

Voices of Impact

Christopher Beck

Christopher Beck is a highly respected leader in the fundraising profession whose work reflects a deep and authentic commitment to community, mentorship, and impact. He serves as a member of the AADO Board of Directors and leads **Men of Color in Development (MOCID)**, where he has helped create powerful spaces for connection, leadership development, and professional growth for fundraisers across the sector.

Known for his generosity, collaborative spirit, and ability to bring people together, Christopher is widely admired by colleagues and peers. His leadership is grounded in relationships, faith, and a strong belief in the importance of building a philanthropic sector that truly reflects and serves the communities at the heart of the work. We are honored that Christopher is sharing his reflections with the AADO community in this edition of *Voices of Impact*.

Your work reflects a deep commitment to community and impact. What experiences or influences have most shaped your approach to philanthropy and leadership?

Coming from a teaching and fitness background, the charity space was very new to me.

Having a great first Leader in the space, Harold Witherspoon, at the time, Boy Scouts of America, (now Scouting of America). Harold took a chance on me, gave me a solid foundation, and taught me the importance of Relationship Capital, learning how to lead from a place of authenticity, and taking a community- and donor-centric approach.

This approach has served me well and paid major dividends, both personally and professionally. I will forever be grateful!

What first drew you to fundraising or the non-profit sector, and what has kept you committed to this work?

What drew me to our sector? I always wanted to help make a difference. I enjoy people and making connections. I made a list of things I wanted in a career, spoke with the Big Guy upstairs (Faith in action), and watched him do what he does best!

What has kept me in the space? The work is what keeps me grounded and being in community with the right individuals has given me the confidence to be myself.

In your view, what does it mean to build a philanthropic sector that truly reflects and serves the communities at the heart of the work?

As most development professionals know, our sector is going through a massive shift right now, and no one single person, charity, organization, or philanthropist can do alone.

One way, in my opinion, we must find a way to bridge the communities that are being served with those who have the capital and the heart to make a transformational difference.

It will start with real, authentic conversations and bring all the key people to the table and make something REAL!

Who are the people, mentors, or communities that have helped shape your journey in this profession?

My faith, family, and my sector peeps—like AADO, MOCID, RPOC, AFP Global, Day Light Advisors, IPA and Veritus - have wrapped their arms around me at just the right time. They have poured into me in a BIG way that I've never experienced, and they continue to invest significantly!

To name a few individuals: Birgit Burton, Ken Miller, Dien Yeun, Mide (Olumide) Akerewusi, Joy Webb, Crystal Thompkins, Taroue Brooks, Kia Kroom, Gregory Warner, Ted Weyn, Howard Hui, and Mario Simmons just to name a few. Real talk, I truly have a community of soldiers.

Many people see your impact through how you show up for others. How has community shaped your path as a leader and what is one leadership lesson that continues to guide your work today?

For me, leadership is more than a title. I've seen leaders with titles but no following or influence—just the title. That's another conversation.

A few key leadership lessons for me are trusting your people and giving them agency to do their best work. Provide them with the runway to fail and help them learn from those experiences.

What change would you most like to see in the philanthropic sector over the next decade?

I'd like to see a revamped metric system for assessing our work and the work of front-line individuals. Currently, our metrics contribute to high burnout, especially with our new donor landscape.

We also must do more than just talk about involving the Next Gen. I know some really strong Next Gen philanthropists with great ideas to improve our sector. As leaders, we must bring them to the table and get them involved in a meaningful way.

What advice would you give to emerging fundraising professionals who want to lead with purpose and integrity?

Find a community and get active and don't be afraid to ask questions. Don't try to do this work alone.

People like Lauren Tudor, Lauren Graham, Angela Barnes, Ken Miller, Joy Webb, and Brandon Taylor, Trish Davis, Mallory Erickson —just to name a few—are dedicated practitioners committed to advancing this new charity landscape.

When you think about your work and the communities you serve, what gives you the greatest sense of purpose or fulfillment?

Knowing that I am helping to shape a new sector (making the gumbo) and actively adding value alongside some of the best professionals in the field.

What gives you hope about the future of philanthropy and the people entering this profession today?

The future of our sector is bright! We have incredible professionals leading the charge. Shout out to a few of these leaders: Dan Heist, Richard Peck, Andrew Tudor, Cherian Koshy, Aquanetta Betts, Shane Carlin, Pedro Jose Rivera, Floyd Jones, Frank Vela'squze Jr., and Melissia DeClue.

Closing Reflection

Christopher's insights remind us that philanthropy is ultimately about people, relationships, and the courage to lead with authenticity. His journey reflects the power of community to shape not only careers, but also the future of our sector. As fundraising continues to evolve, voices like Christopher's help illuminate the path forward—one grounded in purpose, inclusion, and shared responsibility for creating meaningful change.

We are grateful for Christopher's leadership, his service to AADO, and his ongoing commitment to uplifting others in the profession. His perspective challenges us to think boldly about what philanthropy can become and inspires us to continue building a sector that truly reflects the strength and diversity of the communities we serve.