

# 3.5 Pamela Fann

📅 Wed, Apr 12, 2023 4:26PM 🕒 1:01:44

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

communities, people, environmental justice, energy, climate, diversity, talking, work, organizations, equity, project, design, problems, pamela, helping, diverse, happening, climate change, impact, connected

## SPEAKERS

Narrator, Eric Benson, Pamela Fann, Rachel

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**Narrator** 00:00

This podcast is a project of the climate designers network.



**Eric Benson** 00:03

Hey, this is Eric. Welcome to season three of Climify. This season, I'm talking to women across the globe, who are at the forefront of climate science and climate action. Each guest is a thought leader in one or more of the drawdown.org climate solutions sectors. What you may ask are the drawdown.org Solution sectors. Well important topics like renewable electricity, soil and agriculture, architecture, oceans, health, education, so much more. The goal of this season is of course, to continue to help design educators incorporate a foundation of sustainability and regeneration into their courses, and, in turn, inspire more climate designers. Climate Solutions are already here, you can literally start being part of the solution today. Climify brings these solutions to you. So no matter what your skill or knowledge level, you can implement what you learn today in your personal life, and classroom.



**Eric Benson** 01:17

When you look under electricity in the drawdown solution sectors, you'll find a large list of climate solutions ranging from high efficiency heat pumps, to solar panels, and from LED lighting to insulating your business or home. The guest today Pamela Phan checks nearly all these energy solution boxes through her truly inspirational black owned business impact energy. But beyond electricity, Pamela also is helping her clients understand that equity and inclusion is vital for environmental justice, and cannot be untangled from our climate problems. One of the many key takeaways I had from this interview today was how best to work within a community to restore their power and voice in making the changes they need. I hope you are inspired by Pamela's work can help support all her efforts.



Pamela Fann 02:13

I am Pamela van co owner of impact energy as certified black women own energy services company where we specialize in both project installation of electric vehicle charging installs and maintenance, heat pump installs and energy audits and also with a focus on workforce development. So working within communities for economic impact to economic development. I am a certified diversity professional certified diversity trainer and I've been working in the energy industry on equity issues for over five years. I'm personally located in Atlanta, Georgia, but our office is based out of Massachusetts. And we do work across the US. You can find us at [www dot impact energy that energy](http://www.dotimpactenergy.com). Or you can find me on LinkedIn under Pamela fan as as in Frank A N N as well as you can find impact energy on LinkedIn as well and follow us.



Eric Benson 03:16

Welcome, Pamela, thanks for being unclarified today.



Pamela Fann 03:20

Thank you for having me. I'm looking forward to this conversation.



Eric Benson 03:23

Me too. Yeah. It's been a while since we first met each other when we talked on Zoom. I don't even know was it like a month ago?



Pamela Fann 03:32

A month? Or maybe two? Two? Almost two. Yeah.



Eric Benson 03:34

You've been busy.



Pamela Fann 03:35

Busy tech in February, which is a busy.



Eric Benson 03:39

It's a good busy though, right?





Pamela Fann 03:41

Absolutely. Yeah. Well, yeah.



Eric Benson 03:44

I'm excited to talk to you about your knowledge, working in energy, your Dei, we're going through the list of things you do here. It's quite a lot. So there's there's a lot of ground to cover. But before we get into the stuff that you're doing right now, I'm wondering how you got to where you are, and why you decided to focus in climate work, and everything connected to climate work, because I feel you can't unravel pretty much anything from climate, right. A race. Politics. I mean, it's all kind of baked into it.



Pamela Fann 04:24

Yeah, yeah. So I'll tell you, I got here by purpose. And I say that because you know, I like to think that you're, you know, most of our steps are kind of ordered through life, and I never would have projected that this is the space that I would be in. Oh, really? Yeah, I've got self here.



Eric Benson 04:43

Like what did you expect to be in when you were younger?



