organizations like Latino Network exist is to address those needs in the community that are currently not filled by the systems in place. so we see, families falling through the cracks and we see some of those needs of students not being met, which is why we see a lot of these disparities, which is the reason why we worked so hard to connect with these families.

Rafael: [00:04:20] So, can you talk about the experience of participating in the collaborative and what that has been like?

Anthony Castaneda: [00:04:27] The experience has been overwhelmingly positive. I think the collaborative provides a space for our organizations to connect on shared goals and interests. it provides a space for information sharing as well as strengthening ties between our organizations. I think one of the early experiences has been learning about the other services provided in the area by our partner organizations.

We can share expertise, share resources with one another, and really connect these families to other services that may be needed.

Rafael: [00:04:59] Talk about, and maybe you both can talk about this a little bit, but the approach to advocacy as... as you're representing direct service organizations that have close ties to the community and families. What does that mean for advocacy and how has that shifted or changed because of the collaborative? Anthony, did you want to start with that?

Anthony Castaneda: [00:05:17] Sure. I think one of the strengths has been bringing parents from different backgrounds and perspectives together and really leading with that parent voice and really elevating the needs of those children or the youth that we're working with.

Rafael: [00:05:31] Pooja, do you have comments on that?

Pooja Bhatt: [00:05:32] Yeah. I mean, I think that that exactly is the power of the collaborative, of bringing together parents from diverse communities and really showing the richness of Oregon's community. We often say that Oregon is very white, right? That we're

known as one of the whitest big cities in the country. But what that does is that it makes invisible the communities of color that are here. And so I think that one of the great things about the Equity Collaborative is that it really elevates the power of being present and being seen and we are here and we do have policy priorities that we want to engage partners across the spectrum to uplift.

So I think that the way that this collaborative has really connected parents from diverse communities with the organizations that they are most connected to - with other partners, dominant culture partners, school districts, as well as policymakers and funders - has been really powerful.

Rafael: [00:06:24] It was something I wanted to ask you about was that collective effort and voice and what that's looked like and how it's evolved and I'm just curious if you have anything else to add about, you know, maybe what that growing collective message might be from your culturally specific organizations.

Pooja Bhatt: [00:06:40] Well, I can start and then Anthony you can feel free to add. I think one of the key messages is really building awareness of the importance of public funding in culturally specific services. And, there was a report that was done, I think it was in 2018, that was a collaboration between Oregon Community Foundation, our collaborative, and Portland State University and I believe other partners.

Forgive me if I'm missing any of those key partners off the top of my head, but it was a report that was really making the case for culturally specific investments and why it's needed. And I think that, that again, it's the collaboration of all these partners coming together to say, these are the aspects of what culturally specific early childhood looks like and this is why it's important because it makes an impact to address the needs of quality early childhood in our state.

So it's number one, building that awareness of why these investments are important and building that awareness of what exactly culturally specific programming looks like in the early childhood space. And, it's increasing engagement by parents of color, as Anthony mentioned before, in early learning and policy budget and budget decisions.

So it's really building capacity in our state to have more diversity of people who are informing what our public policy and budget looks like.

Rafael: [00:07:59] Anthony, do you have comments on that?

Anthony Castaneda: [00:08:01] From our perspective, Latino Network was founded in the mid-nineteen nineties. Historically, we have operated with a shoestring budget, and those funds generally came with certain stipulations, which would require us to design a program that wasn't really meant for a Latino community.

So this has allowed us to kind of shift the dynamic and really allow us to design programs that are going to meet the needs of, not only the growing Latino population, but also the growing diversity in our state to meet those future ethnic, racial, and linguistic needs of our children.

Rafael: [00:08:37] Has the advocacy work... tell me how it's extended to the families that you're serving. What does that look like? How familiar are they with what you're doing on the advocacy side of things?

