

Saskia Epstein:

Welcome to PNC C-Speak: The Language of Executives. I'm Saskia Epstein, Senior Vice President of PNC Bank in New England, alongside my co-host, Carolyn Jones, Market President and Publisher of the Boston Business Journal.

Carolyn Jones:

Thanks, Saskia. It's great to be with you on PNC C-Speak. Each podcast features local executives talking about relevant and timely business topics and sharing insights on their leadership journey and observations on the Boston community.

Saskia Epstein:

Our guest today is Christina Gordon, Founder and CEO of the Women's Foundation of Boston. Christina, thank you so much for joining us.

Christina Gordon:

Thank you for having me. I'm excited.

Saskia Epstein:

We look forward to learning more about you and the great work that you do at the foundation, an organization that empowers and enables women and girls to be financially independent and successful leaders. To give some context to what led you to be a co-founder of the foundation, it would be great to learn about you and some of your experiences that have shaped your career journey. You started, I believe, in financial management. Talk us through that.

Christina Gordon:

I started out as a stock analyst, an equity stock analyst. When I graduated from college, I actually had accepted a job as an options trader in Chicago, and before I left for Chicago, there was a woman speaking about women on Wall Street in Boston at my college, and I decided, oh, what the heck? I'll go. So I went and she was great, and after she spoke, I went up to her and I said, "Hey, I just took a job at O'Connor and Associates as an options trader in Chicago, and I don't know if that's the right thing because it's so male dominated." This was just to put it in context, 1987, and she said, "Don't go to Chicago and be an options trader. I'm going to connect you with someone at Fidelity. You should be a stock analyst at Fidelity Investments in Boston." And I said, "Okay, sounds good."

So then next, whatever, I wrote the letter, I got the interview, and I ended up reneging on my job in Chicago and taking a job as a stock analyst at Fidelity, which turned out to be obviously exciting and pivotal, and it was the wild west of investing is what we used to call it. There wasn't as much structure and regulation. It was exciting, it was young, it was happening, it was great. And I then went to business school. I went to Sloan at MIT, and then I went right back into the investment industry at Wellington and I started covering internet stocks. And this was before the internet, so it was really exciting and cutting edge.

And then I was pregnant with my first child, my daughter, and I had maternity leave, which I think was six or eight weeks. And I went to our... And I said, "I would love to work a four-day work week because I have this baby and I'm breastfeeding. And the answer was no, and there was no work from home. There was no laptops, there was no even cell phones, I didn't even have a cell phone then. It changed my life in wonderful ways and I started working in the nonprofit space and I started thinking about pivoting and using my business MBA skills to work for a women or girls serving nonprofit, basically.

And I decided to go back to school and get a master's in women's studies, and I went to the Lincoln Library. I lived in Lincoln, and I went to the Lincoln Library because again, there was no internet and I looked in a big fat book to see where there was a master's in women's studies. Lo and behold, there was two in the country and one was at Brandeis, which was exactly three miles from my house. So I applied, I went to Brandeis, and that just began the circuitous route to where I am now, but it was all meant to be, and I love being in the women and girls space, particularly in the economic empowering part of it.

Saskia Epstein:

Well, it sounds like the seeds of the Women's Foundation of Boston were planted long ago through your personal experience. It's not uncommon, personal experience drives a point home like nothing else, I think. But talk to us a little bit about this and transition into the nonprofit sector and how you really discovered your passion and purpose around girls and women that led you to found the Women's Foundation.

Christina Gordon:

Part of it was studying. So at Brandeis, studying about women and girls, I had to take all these classes, ones that I really liked and ones that I didn't really like. One of the classes that you had to take, you had to take a class outside of women's studies, one. And so I took one at the Heller School and it was about at-risk children, and that was the most profound class I took because it was my aha-moment when we discovered that or research had shown that the strongest variable for success for a high-risk child, a child living in a high-risk environment. And that could be many different things, poverty, illness, whatever, was maternal education. That to me was like the aha-moment. I was like, I walked out of that classroom and said, "It's women's education." That's the issue. And if women are educated, they become the mothers. They are the childcare providers. They're 25% of households in greater Boston are single moms, 3% are single dads, just to put it in reference. So, women are raising the children, if they're educated, children will have better lives.

