

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/in-brief/a-sense-of-purpose/>

Ray Harts developed the concept for the Healthy Hearts Institute while participating in The Last Mile's prison education program in San Quentin State Prison. After his release, he made that organization a reality, incorporating as a nonprofit that aims to eradicate food deserts and empower individual and community transformation through health and wellness. Among other activities, the organization leads a community garden project at Pittsburg, CA's El Pueblo Housing Development that feeds over 150 families. Here, he shares some of the roadblocks that he faced, and describes how his firm sense of purpose and his commitment to support his community help him push back against structural racism.



Transcript

- There's a question from one of the students to Ray 00:00:08,240 and it says, what were some of the barriers you faced when you started Healthy Hearts, I'm assuming outside of prison, and how did you overcome them? - Oh man, you know, some of the barriers I think was just 00:00:23,131 getting myself out there.. Letting people know who I was, and sharing my story, and having access to capital.. That's still a barrier.. Being able to hire talent.. That's something that's super difficult just because of where I'm at.. There are a number of things.. But you know the main thing is to live with purpose.. I really feel like I live with purpose and when times seem hard, I lean on that.. When I see other organizations, and I'll speak on this real briefly just because of the times that we're in, when I see other organizations that are non-black and they receive like four times the amount of funding I receive in half the time, or they hire talent to build out their team, like highly skilled people come out and volunteer to build their team, or when I get a newsletter and it's well written content and they got videos to boot, you know, I wonder why don't I have something like that? What's the barriers for me where I'm not able to create that type of support so my community can get the support that they need.. So when I look at those type of barriers, especially the highlight right now is just talking about all the Black Lives Matter and you see all these big brands speaking about it, but when I think about what I've experienced personally, it makes me think about is this a part of structural racism that I'm not receiving that? So those are some barriers and I'm just gonna speak my truth, right..

I could sugar coat it and say, "Ray, you're not working hard enough." And then as an entrepreneur, you have to figure it out.. It doesn't matter if you're black or white or whatever color you are.. If you're an entrepreneur, you have to figure it out, you have to overcome these things, and you gotta stay the course.. And for me, I'll say to any entrepreneur, if you're doing something purposeful, then lean on that.. If you have purpose and you're living through purpose, lean on that and you'll be able to overcome whatever obstacle it is no matter what...