Pamela Fann 04:47

Not thinking. Yeah, and I think about that, because that was that was all purposeful too. It all led to where I am today. I spent 22 years pretty much all of my working years at the Coca Cola Anthony Oh, well, I'm where I work. Yeah, my last role there, I spent seven years in global public affairs and communication, which seemingly and now I've worked a lot with the ESG group, the sustainability, doing a lot of the sustainability work and packaging and bottles and things like that. So doing the Public Affairs around that, but even then, even in then, I still didn't recognize the purpose, right. Also, you know, they did a lot of work with women in the pie by 20 project that reused, whether it was coke bottles, or caps, or material is some sort of way to make things with to then go resell on the marketplace. So do you think about sustainable products in that way, and then you could buy these products through a booklet, a five by 20, booklet, and the fence print funding from that goes back to the women in these villages. And these are women all over the love Oh, yeah, yeah, wonderful, wonderful. Probably like one of the most inspiring parts of the work that I saw the organization do, during my time at Cooke is well, I seven years for seven years sat on the diversity board there. And so diversity has always been a part of something that I encompassed in the work that I've done, I grew up in a small town of Waso, Oklahoma, my family was the first black family to integrate the entire town. Yes, the entire town, the entire town.



Eric Benson 06:35

That's a whole other podcast about how that happened. That's a whole other

P

Pamela Fann 06:39

podcast, but it's still connected. Because again, what I'm doing is purposeful work, is purposeful work. And so I think that the way that I, you know, grew up in the town that I was in a lot of me a certain vantage point in viewpoint of diversity that I then brought into, you know, the scope of the work that I've always done, whether that's through volunteerism, or whether it's in the lens of the work that I had in, in corporate, amen, you know, which led me to, you know, a little over five years ago, coming into the energy industry, when I go to my first two conferences, my first conference actually was in DC, it was a conference of about 700 people were present. And there were literally two black women there no black men, two black women, myself and another woman, very small percentage of women altogether, but racial makeup was very small. There might have been, I think, an Asian man, there that I remember. But this was at a group of 700 people in the energy industry. So I was like, Okay, interesting. That's to me, that was interesting. Again, yes, very white, very old. Which is, you know, common for, for this industry. It's commonplace, which I didn't really know at the time, I was literally in my job, probably about two weeks before I went to this conference. So then the next conference that I go to some of the same sentiment, like, I think I might have been the only black person, their person of color, even a few more women, but mostly male, mostly older male. And that's all you really saw on the stage during the panel discussion, then all of the talk tracks were men, very few women's sprinkled in there. And I remember seeing a black woman on a on a panel at the bet the third conference, and I had a conversation with her. And I was like, what's, what's going on here? Like, you know, I'm so happy to see you in this space and see that you were on the plant panel, she was on a women and energy panel. So it was for like a women affinity group. And she was like, Yeah, this is how this, this landscape looks as you start to travel and go through these conferences and events. You know, I'm a business owner. And and it's, it's hard for us here. And I had that really great conversation with her about it. And I said, I even told her at that time, like, I want to, I want to help with this. Like, I feel like I can help with this. Utilizing the skill set that I learned back at Coke, and then my knowledge of diversity growing up, I really thought that I could make an impact there. And so I went back to my office and I had a discussion with our executive director at the time and I said, you know, what do you think about this diversity problem in the energy industry? And she was like, Yes, this is obvious, right? It's just the older white man's industry and this is what it is and I said, Wow, and I said I'd like to do some work and helping with this and so I thought I you know, just to be official, I went and got certified as a diversity professional. I got a CDP I got certified as a diversity Trainer. this is well before I even became popular after George Floyd and people wanted to get into these careers, but I wanted to really learn the fundamentals behind it. And then so people can say, take me serious, I guess it's enough to say, Yeah, I worked on a diversity board for seven years. But then the put some kind of credentialing behind me. So I went and did that. And then I came back. And after I got those certifications, I took our own organization, through a cultural competency framework to ensure that we were living the values in which we thought we were, we were creating an inclusive culture, for people to come in and be themselves and be able to work because you know, even as much as people say that they're diverse or that they embrace diversity, and that they're culturally competent. You know, we're humans, and sometimes we're just just not or organizations aren't as good as they can't be. Yeah. Was that



Eric Benson 10:55

something of without like a workshop? Or what kind of what what was that all about? How did you come to the conclusions about? Were you diverse in terms of what your mission said?