And then I started doing work at Rosie's Place, which is an amazing organization, which I'm sure you're familiar with, and I worked there for many years in many areas. Teaching ESL to immigrant women was very inspiring to me because I realized that these women were just like me, they just weren't born where I was born. And they had children, and they had worries, and they had concerns, and they wanted to get jobs, and they were optimists, which also was super inspiring to me, that these women with all of this heaviness and all of these barriers, yet they were showing up for my ESL class so that they could get a T-Pass and apply for jobs and build a resume. It was so inspiring, that was my only direction. It really, I never thought of anything else other than women and girls.

Carolyn Jones:

So Christina, let's dig a little bit into the actual work that you do. The Women's Foundation really has such a great story. Tell us about that.

Christina Gordon:

I'm not the only founder though, there's four founders, and there was a group of us who started really thinking and digging into it in 2015, 2016. And we came upon research from Indiana University that less than 2% of all philanthropic dollars were directed towards women and girls serving nonprofits, less than 2%. And that number really resonated with us. Actually, we were shocked, didn't believe it. We reached out to Indiana University, we met with the software engineer who created the index, and she went through all the numbers with us and it was actually worse than we thought. It was super comprehensive, it included women's health, girls' education, everything, all women's colleges. And we also found out that about 30 to 40% of that was sent overseas, versus 10 to 15% for all other giving. So, we saw this massive

under-investment philanthropically in women and girls serving nonprofits in our country. And at the time, we could not find a large vibrant women's foundation that was serving Massachusetts, so we created one, and we've been growing honestly very quickly ever since.

Carolyn Jones:

That's amazing. Anything else, in terms of maybe the Women's Foundation, do you want to talk a little bit just about the metrics? You talk about how many you serve, what does the fundraising model look like? What are some of the challenges? What's the overall financial picture, and what are some of the opportunities and challenges there?

Christina Gordon:

Thank you for giving the opportunity to share with you. The Women's Foundation is a foundation that pools dollars from all different donors, individuals, corporations, foundations. We pool all those dollars and we take all those dollars and we grant them out the next year with a very sophisticated quantitative and qualitative vetting process. We fund and we take all those little pooled dollars, we pull them all together and we grant out in very large multi-year grants. That's what differentiates us, is we are the only large multi-year funder to women and girls serving nonprofits in our state. That is really significant, because multi-year grants are the most impactful.

So, and we know that because we get grants, so we apply for grants from large foundations to cover our internal capacity and our technology expenses. So, every donor dollar that we get goes directly into our next grant cycle, but so we know what it's like to apply for grants, right? When we get a grant, it's great. If we get a \$10,000 grant, we're thrilled. If we get a \$25,000 grant, we're really happy. But if we get a \$300,000 multi-year grant, we can plan and strategize and we're so much more effective. So, we know that. So, we do that for the women and girls serving nonprofits in our state.

We have moved all the way across the state of Massachusetts. So we really are a women's foundation of Massachusetts, but we're all the way out to Pittsfield and Springfield, we're on the Cape. There's an enormous number of women and girls, and our target market is women and girls living in very under-resourced communities. Okay? We realized a couple years in, there was an enormous number of women and girls in very under-resourced communities in our gateway cities, so we quickly pushed out to our gateway cities. Then we realized, wow, there's actually a lot of women and girls living in under-resourced communities in rural parts of Massachusetts that are getting no programming. There's literally no programming outside certain areas and rural areas. Transportation is an issue. The issues are actually different. So we're trying to serve all the women and girls across the state, which is a big job, but we're here to do it, we're excited to do it, and we have a very sophisticated method of doing it, pooling the dollars, granting everything out the next year, large multi-year grants.

But we focus exclusively on economically empowering programming. Why? Because if you raise a woman with economic status, all of her life variables improve, as well as for her children. So when you invest in women, it actually has a multiplier effect on your community. Women also reinvest 90% of their income back into their families and communities, so that again fuels this multiplier. So that's what we do and how we do it. We measure our impact every year. Thankfully, we started that with our first grant in 2018. We had this little scrappy Excel spreadsheet that we added all of the new women and girls and who they were, their stage of life, how we were impacting them in skills, knowledge, and mindset. And we've kept that every year and we collect that data every year. So, now it's this beautiful inter database that includes all the information about the women and girls.