Anthony Castaneda: [00:08:51] Sure. So we have programs that support parent advocacy. We have programs such as Colegio de Padres, which is "college of fathers and mothers". And, this advocacy looks different. It takes many different forms. Advocacy can also mean being able to... empowering our parents to meet one-on-one with educators and teachers to address maybe issues that their children are experiencing in the classroom - so helping parents and empowering them to reach out to school administrators to address other issues that might be happening.

So it's giving those parents the tools to help their children's transition from elementary school to middle school to even college from high school. Giving parents, who might not have that expertise or that experience, especially for the Latino community... that we have parents who moved here from Mexico or from other Latin American countries when they themselves were in their teens.

So it's helping to integrate and while also honoring the strengths of these families and really their resiliency: being here in this country and trying to provide for their families.

Rafael: [00:10:01] Pooja, do you have comments on the challenges question around advocacy and what organizations have been experiencing? I just want to make sure you have some time to speak to that.

Pooja Bhatt: [00:10:10] I totally agree with all of what Anthony said. And I mean, at the beginning of really just around the historic lack of investment in advocacy capacity for culturally specific organizations, and it's only shifting, I think in the past few years, where funders are actually wanting to fund more and more of this.

And we've been really lucky at the Equity Collaborative to continue to have support from generous foundation partners who are actually even helping us connect with other foundation partners. Which is, like, just next-level partnership I think: when one funder helps you to get into a door that you didn't even know existed at a different foundation. That is game-changing and different work and I think just speaks to the strength of the culturally specific organizations who are doing this work in the foundations - kind of seeing the strength of all of that work. So I think that has been awesome.

At the same time, the historic challenges have been around, like, the length of funding of... you know, one-year funding is often just really hard. I mean it's great in many ways, it's better than nothing, but being on one-year funding cycles essentially forces us to have consultant capacity and parents and staff at these culturally specific organizations at least spend at least a third of the year fundraising when we could be doing programmatic work that's long-term. Because really what we're talking about is embedding racial equity within the early childhood system. It's not a one-off one-year thing, and it's going to take a long-term strategy. And that's why longer-term funding really helps when our partners are able to make that type of commitment as well.

So, kind of that longer-term funding is one piece. The other piece is that, even with the continued funding that Equity Collaborative partners have enjoyed - and this year we're lucky enough to be able to add other funded partners who are culturally specific outside of the Portland Metro area, which we're really excited about - one of the challenges that still... we have more money than zero, and we don't have enough money for every culturally specific partner to have one full-time advocacy position that is paid a living wage on par with what you see at dominant culture organizations or even in the public sector.

So it's like, we're making movement, but we're still dealing with the scarcity of resources that often makes our culturally specific partners have to make really difficult decisions. Especially when we talk about - and I think we'll talk a little bit more about - just the multitude of coalitions that are out there in Oregon. And it's great when we have more and more partners collaborating at different tables. And at the same time, when you're trying to spread a few amount of people who are culturally specific organizations at multiple tables - especially when you get into a legislative session where there's this hearing and that hearing - it just pulls people like Anthony in just multiple different directions. And it's just hard, especially if you don't necessarily... You know, Latino Network has a full-time staff person like Anthony, but a lot of other culturally specific organizations, don't..aren't at that place yet. So it's kind of a combination of... it's been a relatively nascent area of investment from philanthropy and so it's going to take more time to get at scale, but in the meantime, we're trying to uplift each other with the resources that we do have and amplify each other's messages, which is why I think the collaborative is so pretty cool.

Rafael: [00:13:25] Can you talk just a little bit about the range of other coalitions. I know you're both involved in the Early Childhood Coalition and there are probably some others, but what's that like? And what do you feel like the presence of all of these coalitions and voices is doing for advocacy?