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Pamela Fann 11:06

Yeah, no, it's actually building out a framework. So taking the organization through assessments, to see what the latest thought that work there, no matter how big or small the organization is, your employees are your best indicators and trackers for how well you're doing on inclusivity. Right. Asking questions like, Do you know how promotions are, are awarded within a company? That's diversity? Because people have to be able to feel like, you know, they're not being discriminated against, whether that's through pay disparity, or any other means? Do you have it 360 feedback, where you can give feedback to your managers, as well as your, you know, doing peer reviews, all of that HR process stuff is a part of it. So it's not just doing bias training. Everybody thinks it's about bias training and learning about our biases.



Eric Benson 11:57

I do that all the time. University today, we have, I think, three different tests.

P

Pamela Fann 12:03

Yes, every year. Yeah. So you picked the bias test? Are you by Are you biased? Yes, of course you are.



Eric Benson 12:10

Every day. Yeah.

P

Pamela Fann 12:12

Right. We're all biased. So there's gonna come out the same way every time, your your bias, we all are. So yes, doing bias training in trainings are a part of that. But training is a low don't create an inclusive culture, you do have to be intentional, and put intentionality behind creating inclusive inclusivity into your organization, and inclusivity into your work and how you work. So then I began working with other organizations on developing frameworks for their cultural competency within their organizations. They were like, Yeah, we want to become more diverse, too. And then after George boy was like, everybody wanted to become more diverse, because, you know, that made these commitments to diversity, and we're going to do better, but they didn't know how to go about doing it. So then I started working with companies and organizations, and a part of that framework is also how do you work with a communities? How are you understanding the needs of communities within your work and building equity into that, because as energy companies, right, you're dealing with communities who have taken on the brunt of climate change, taking on the brunt of environmental justice? And if you're going into these communities looking like the people that I saw in those first couple of conferences, right, they're not going to trust them, right? They're not going to trust you. They're not going to trust

anything you're saying, because you're the same people that caused harm to their communities? How do we bridge those gaps? How do we one get you people employed there? Because you know, what I was hearing is, we don't know where to find the diverse candidates, we don't know where to buy and diverse people were all over like, you know, what are they talking about? That's exactly like, that's exactly. But you know, you have to think about it. And they come, it's honest for them that they don't know where to find the candidates or the people because their network is small. You know, you're not a person who embraces cultural differences, typically, and you haven't done that and it's not a part of your normal regimen, then you aren't going to look at who went to school at the same school that I went to, which might be a predominantly white school, or you know, you see a resume who got recommended or who got recommended from this person. Your it might be someone in your network recommended this person to work for you in more than likely their network look like them. So you got it honestly. So I help teach them how to, you know, divert the path a little bit and rebuild those networks. So you are creating a more diverse network of participants to your applications. Because your your, your communities and the people that you're actually your customer base and people who you're actually trying to do this work for People in your office need to look like that customer base. People in your office need to have that experience that sometimes lends to thought and different thoughts and different reactions they have do not have someone on your team that can raise their hand and say this is not equitable. And so creating inclusivity within your organizations and work is what's going to help build that equity into doing the work externally in doing the work in those communities. And, yeah, I mean, we're doing a disservice to ourselves if we're not diversifying our organizations to meet community needs, because again, those are the communities that are being left behind in this transition. And so in order to make those communities whole, and to bring them along with us, you're gonna need to have some people that look like those communities and understand the problems in the systems and the way that things work in those communities, too.