So we have now impacted over 20,000 women and girls, we've only been doing this since 2018, granting since 2018. Every year we impact thousands and thousands more of women and girls, and we're not going to stop. And we are the only ones doing it, that's the issue. We wish we weren't necessary, right? We are also upholding this whole ecosystem of women and girls serving nonprofits.

And now it's changed in the last two years, especially as CEO, how I look at our strategy and our purpose and our mission. This was something that we wanted to do and really focused on it. Now, it's something that we can't stop doing because we're really supporting not just financially a lot of the women and girls serving nonprofits, but we're also there for them for strategy, for guidance, to be an ear just for them to complain to because it's so hard, especially now, which is another topic. But it's been really meaningful to the women and girls serving nonprofit space. And if you ask any nonprofit women and girls nonprofit about us, they know about us. They apply for grants for us. They appreciate our existence, and they are so glad that we actually are here.

So, it's become more of a responsibility, which was different. It's different than it... So we can't disappear. So now as CEO, in the last 12 to 18 months, I was looking at the long-term sustainability of our organization so this doesn't go away, because women's foundations do disappear. There's a women's funding network, we're part of it, of all the women's foundations all over the country. We are continuing a natural evolution for a successful women's foundation, which is, you start in the city, then you go to Metro, and now we're across the state. And Minnesota, the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, Colorado, Texas, these are all very successful women's foundations that we are emulating, and we reach out to them every time that we're looking to do something new or making the next step.

Saskia Epstein:

Christina, I'm so glad that you identified those other examples because I know how extensive the research was in the landscape and that you were inspired by models of success elsewhere. I'm curious, what sort of portable successful elements you adopted or were motivated to pursue here that came from other places? And in what ways are you seeing unique needs in Massachusetts or experimenting with some innovative aspects of the foundation's model? How you were inspired by other regions of the country and models of success.

Christina Gordon:

There's a couple things, I can give you a couple examples. So whenever we were going to do something new, we would reach out to Texas or Colorado or Minnesota. And for instance, one of the things that we consider doing, which we didn't because Texas told us, "Stay away, don't do it," was giving circles. Women's foundations sometimes include giving circles as part of their donation, their donor base, and we didn't pursue that. We actually had a pro bono consultant volunteer evaluate the whole thing. We had meetings with different women's foundations all over the country that had done giving circles. And the conclusion was, no, this is not a good idea, it's actually not a good use of resources. It's very human capital intensive and it has a lot of different complications that don't make sense for us. So, that's an example of something we didn't do because sometimes it's more important of what you don't do than what you do.

Saskia Epstein:

Really interesting. And there are robust, very successful giving circles in our region already. It's nice to know that you chose not to duplicate those efforts.

Christina Gordon:

And that was one of the 10 reasons why we didn't do it. So that was one of the lessons learned that something we wouldn't do. We have and we've even reached out recently, we've just met with Minnesota, I want to say 10 days ago about research. So we are now diving into research, which is the natural evolution of a very thriving statewide women's foundation. So, a lot of the really established high quality foundations, especially statewide, have really quality research done on their women and girls. And what

does this do? This gives them the information that they need to drill down on exactly what you said, what is going on?

We don't know what's going on with our women and girls. I have a really good sense, and we have our fingers on the pulse of our women and girls across the state, I can assure you, but we need data. We need to know exactly what percent of women, what percent of girls are dropping out of high school? What percent of girls are getting pregnant in seventh and eighth grade and aren't even showing up to high school? What percent of women can't go to college because of a barrier? Who are those women? What number of women want to become a tradesperson and can't? Because the barriers are like skyscrapers for women. The barriers to the trades are so high for women, we're actively looking at that, obviously. So anyway, we need this information. And by the way, not just us, everybody needs this information. Our community colleges, our police officers, our schools, our high schools, our junior high schools. The Boston Foundation, the Cummings Foundation, they will use this information, right?

