



Majora Carter (1965-Present)

President

The Majora Carter Group

"The phrase 'not now' does not mean 'not ever'." Majora Carter, 2010.

Overview

Majora Carter is an urban revitalization strategy consultant, real estate developer, and Peabody Award winning broadcaster. She is responsible for the creation & successful implementation of numerous green-infrastructure projects, policies, and job training & placement systems. After establishing Sustainable South Bronx and Green For All (among other organizations) to carry on that work, she built on this foundation with innovative ventures and insights into urban economic developments designed to help move Americans out of poverty. Her long list of awards and honorary degrees include accolades from groups as diverse as Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, John Podesta's Center for American Progress, Goldman Sachs, as well as a MacArthur "genius" Fellowship. Her 2006 TEDtalk was one of the first 6 videos to launch their groundbreaking website. Majora is a Board Member of the US Green Building Council, and the Andrew Goodman Foundation. This interview was conducted in 2010.

This interview was conducted in 2015.

Early Life and Education

Majora Carter, born October 27, 1966, grew up in the Hunts Point section of The South Bronx. She graduated from the Bronx High School of Science in 1984, and then attended Wesleyan University where she received a Bachelor of Arts in film studies. Carter pursued a Master of Fine Arts from New York University in the late 90's. Shortly after, she returned to her family's home in Hunts Point. Carter believed that politicians and other leaders responsible for regulating the commercial activity of the region were burdening her community with more waste and pollution than others and she wanted to do something about it. Thus began her career as an environmental activist.

Career

Carter launched a campaign against a planned waste facility; it was slated to be built in her neighborhood and it would process 40 percent of New York's municipal waste - although the same area already handled that as much of the City's commercial waste. Her organizing helped defeat the siting of that waste facility, and was a catalyst for Carter to establish and direct the non-profit environmental justice solutions

organization, Sustainable South Bronx in 2001. She led there until 2008, and considers her most significant accomplishment to be her role in changing the lives of people who took part in her organization's Bronx Environmental Stewardship Training (BEST) program because of the many lives she was able to positively impact through the program.

Challenging Times

Carter recounts that one of the lowest points of her career was her unsuccessful run for NY City Council. However, she now views her loss in politics as a "blessing in disguise" because it spurred her to create SSBx, which has had more influence than a NYC Council seat would have.

Currently, Carter is the president of an economic consulting and planning firm, The Majora Carter Group, which has clients in New Orleans, Detroit, and coastal towns in Northeastern North Carolina. The mission of the firm, as described on the web site, is to "use the green economy and green economic tools to unlock the potential of every place – urban, rural and everywhere in between."

Importance of Mentorship to Career Development

When asked to note people during her career who have been important mentors, Carter acknowledges the support of both Leslie Lowe and Yolanda Garcia. These women helped her, "think through the difficult situations you find yourself in when you challenge the status quo." She goes on to state, "For me, those challenges came from government, political forces, the non-profit sector, and commercial interests. My mentors taught me that if many forces were lined up against me, I must be doing something right!"

Though demanding, Carter's career is immensely rewarding and she is continually re-energized when she meets people who have been inspired to do something positive because of her example. She has also been formally recognized for her work. Her many honors include: the NYU's Martin Luther King Jr. Award for Community Service, a MacArthur Foundation "genius" Fellowship, a Post Carbon Institute fellowship, and an Honorary PhD from Mercy College.

Advice to young professionals

Carter provides the following advice to minorities considering a career in the environmental field, "Start with what you know." She also urges them to remember that the phrase, "'Not now', does not mean 'not ever'."

For More Information

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