Eric Benson 16:00

Yeah, so I'm wondering, you talked a lot about impact, I'm guessing this is the impact you want with the name impact energy.



Pamela Fann 16:07

Yeah, that's the whole impetus behind our our name is that we want to make an impact within communities. And we're doing that through because we have the knowledge of going out and how to get the contracts and how to get the project work for every installation for every maintenance for energy auditing, that we're also going to work with the communities to train people to go out and do the work of these projects that we win. So not only are we going to make communities whole by making them healthier, by installing electric vehicle charging stations, in their communities and educating them, about Evie charging in EBS that they are cost effective, they are a cost effective option in some pretty almost more so than a car with an engine that, you know, you can drive out of state in one and go visit your family if you've got, you know, a larger family in flying may not be an option or you and you drive everywhere. It's like yes, this is an option and you can drive your family out of state. Absolutely. And it's the health benefits. The carbon reduction, the health benefits behind making this community a cleaner transportation community where you already are suffering from, you know, the carbon effects of large warehousing or highways coming through your communities because of

redlining, the systematic problems that we see in environmental justice communities that are really like, I don't want to say like the dumping grounds, but really have been for, for climate, for climate issues and in environmental issues. And so going in and providing these options to communities and providing economic opportunity to where they can also see a future for themselves in this in this industry is really our mission. This is what we're passionate about what we want to do, and we're making some really great strides. I'm getting that done.



Eric Benson 18:15

That sounds wonderful. I was wondering as you were talking, and maybe you kind of hinted at it, there was what kind of messaging do you go into the communities with his son, and you are talking a lot about economics and what else has been working for you in terms of having them adopt some of these more clean energy installations?



Pamela Fann 18:39

So I recently well, over the past weekend, I was at a southeast environmental justice convening that I helped organized with an environmental justice group, Harambee house, out of Savannah, and it brought together all of the southeast EPA Region four states, except for Tennessee, we didn't have representation from Tennessee, that everyone else was there. In talking to community. That's one thing that you have to do you have to get in there in the in the community and actually have these conversations with a builder. Then build the relationships and build the trust and build the understanding of what they actually need. Talk to them about their needs, when talk to them about their assets, what are some of the great things that the community already has in place? And then what are the needs that they have the adoption with electric vehicles, some of the opposition to that has been What does and these are smart communities. They've been doing this environmental justice work for a long time. So they're, their concerns are what does the waste of these batteries after they're done look like and is it going back into our community? Oh,



Eric Benson 19:55

that's that's that's good thinking.



Pamela Fann 19:58

That's, that's good. thinking that's why I said they're very smart about their communities. They don't want to see more form done for the sake of innovation. I see then that kid is, you know, yeah, the cost because most people think that you have to go out and buy the Tesla's in order to have an Eevee. They don't know that there's cost effective cars out there, like they're not all super expensive, you've got your leafs you got your other and then you can buy them used at that you get to use Eb, and no, like here in Georgia, for around \$1,000. And then you don't have the same maintenance that problems that you would have on a traditional IT DOESN'T dollars is good, or Yes, Ford used car. Absolutely. So is the education piece around that. Looking at the environmental effects. So utilizing a lot of the mapping tools that are out there, I know that there's the EJ screening tool that the EPA has, the DOE has a brand new