Minnesota, we met with them one-on-one on several things including research, and they gave us their whole template. They have this amazing research. They've been doing it for 12 years. They update it every two to three years so it stays relevant, stays actionable. We really put all of our effort into research over the last 12 to 18 months, and it's been a very interesting route. And it speaks to the lack of philanthropic dollars towards women and girls, which unfortunately also includes research.

We went around and tried to get support to do some research. We decided to move forward with our own selves and as the Women's Foundation, we kicked off a research project with UMass Lowell, super excited about, about young women and girls in the gateway cities and what barriers they're experiencing to access post high school education. Because post high school education is directly correlated with life earnings and financial independence, so we are working on that. We fundraised for it. We have this amazing professor there, Yanfen Li, and the Li Lab, they're doing incredible work.

Saskia Epstein:

So your plan is to continue to pursue the research agenda in partnership with UMass Lowell. That's terrific. What are some of the things that you might expect to see informed either by the research in your grant making, or what you're hoping for in terms of having data and results and from new information to tell a story? Perhaps one that we already know, but nonetheless, having evidence-based information?

Christina Gordon:

One of the things that we noticed, which I made reference to a few minutes ago, one of the things we noticed right away with UMass was that the high schools, they just chose a ring of 10 high schools, typical high schools in the gateway cities, including Chelsea, and Lynn, [inaudible 00:18:38], whatever. And we noticed immediately that these high schools were below 50% female, and some of them as low as 43 to 44% girls, not reflective of the population. And actually, the population of Massachusetts is actually slightly 50.5% female. So, we were struck by this information and it made us realize how important it is to finish this research.

So we actually moved backwards to seventh and eighth grade, and we're finding alarmingly high attrition rate for girls in seventh and eighth grade in our gateway cities. We have not gotten to the bottom of it. We're also looking at teen pregnancy rates. There's a lot of things that need to be uncovered, but it really hearkens back to the fact that we need research. It's so incredible that no one is aware or seems to be aware of the fact that there's these high attrition rates for girls, relative to boys, much higher. And so we're concerned about that, but we're going to find out, but we're in the process of that.

We're also in the meantime, just announced, well, not just. In January, just announced a partnership, which we are over the moon about with Wellesley College, and they have the Wellesley Center for Research, and they are going to do like Minnesota, they are going to do a full status of women and girls research report in the state of Massachusetts. They are going to have a build a microsite. So Saskia and

Carolyn and everybody else can go on if they want information about our women and girls, and they're going to update it every two to three years. So as I said, so it's relevant and actionable. So we are so excited about this partnership, we are over the moon. And we met with them yesterday, they're on it and because of the current changes in political environments and the changes in government information available, they actually already got all of the information they need. They downloaded immediately all the information so they are not going to get in a situation where they don't have access to something that they didn't already download.

So, I feel so grateful that we're able to move forward with Wellesley and it's going to be super exciting. And both UMass and Wellesley, I just can't think of a better combination. UMass Lowell really focusing on the gateway cities and focusing exclusively on this barrier, whereas Wellesley looking at the whole piece. And what we hope to find Saskia, is we hope to find what's going on with our women and girls and how can we as a community foundation... And by the way, all the other awesome community foundations, the Metro West Community Foundation, United Way, Cummings, the Barr Foundation, all these amazing foundations, what could they be doing differently? What problems do we not understand yet? So, we're super excited about it.

Carolyn Jones:

That's going to be amazing information. It's easy to see why, how much you love the work that you do. Your passion is really infectious. And as a woman and former girl and having girls of my own, it's encouraging.

I'd love to pivot a little bit to learn a little more about you, and leadership and empowerment is such a key factor in the work that you're doing. Right? So talk about how you lead, what's your secret sauce as a leader that you want to impart to some of those girls and women as you look ahead?

Christina Gordon:

I believe in, we used to call this, all answers no questions. This is in the stock market. So in the stock market, we used to say, "Analysts that don't do well, bad stock pickers are all questions, or sorry, all answers, no questions." So, if you know everything. So I approach everything every day, every experience, every new nonprofit, every new donor, every new research opportunity as, this is an opportunity for me to learn. There's so much I don't know. There's so much that I don't know, and I feel like that's wisdom. It's ironic, right? I feel like as you get older and you get more wise, you realize, you don't know, there's so much we don't know. Right? And it's like the opposite of a teenager that knows everything. Right?