Pooja Bhatt: [00:13:42] Yeah, the question is really how do we work with other coalitions, like, given the last response of like the limitations, right? Yeah, I think that it's doing the best we can, I think is the thing. And I think that it really helps when partners like Children's Institute and Foundations for a Better Oregon have their staff capacity where they're able to have multiple staff at a coalition meeting, like, doing all of the things for managing a Zoom meeting, to taking notes, to making sure that they've got breakout rooms set up for partners to be able to engage in rich discussions.

That type of convening capacity is really really important, I think, to like making a coalition work and an experience that culturally specific partners can engage with in an accessible manner. So I think that that kind of clear leadership, that convening ability, is really helpful. The ability to kind of connect multiple dots.

And I think that one of the things that I have seen really great about this the past few months is that some of these coalitions, like the one that's convened by Foundations for a Better Oregon - that coalition is called Oregon Partners for Education Justice that Anthony and I are involved with - there's the Early Childhood Coalition, there's a crossover with the multiple partners being at multiple meetings, and there's also a lot of differences of... some people aren't able to come to different coalition meetings. And the beauty is that when you

have bridges of people who do have the capacity, who attend multiple coalition meetings, again, you're just amplifying each other's messages and aligning priorities.

So for example, the Oregon Partners for Education Justice has worked with partners to create a comprehensive education agenda that includes the Early Childhood Coalition's agenda items and key areas for the early childhood focus. And they've also brought in Reimagine Oregon's proposals that really focus on investments and policy suggestions that emanate from the Black community.

So I think that type of thing is really really critical. And I've seen that in other work that I'm doing in the criminal justice field too, where it's just taking things that have been seated and conceived by organizations and uplifting them and amplifying them to make sure that these things show up on other coalition's policy agendas has been really critical.

Rafael: [00:15:58] Anthony, did you have thoughts on that you wanted to add?

Anthony Castaneda: [00:16:01] Yeah. And I'd like to add, you know, another question that we can ask is why don't we all exist in one space and one coalition. I think having that separation, you know, having a culturally specific coalition such as the Equity Collaborative allows us to focus on the issues that specifically affect the BIPOC community.

And we know that the BIPOC community is not a monolithic community. They face challenges in different ways. They're affected by policy in many different ways and having these bridges allows us to bring those needs, our policy priorities, to the table with other coalition partners that can really help us uplift and provide some of that institutional knowledge and expertise such as the policy expertise that Children's Institute can provide for us.

And they open other doors and opportunities for our organization to advocate directly with legislators or other decision-makers. So I think that's been very impactful to identify those shared interests and goals between, not only our own, community-based organizations, but also with other coalitions that are working towards a more just early learning education system.

Rafael: [00:17:09] I wanted to look back just a little bit and talk about The Early Childhood Equity Fund and the way that was passed. And I'm just curious, maybe Pooja, could you start by talking about that fund? Just give us an overview of the fund and what it's designed to do or is already doing.

Pooja Bhatt: [00:17:27] Yeah, it's a ten million dollar fund from the state of Oregon's Early Learning Division really specifically geared towards culturally specific services in early childhood to fund services for children that are zero to five years old. This current fiscal year is the first year of funding. So it's a relatively new program and what's actually really really unique and really great about this program is that it's not only just for direct services, but it's also for planning dollars especially for remote rural communities throughout Oregon, that don't necessarily have culturally specific services right now. We know that there's a dearth of culturally specific services, especially in rural Oregon, and so why that fund is really important is because the way that it was designed was really thoughtful. And thinking about

long-term systems change requires growth of culturally specific services in these other areas outside of the metro area, outside of necessarily the I-5 corridor. And so, I think that's one of the aspects of The Early Childhood Equity Fund that has been really transformative especially in other conversations that I'm having. Again, I mentioned in the criminal justice space where The Early Childhood Equity Fund is serving as a model of how might we take a fund that is really geared for culturally specific services and think about really transplanting that in a different sector of government to see if we can expand access to services. Because there are so many state grant programs out there and what we know from experience from data is who ends up benefiting from that is not necessarily the same as those who are impacted by racism and all of the different forms of oppression that manifest.