environmental justice mapping tool that they utilize, which, for those listening, if you're interested in getting some applying for any of those Department of Energy grants that are coming down as part of the infrastructure, the IRA, or the big ol bipartisan infrastructure laws, or the infrastructure bills, or justice 40, you have to in order to qualify for any of those, those dollars, you have to be within those communities that they have mapped out on their site. Okay, that's just no little good to know. But showing communities like these are the things that play currently, based upon these maps that plague your community. I think carbon offsets really high on probably the majority of these, because a lot of them again, are red line communities next to highways next to warehousing is big semi trucks and things coming through. And so talking to them about you know, they even have air quality monitors, in most cities is looking even at air quality monitoring. So you take the, the numbers and the statistics and talk to them about those things. And you put it into terms that people can understand, here's what this could mean for health benefits. I see. Here's what it mean, for not on this, this could also be a solve for some transportation issues that typically plague these communities, because they are either that last mile problem off of the public transit, or they have too much public transit and not enough really infrastructure for roadways, and so talking to communities about what it is they feel like they need, give them the details about what's out there, and letting them make the informed decision. Like we would like to see some electric vehicle transition in our community. Like yeah, sounds like a good option. So that's, that's the formula.



Eric Benson 23:00

So it sounds like it's in person it's face to face. It's not. Here's a video on Tiktok. And yeah, it seems like it's very specific to that community. I'm sure there's some general similarities between other communities, but you really have to know that community pretty well. And that might take some time, I'm imagining, right, because you have to build that relationship and trust and they want to trust you. You're not like, paid and bought for by some big energy company.



Pamela Fann 23:31

Absolutely. So, you know, environmental justice communities. And when we're talking about environmental justice, have I just had this conversation earlier? I think that the term is being more loosely used in industry, to also combine low to moderate income disadvantaged communities, you know, we throw these terms around and now as EJ communities, I think that that's, but environmental justice is more so of a movement. Yeah, unless, like community.



Eric Benson 24:02

I always that makes us today as a movement from from my perspective, but



Pamela Fann 24:06

yes, but industry that hasn't necessarily.





Eric Benson 24:10

They're called opinion tour, are they? Yeah,



Pamela Fann 24:13

I think so. And they're cooperating, they're putting it in with low to moderate income, as well as disadvantaged communities. So that kind of like the EJ word has taken place of disadvantage, which really is should be environmental. As Dr. McNeil, Jim McLean was say, who's one of our great pioneers in the mother of environmental justice movement. She would say environmental injustice communities, because they Oh, yes, that's right. Yeah, they haven't seen justice. Yeah. So if you're looking at environmental injustice communities, some of them may be disadvantaged, but some of them may not be disadvantaged, some of them more than likely are low to moderate income. but we don't put them all in these buckets. Like they're not all of the same thing. Environmental Justice is really a movement, and is a movement, about climate, about sustainability, about community health, about community, economic viability. And it's like what has created these issues was created energy burden, what's created the creation of climate change that disproportionately impacts these communities? Yeah. So it's more again, it's more about a movement than it is about a singular community and what this community actually is. So yeah, I just wanted to note to note that,



Eric Benson 25:44

I'm all Well, I agree with you on that. And, and one thing that you mentioned earlier on when you were at these energy conferences, predominantly male and white, that was my experience, too. I am male and white, however, but I would go to, or not even go to conferences, but read books on climate or a sustainability. And of course, I was very inspired. And that's what got me into doing what I'm doing today. And it took a little while, but I looked at it one day. And I'm like, all of these books are written by white male authors. And I'm wondering, Where are the other perspectives? And so my question for you really is I, I came to the realization probably late to not too late, but late later in the game, that you really can't like the idea of climate, action, environmental justice. It's, it's married to all these other topics, DDI included, and I'm wondering, are you I know you agree with this, but are you finding more people are awakening to that or or or not? I would say.



Pamela Fann 26:58

So then people are awakening to that. I know when I go speak on this issue. I talk about, you know, the fad, because, you know, three years ago, it was all about energy efficiency, energy efficiency, energy efficiency, energy efficient. I agree. Yeah, exactly. And I was like, Okay, well, we can't talk about energy efficiency without talking about climate change. We can't talk about climate change without talking about environmental justice. We can't talk about environmental justice without talking about systemic racism. Are you ready to go? They're



Eric Benson 27:34

proud? I just want to put insulation in my attic. Nope. Yeah.