I lead that way, so I lean on our team. I don't walk in thinking I know more than my senior operations and marketing manager and finance manager. I know more than my director development. That's, I don't. And I have conversations with our team, our director of grants management, our COO and our director of... everybody. And sometimes they'll say, "What do you think we should do?" And I'm like, "I don't know. You're the expert. You're the development expert. You're the granting expert. You tell us, I want to learn from you." So, I think I try and build an ethos of inquiry and bravery and honesty and courage. I feel like those are the reasons why we created the Women's Foundation, is because we had all those, we weren't afraid of data. Right?

So when we get this data from the research, we're not going to shelve a whole bunch of stuff that doesn't tell our story the way we wanted it to, which is very typical. Researchers go into something and they think, I want this to say women are struggling at the trades. If we get a bunch of information back that says women don't want to be carpenters, that's good to know. That's actually information that we could use. I don't think that's going to be the case, but so part of it is just I lead that way. Right? So I try and get our team to feel comfortable with challenging everyone, challenging me, bringing new ideas, but also being realistic. Right?

So I always come back to, okay, is that something within our mission? So one of the pillars that I've been really focused on since day one is avoiding mission creep. It's very dangerous in the nonprofit space, because there's so much work to be done. And I find that, and there's so many causes, I get it. There's a lot going on and women and girls is our focus, but there's so many things that are in our focus, and that's okay. That's actually good. We're really good at funding economically empowering programming for Massachusetts women and girls. We're actually really good at that. So, we're not going to take on the environment. We're not going to take on, frankly, racial justice. Those are important issues. We're not going to take on, I don't know, the million other things that are going on in our space, because that's not our focus and we don't know anything about that. We're really good at women and girls and economic empowerment, it's our ethos, it's what we're good at.

So, mission creep is something that has popped up, pops up all the time. And to be honest with you, I think it's an issue in the women and girls space. So I'm part of this women's funding network. There's a lot of women's foundations all over the country, we're all friends, we all connect. A lot of them are trying to do stuff that's outside the women and girls space, which is admirable, but it's also, but you're fundraising under the umbrella of women and girls. So, let's keep it for women and girls, which you're only getting just 1%, one to 2% of all dollars. So, that part is something that I feel really strongly about, as does my board, as does our advisory council. So we feel we have a lot of strong women and men in our organization, and I find that empowering.

Saskia Epstein:

Christina, you talked about your leadership style as adopting a posture of curiosity and inquiry. I'm curious to hear you talk about what you've learned as a leader founding a nonprofit, really working a variety of organizations who are touching a lot of different issue areas affecting women and girls throughout the state. What are you observing in the sector or learning from those leaders that makes you optimistic and enthusiastic in the way that you described that first moment as an ESL teacher?

Christina Gordon:

So, what I've learned in this work, I've learned so much. So I was not in the nonprofit space, so this was brand new to me. So I had no idea, literally no idea. And I had run 10K for women, I had been in charitable events and stuff, but I'd never actually been in the nonprofit space professionally.

I've learned that women and girls are rarely the priority, and that's a heartbreak, to be honest. Research just came out today by the Boston Foundation on men and boys. I actually tried to convince them to do a parallel on women and girls, I thought that would be very exciting and equitable. I almost got them across the finish line but they declined at the end. They did ask me to be on the advisory group for the men and boys research. So I did join that and I feel like I contributed to give them another angle. But I do find that there rarely is women and girls the priority, which is not necessarily an optimistic ideology.

But I also am really inspired by the work that is being done in the women and girls space, despite all of the challenges and the barriers and the lack of philanthropic support. And I really mean that. It is extraordinary, the women and men, but mostly women that I meet who are working, running these nonprofits that serve women and girls. It is tough work. It is really tough to fundraise for women and girls, for non-coed organizations, and I am inspired by them. I'm inspired by their tenacity, by their strength, and by their just hard work. It is really impressive. And the impact that they make, and I always see this to our team, to our donors, because sometimes it can get a little overwhelming, to be totally honest. Today actually was one of those days, where there's a lot of press right now going on about men and boys, and it is the same thing, it's like a drum beat. When is there going to be a study on women and girls? Why are we not having a parallel study? But it inspires us because it makes this work so important.