Rafael: [00:19:09] Right, right. Anthony, did you have anything to add on the fund?

Anthony Castaneda: [00:19:13] I would add that, as an organization working with families and planning these programs, we know high level what the data shows. The data shows that many inequities in education began to form in early childhood. We see this in literacy rates in other measurement tools that we use. And this fund really allows us to design those programs that we believe are going to benefit those children and families.

Another strong aspect of the equity fund is that it preferences programs that are designed by the folks who those programs are intended to serve. For example, at Latino Network, I would say 90% or more of our staff are bilingual. They can provide information in Spanish to our families. And I think that's something that really adds a lot of value to our programs. Our parents come to our programs feeling welcome. They can ask questions in their own native language. They feel comfortable asking those questions as well, or inquiring about other services or other challenges that they might be experiencing.

Pooja Bhatt: [00:20:14] Yeah. One of the things that I would also just add to what Anthony said is that, when I referenced earlier that PSU report, and we talk about the elements of culturally specific early learning, some of those elements that show up in those programs that are funded by the Early Childhood Equity Fund are elements that include: One, building a multi-generational whole family approach that includes, as Anthony mentioned, leadership building of parents, development of a diverse early learning workforce, right? Because we know that we have a dearth of an early childhood workforce and we need to do a really intentional job of building up a pipeline of diverse educators in the early learning sphere.

So parent leadership and development from the culturally specific services is a really great opportunity to build up our workforce with good living wage jobs that have pay parity along with kindergarten teachers, for example, and along with, like... Number two would be kind of using a strengths-based lens, like Anthony mentioned, that really views the unique cultures, traditions, language as an asset to retain, not a deficit to assimilate. And it's important that this happens across generations that really uplifts the wisdom and the resilience and the expertise of communities of color and immigrant and refugee children because, you know, we acknowledge that racism in our country manifests differently for different communities of color, right? How racism has showed up in education for Asians is different than for the Black community or for the Latino community or for the Native American community.

So we've all been impacted by racism. We've been impacted differently, have different interactions with ways that white supremacy manifests. And so, in order to acknowledge that with care and concern, we need to be able to invest in different approaches to make sure that each community is being able to self-determine what they need in order to be able to actualize their vision for success.

Rafael: [00:22:06] Anthony, I know you've talked a bit about that earlier and I just wanted to see if you wanted to say something about it here. The value of a multilingual bilingual community - bicultural community - what that has traditionally looked like in the education system and what you're really trying to move toward.

Anthony Castaneda: [00:22:22] I think historically as part of our human condition, whether it's educators, administrators, or perhaps other parents as well, we come to spaces with biases. We can discriminate, we can view skills through a deficit-based lens, and that manifests itself into the classroom in many different ways. Again, we can look at children whose dominant language might be Spanish and begin to discriminate against that student because their dominant language is Spanish rather than viewing it as an asset and something to celebrate. Bilingualism at that age is really a strength that should be honed and cultivated throughout that child's life because science tells us that: being bilingual really leads to greater educational outcomes in the future. So the question is, how do we design programs that are going to cultivate the conditions for our students to thrive in these environments?

I think that's also looking at the households. When we think about the typical American family, we might think about a four-person household: two working parents, maybe two siblings. But when we look at non-traditional households, such as like Latino households, there's a strong cultural tradition of having multi-generational households where you might have the grandparents living there, you might have one parent working or both parents or you might have one sibling also sharing the burden of taking care of other siblings. So how do we really look at these households and think about these aspects as strengths?

So kind of going back to, again, the stigmas, the biases that we carry, I think when we look at children who are failing, our assumption is: Oh, perhaps the parent doesn't care. But through our research and through our work with these parents, because we spend a lot of time with them in the community, it's actually the contrary. These parents care so much about their child's education. Sometimes they just feel helpless or maybe perhaps they feel like they don't have the tools to really support their children's learning trajectory. So again, it's providing culturally responsive services that are going to respond to the needs of the parents and to the children, and really help those children grow and become great learners and be happy and fulfilled throughout their education experience.