P

Pamela Fann 27:37

Like no, like, we have to talk about all of that. I mean, because people are wanting to understand like utility companies, specifically, try to understand how can we how can we cannot get minority or low to moderate income, or disadvantaged communities, all of those terms, to buy in to these these energy efficient programs? Why are we missing the mark on these energy efficient programs? Aha, it's because they're dealing with climate change, because they're dealing with environmental justice issues, which is all a cause of systemic racism and the systemic problems from redlining and other things. And so if you're talking to arc, you can talk to a person about switching out light bulbs in changing their their, their spouse on their, on their their sinks for water efficiency, or in their showers. Oh, yeah, if the person is thinking about do I pay is energy burdened, which, that's a word that they're that they're not familiar with. Right now, they know they can't pay their electric bill because they have this doctor bill or med that they go pay X amount of dollars for medicine. And it's still no matter if they boost up their air because their house is sealed properly, properly, that they're still hot in their home, the home is still hot. So you know, you you've got to meet people, you know exactly where they are and and be able to explain and understand why I'm not thinking about changing light bulbs as an energy efficiency measure thinking about that program. When I'm energy burdened, and when back in the day, when my grandma used to tell me, you know, to close that door, I was letting her air out. Or



Eric Benson 29:31

to my dad.

P

Pamela Fann 29:33

Yes, yes. Or when we would they would have the wind all the windows up in the house. It happened air and have fans in the window because they couldn't cut the air on. We were energy they were energy burdened. Yeah. You know, as you think about as a culture for people of color. We're some of the most sustainable people out there. We've been growing crops in this us for over 400 years now. We've been growing our own food, we've been recycling things and utilizing everything. We've been saving energy in our phones, but the name of it, you know, people tend to think that these communities aren't thinking about sustainability when there's when these communities have been probably some of the most sustainable communities. Yeah, they enable people out there. But they're also because of conditions of systemic racism. You know, it's caused other issues, to where it's hard to, it's hard to catch up. It's just hard to catch up. There's no equity, there is not equal. There's not an equal playing field to where they're starting from. That makes it



Eric Benson 30:43

it does, because it's like they keep on falling further behind if they try to make that step forward. Right, because they're already coming from from behind.

P

Pamela Fann 30:53

Right, either economically and then let a climate disaster happen. We got flooding. I understand. They're like in many of the southeast states where, you know, communities are low line and flooding, who got put in those low lying communities? Why wouldn't why are they designated as that? Because probably from some redlining, that it was undesirable property that, you know, it says it's all connected. Yeah, every single bit of it is connected. And you talked a little bit about, you know, the books that you've read, and things like that have been published by white men, and communities, environmental justice communities are at really at a point where they're like, the systems that are currently out there are very extractive. And they're like, they're coming into our communities. They're doing this research, they're inviting us to these focus groups. They're getting all this information from us, and they're not putting anything back into the community that addresses our our issues. And so is that restorative justice model that we want to see happen for environmental justice community, where I'm talking about research and design, and people are like, well, you help us with research and design for connecting with these communities? I'm like, What's the restorative part? It should be restorative research and design? Because as we're going to be getting dollars for all this research on these communities? Shouldn't we be giving it back to them so they can solve some of the issues that they have? Oh, yeah. Are we just extracting from them?



Eric Benson 32:33

We'll be back after this message. To learn more about restorative design and how to best co create with a community.

R

Rachel 32:42

Where do young designers see themselves at the intersection of climate change and innovation? And how can we teach that intersection in the classroom designers are problem solvers capable of imagining solutions for a more sustainable future, we have a bigger role to play in all phases of the design process, not just the beginning. My name is Rachel suffer le graphic designer, recent college grad, and part of the climate designers. Edu team. And after graduating, I realized today's classrooms tend to skip over that universal side of design. So if you're a design educator, I want to hear from your students help set in motion the first ever project that centers students at the intersection of design education and climate change. I want to know what your students think about sustainable design, how they see climate change impacting their future careers. And what even comes to mind when they hear the term climate design. Send your students to [climate-designers.org/edu/new Wave survey](https://climate-designers.org/edu/new-wave-survey), to take the five question survey or sign up for an interview with me, helped me inform a new wave of design education, one that teaches every designer how to be a climate designer.