So, I wake up in the morning and I think if I don't do this, and I say this to our team all the time. We have team meetings every other week, every Tuesday, every other Tuesday we have collaborative team

meetings. We get together and that will do all our collaboration. And it almost always comes up that if we're not doing this, no one else is. There is no one doing this, so we need to do it.

Carolyn Jones:

Talking about inspiration, we all learn from mentors and others in our lives and that mentor could be the young person, could be someone we've known for years and years. It's really key to what you do and the work you do as well. So, share with us maybe some of the best advice that you've been given. What's your advice for the next generation of leaders, particularly women and girls?

Christina Gordon:

I think the best advice that I was given, I remember it was from my husband, actually. It was, don't start anything. This is like classic business, MBA 101. Don't start a new business, don't start a new product, a new business, or even a non-profit, unless you're doing something different or you're filling a gap. It's really important. And to be honest with you, in the non-profit space, it's like a disease. People start nonprofits constantly, and even though there's 17,000 of them doing exactly the same thing.

So I remember we did a strategic plan. We have a five-year strategic plan that we started in 2020, we finished it in 2021. And in that strategic plan, I remember we were working with a consultant and the consultant said, "Do you know there's..." I forget the number, so I'm just going to make something up. 1,700 non-profits for brain cancer research. That's so inefficient. So, one of the things that my husband told me long ago when we was first starting this was don't do anything unless you're doing it, you have a different solution or you're filling a gap, which is what we were doing. We had no intention of starting anything. We thought we were going to join something. We're like, oh, can we help out? Why is no one doing it? At the time, literally no one at the time. And this was January of 2017, is when we became incorporated in January 2017. And we looked, we scoured. Yes, it was very good advice, it was very good advice.

And then the other advice, same person gave it to me, my husband. He said, "When you're starting something, whether it's a nonprofit, a project, a research, a company, a consulting business, a family, even if you're starting a family, you have to do it with optimists. Don't partner with people who are naysayers." It just can't happen. Everyone has to be like, "This is going to work. We're going to crush it," every morning. If you don't have that, you're never going to succeed because it's really hard.

Saskia Epstein:

So speaking of the sort of optimism and sharing along big ideas, what are the big ideas that you see that you're going to be cheerleading and championing going forward?

Christina Gordon:

That's a really good question. I think, as I said, for the Women's Foundation, for us specifically, and me as the CEO and my strategic focus that I bounce off the board obviously, and with their permission, our focus is long-term sustainability for our organization and research. Those are the two things that we need to really get done. I do see, and those we're already on our way, right? We have an endowment that we're starting to kick off. The really successful women's foundations across the country, those Minnesota's, those Colorado's, those Texas, they have endowments that their founders started so that they can continue this work in perpetuity. So that's from a micro, internal leader perspective.

From a macro perspective, I see a fire hose that's coming against women and girls that is hard to describe. And I try, I'm an optimist, we're doing our best, but it is extraordinarily challenging right now on a macro level, nationally, locally, and I don't see that changing for a while. I also see a vacuum in leadership for women. We need some strong women leaders to stand up and speak up and be more present and be more vocal because there's a really loud narrative about masculinity that's very negative, to be honest with you.

And I don't believe it but there's a whole very negative narrative that's going on in the men and boys/masculine space and there's no one standing up responding to this. And I am not a social media person, but it is rampant on social media. Very provocative and extremely successful. Unfortunately, I think women and girls to a lesser extent, are becoming a scapegoat. We need more women, furious leaders to stand up and start handling it differently and in a different way because it's not working.

Carolyn Jones:

Right on, and I see that and totally agree with you. Christina, for our listeners out there who really are inspired by the work you do and the stories you're telling, what is your call to action for them?