Rafael: [00:24:34] I want to focus and just think about what's happening legislatively 2021. There's a lot happening in the Oregon legislature right now. Let's say we have some legislators tuning in to the segment, you have their ear for a little bit, what do you want to say to them? What are you hoping will get traction in the current legislative session?

Pooja, do you want to start with that one?

Pooja Bhatt: [00:24:54] Yeah, I'll let Anthony talk about the ICE proposal for sure, but I can speak to a few of them. There's a policy ask for expanding access to culturally relevant inclusive and developmentally appropriate early childhood services, and includes preschool, includes additional resources for the Equity Fund, that's one key part.

Another is really creating a tribal early learning hub, which was really at the request of, the Oregon Tribal Nations. So, again, this just speaks to self-determination, so when communities of color are coming forward to policymakers with clear asks of like, this is the thing that we need to set us up for the success that we imagined for our communities, that it's really important to listen.

And so that's one of the reasons that The Early Childhood Equity Collaborative elevated that policy ask. The other is really clearly important as well: really reducing and eliminating, eventually, the suspension and expulsion that's happening in our early childhood settings, which is all too common and it happens typically through exclusion in preschool settings.

So what that bill does is really just to help create the conditions for educators in the early childhood landscape to have just many options to address what they really need, and the root causes of what children and families really need, to avoid the need to ever suspend or expel a child that is under five or really any child. So that's another key component as well.

Rafael: [00:26:22] Okay, Anthony, let's talk about the ICE proposal that's out there or anything else that comes to mind.

Anthony Castaneda: [00:26:27] Sure. I think it's important to note that early education investments are probably one of the best investments that we can make as a state. There's a large body of research that shows that every dollar that we invest in early education opportunities yields a seven to fifteen dollar return on investment.

I think that's really important when we're thinking about, like, anti-poverty measures as well. Oregon currently ranks as one of the least affordable states in the country as far as childcare and preschool. I believe The Center for American Progress ranks us as the fourth least affordable state in the country. There's been some momentum, for example, Preschool For All was a landmark measure passed in Multnomah County that is going to, over the next few years, expand preschool to all three and four-year-olds in the county. And really when you look at that policy, the policy development, the policy design, it starts with serving our least served students.

It starts with equity at its core and that kind of really turns the head on previous models, when we look at the utilitarian approach, when we try to stretch dollars to meet the most amount of students. So kind of turns the traditional approach on its head and says: how can - by serving those with the least amount of access today - we can get to all the other students and yield better outcomes for all students in the future.

Rafael: [00:27:48] I want to end with a little bit of a future-forward look. And I think you've both kind of spoken to this a little bit, but if you could talk about a vision for what things would look like when family voice is front and center, when the perspectives of culturally

specific organizations are front and center when it comes to shaping policy, what would that look like?

Pooja Bhatt: [00:28:13] There's so much I would want to share.

Rafael: [00:28:17] Do we need to do a follow-up segment, Pooja?

Pooja Bhatt: [00:28:20] [Laughs] We'll see, I'll try to be concise and Anthony can kind of piggyback anything that I say as well. I think that, one of the things that we named last year, so 2020. We obviously had this racial justice reckoning taking place on top of COVID-19 pandemic, right? And what that meant is that the state budget was essentially... we were looking at cuts, right?

Last, summer, there was a lot of anxiety around what sort of budget cuts would be necessary. And that's part of what the legislature convened in a short session to look at. Given that communities of color typically dealt with the scarcity of resources, we really sought to make sure that legislators understood that it was important to retain that Equity Fund..