Eric Benson 33:50

We're back with Pamela Fann. So restorative, can you define that in the environmental justice movement? What what would be restorative design research?

P

Pamela Fann 34:01

Restorative? Honestly, restorative design research is if you involve community, in your research search efforts, for instance, we know that there's a lot of federal dollars that are becoming available, most of those, yeah, which is good, which is great. Most of those federal dollars are going to require that that organizations work with community based organizations to get this work done. So just about every grant that I've seen out there requires like usually three partnerships. So it's saying that you have to connect with a partnership in that community to get this work done. Some sometimes you have to connect with the school or university or minority serving institution or HBCU to get this work done. And those are the ones that typically are doing a lot of the Reese come in, do the research lens as well as some utility implementers or utilities themselves, because they want information like out in the fingers, the information that they want, in bad information, they want to know how to best support these communities. And the way to do that is to go to the community and find out how can we best support you? What programs could work for you? What type of workforce development should we be looking at for your community? But while you're extracting this information, also find out, you know, as you know that you're going to get a certain amount of dollars for this project, how are you pouring that back into the community? So that's the restorative part, are you actually developing a workforce development plan, employing that together to go back to the community and say, now that we've done this research, we have x amount of dollars that we're going to provide for workforce training, or now that we've done this research, we know as the utility that we can work with maybe the water company to go in and help clean your water systems? Because we felt so it's that restorative part will give you the information, you can extract it from us, they give us something back. Yeah, and put it in, right. And so then that way, it's legal. Yeah, put it in writing, for sure that you're going to come back and do that. But that's what it is. And so as I'm working, and I will tell you, I'm currently working with a couple of organizations on RFPs to do research with, because I work closely with community. So of course, we like commute, assist us with this, and I'm happy to do it because we need to do the work. That is also about how are we pouring back into that community? What's the restorative part? So again, as restorative research in design,



Eric Benson 36:41

I like that, yeah, there is an example I heard on a podcast I was listening to recently, a matter of degrees. And they were talking about a US Department of Agriculture grant in southeast Alaska. So I think it's called SAS or Southeast Alaska sustainable strategy, in which it sounded a lot like what you just described there. But I think maybe even went further in that the grant was actually given to the community and the community, collectively, not through some other person or whatever. They had to come together and say, This is how we want to use that like \$8 million, or whatever it was to improve equity and environmental justice in our community. And this particular podcast was glowing about it, because like, that's the way it should be done. And so that that was inspiring. And so it seems like you're working that way, too. And was this something that you got from Coca Cola? Or is this something that you just continually built upon after leaving that job in terms of knowing how to work so well with communities?

P

Pamela Fann 37:55

Yeah, I think again, it's I go back to purpose, which I didn't see it, you know, that all of the steps in my career, and all of the workings because I worked it, I, you know, worked a lot in

community while doing volunteerism, while at Coca Cola. I used to be what I would call a serial volunteer. So any community project, whether it be a planting beautification project or a feed the hungry project, or, you know, whatever the project was, I was there, and my son could attest to that, because he grew up going every Saturday with me to either a food bank or something. Wow. So I think, and you know, where my spirit of volunteerism came from, is the fact that when I was growing up in Oklahoma, in that small town of a Waso, when I was, it was in 1988, I was a junior in high school, and my family's home was burned down by a white supremacist group. Oh my god. Again, that's a story for another day. But today to Yes, yes. But the the first responders for us were the American Red Cross, I give I donate blood. I'm a platelet donor.