Christina Gordon:

Yeah, the call to action is to speak up, see something, say something. That's what they need to do. Women and men, men are part of the solution. 25% of our donors are men. We'd love to get it to 50%. We love men. Men benefit when women do better. Whole society's do better when women do better. So the call to action is, if you see something, say something, right? So respond and say, "That's not true." Don't, "Oh, I can't respond to this. It's just too overwhelming."

And then also, support your women and girls. So there's many ways that you can support women and girls. You can support women and girls by donating to their charities. So women and girls serving nonprofits in our state get close to only 1% of all dollars. So, think about that when you're doing your charitable giving, whether that's in December or year-end or in the summer or you're thinking about going to an event. I'd love to go to an event, I want to help out by community. Really think twice about, how can you help women and girls, particularly single moms? Single moms really need our support. Hire a woman, hire a girl, mentor a girl. I mentor multiple young women and it's not that hard. And support research for women and girls. Just everything. Just stand up for women and girls.

Vote however you want to vote. We are an apolitical organization, we don't take on any political ideologies or legislation. Everyone should vote. I believe that more women were voting and more women were getting elected in every constituency and in every buckets politically, we would all be better off.

Saskia Epstein:

Christina, we like to close with some rapid fire questions. Off the top of your head, what is something that people don't know about you?

Christina Gordon:

I hate to answer this question, but the truth is, I've been hit by lightning.

Saskia Epstein:

Wow. Oh my goodness. We need to come back to that, but we now know why you're so energized. That's not the first time somebody's made a joke like that, but. What are you currently reading or watching?

Christina Gordon:

I am reading The Sisterhood: Women of the CIA, which is outstanding. I highly recommend it. It talks about how the women were not allowed and still to this day aren't always allowed to be the agents on the beat, but they do all of the research. So they're tracking everything and then they tell the agents what to do. I think it's very symbolic.

Saskia Epstein:

Very interesting. Let's definitely add that to my library reading list. What is your favorite spot in our city? Or I should say, given your statewide focus throughout Massachusetts, your favorite spot in the region?

Christina Gordon:

My favorite spot is Fenway Park. I love Fenway Park, I took my kids there. I have four children and they grew up at Fenway Park and we go to 50 plus games a year, we've been season ticket holders, and it's magical and is our home away from home. And I have had some of the best family times we've ever had were at Fenway Park and I feel very connected to it. Close second is Bruins playoff games at the TD Garden.

Saskia Epstein:

Okay. We've had some happy occasions at both places. We ask all of our guests, who is a Boston leader or perhaps an organization to watch?

Christina Gordon:

I think a Boston leader and organization would be, and I'm not plugging her, just being, I really mean it, is actually one of our co-founders, Ami Kuan Danoff, she's one of the co-founders of Women's Foundation of Boston, but she's also one of the co-owners of the New National Women's Soccer League team for Boston. And Ami helped create the Women's foundation with me and our other co-founders many years ago, and it wouldn't have happened without her. She's very bold and she's very courageous and she's extremely objective, which I think is a very important skill when you're growing something. And I admire her doing that again in the women's sports space for Boston specifically, and I'm excited for her.

Saskia Epstein:

Terrific. We can't wait to have another sports team to cheer on.

Christina Gordon:

I know.

Saskia Epstein:

And finally, what is your wish for Massachusetts?

Christina Gordon:

I have a lot of wishes, but I wish, I hope that there's a shift in philanthropic and research and focus on women and girls from the paltry 1% that we're seeing right now. I really wish and hope that people realize the impact that women and girls have on our societies, but I also wish that we get a WNBA team.

Carolyn Jones:

I love it. I sense a sports theme going on with you.

Saskia Epstein:

That's great. Thank you so much, Christina, for joining us.

Christina Gordon:

It was great to be with you.

Saskia Epstein:

We're thrilled to have you, and that wraps up another episode.

I'm Saskia Epstein.

Carolyn Jones:

I'm Carolyn Jones, and this is PNC C-Speak: The Language of Executives. Our guest today was Christina Gordon, the co-founder and CEO of the Women's Foundation of Boston. And Christina, thanks so much.

Saskia Epstein:

You can find PNC C-Speak at [Bizjournals.com/Boston](https://bizjournals.com/Boston), or on any of your favorite podcast platforms. Until next time.