So even though we just spent so much time and resources and parents coming to the Capitol for the 2019 legislative session, we were again in a place where there's that fear that what we fought for, that ten million dollars per year - which on the face of it, it seems like a significant amount of money and it is for our communities, but you have to put that into perspective of it was a piece of the Student Success Act that was passed. So, it was 0.62% of the Student Success Act budget. 0.62%! And if we're talking about embedding racial equity into the early childhood lens, into the early childhood landscape, 0.62% is definitely not enough.

Our vision is that it should not be just one fund, right? Like there needs to be culturally specific investments programmatically in every single aspect of the early childhood system and the K-12 education system. So we're building toward that, and it's going to look like more engagement around the early childhood educator pipeline, like I referenced earlier. There's so much opportunity to continue to diversify and create these leadership ladders for parents to be able to access different educator opportunities.

We're going to continue to need to build on that as a starting place. So I'll leave it there for now. There's probably much more.

Rafael: [00:30:27] Thank you. Anthony, what are your thoughts on that?

Anthony Castaneda: [00:30:30] When I look forward to the future, I think there's some policy tweaks that we can make that would make life easier for the parents that we serve but also the entire family unit. I think about some policy tweaks that can make it easier for families to access services, whether that's childcare through some of the state programs, but also eliminating some policies that may act as a deterrent for parents. For example, when we think about our programs that support parents with childcare, the question we should be asking ourselves is: how can we reduce the co-payment or how can we eliminate the co-payment to provide more access and allow families to really utilize these programs to help

them, help the family benefit, and help themselves also achieve the goals that they have for themselves? How can we move towards a system that really honors children and families where they're at, to help build a better life for themselves.

Pooja Bhatt: [00:31:25] Yeah. To underscore Anthony's point around this system building, I think the one other thing I would add is that we can create more opportunities for investment in culturally specific services and culturally responsive services. And at the same time, there's so much that we don't know about how the existing dollars that our state spends of taxpayer money, how it's actually benefiting different communities throughout the state.

So one of the things that our early childhood system is really... we're nascent in right now is our data infrastructure in the early childhood landscape. So we don't have a good sense of all the different early childhood programs, early Oregon Pre-Kindergarten, Preschool Promise, Early Headstart, Healthy Families.

We don't have like an annual report or a biannual report that says, here are the demographics of the families that are served, here are the demographics of the providers that are benefiting from public funds. We don't have a good sense of that across the state; it's often systematized.

We're getting there; there's been grants from Pritzker that has allowed some of that data collection to happen as a one-time thing. But in order to really become more of a sophisticated early childhood system, where we are actually able to answer questions about who is benefiting at the very least, we are really early in that journey of being able to know that. Preschool Promise is another good example, where it's a relatively early program that's benefiting a lot of children and families around the state, but we have no evaluation yet designed to be able to tell us: are the providers that are intended to access this program, are they actually as diverse as we hope that they will be? Are our families, our providers who speak languages other than English, actually able to access this program?

The barriers around accessing a lot of the state programs are quite substantial when you're trying to be an early childhood provider and navigating these funding streams. It's very complex. And I think that the sooner that we are able to ask the hard questions about how well are we actually doing about making our systems of grants accessible for diverse communities.

If we're not able to answer those questions, we really won't make moves long-term to really be able to close disparities and achieve racial equity.

Rafael: [00:33:40] I think we'll end it there. Pooja and Anthony, it was wonderful to have you, thank you for your time. It's great to have you on the podcast today.

Anthony Castaneda: [00:33:47] Thank you.

Pooja Bhatt: [00:33:48] Thank you. It was great to be here.

Rafael's Daughter: [00:33:51] This show is brought to you by Children's Institute,

Rafael: Where we're transforming early learning and healthy development for young children and their families in Oregon. Tune in on 99.1 FM on Sundays at 4:30 PM. Or stream these segments wherever you find your podcasts. You can also find episodes on the Children's Institute website @ childinst.org.

Pay us a visit, sign up for our newsletter, or connect with us on social media.

Rafael's Daughter: Thanks for listening!