Eric Benson 39:10

I have tomorrow, in fact, tomorrow



Pamela Fann 39:13

Yeah, yes. See, I'm a special like, blood donor. And so I've worked a lot with the American Red Cross. And I never made all of that connections from when the diversity aspect from to the volunteerism and connection with community. But again, as you can see, throughout my career, they all showed up, all these things just showed up and brought the career. And so coming into energy and thinking and connecting the dots, about what people need, like really one, having that empathy, in that understanding of community in the world and what they're fighting against. Yeah, I've been, I've been there. So having that understanding of it, knowing the system Part of it. So seeing it from the other side, because I'm working in the industry, and seeing the system of how people aren't making the connection, and giving them the tools as a diversity professional to make the connection to then go and help community in do better in working within community. And then, as part of the climate work, even, you know, I think you and I've talked about it before I support some girls in Africa, because this is a global thing, right? Not just a problem here. Yeah, so I support girls and send them to school, through my Eagles Foundation, which you can find that my Eagles foundation us and thinking through the climate issues that they face, which yes, they can be detrimental for communities here to for people that look like me, the for these young women who won, culturally, and these are young Maasai women in Tanzania, who culturally would typically get kind of sold off, quote, unquote, or cattle or goats when they're 10 or 11 years old. Because there's that not value, the value for them isn't around education, they're seen as property sold for.



Pamela Fann 41:24

Yes, yeah. And during them off, or sold off from happening, it's still happening, it's still happening is the cultural practice. And then if you think with climate change, these young ladies and women from these villages have to walk so much further, because their water sources are drying up. Or they have to work in fields a lot longer, because they are the ones they are the the ones who who do the agricultural work for their communities and build their homes, and things like that. So they're out in temperatures that are like scorching, so they're, they're having health and risk effects, or effects, you know, at risk for bodily harm, traveling so far away from home just to fetch water. And so when you educate these girls, you're also

supporting them through through, you know, the effects of climate change as well in the in, in mitigating them from those risks, and letting them see that there's other options out there. So this work again, this is purposeful work. Yeah. Can you talk a little bit about? Is it on purpose? Yeah, it is on purpose. It's the purpose that I'm doing this, I find myself connecting all of these dots with this with this work that I'm doing, and how it's all come come to be a part. And I'm, I'm really just happy and just blessed that the environmental justice community has taken me in and has entrusted me so much to help them figure out the system part of it, because they want to be a part of this economic opportunity that's coming to the energy street that they know a little about. They want to be a part of that. And they see it as a way to rebuild their communities. And so that's what I'm most passionate about doing is helping them connect those dots.



Eric Benson 43:15

Is there anything that offhand our listeners who are mainly designers could do to help support the efforts that impact energy and then the other projects you're involved with? What what can be done maybe just this a donation or what what can we do to be help supportive of this.



Pamela Fann 43:36

So I will say from my Eagles foundation is definitely donation. Because you've learned to go into private school, we're in the process of trying to build a school as well and secure donations for that. So if your passion is around supporting girls in education, in particular girls who are really in need and so bright, and just it's so great to see that they've realized they have a future that would be at my Eagles foundation us. And with impact energy. If you're thinking through, you know, how to work better within communities, and how to build equity within your programs, contact someone like us. We are minority owned, certified minority owned women energy services company. And we are uniquely designed to be able to go and work within these communities, not only through having the diversity experience, but having also the lived experience of these communities, which really lends to getting that trust and building that trust. So we want to see these dollars. And the thing like you mentioned earlier about the project in Alaska, a lot of the Federal dollars are going directly to community based organizations and then they have to find the partnerships A lot of these community based organizations don't know who they should partner with. Okay? So it's really time to start getting out there and making those connections for them now making introductions to your organization or to your school. If you haven't worked in community before, start getting out there now. And understanding, go to a community event, go to a neighborhood Planning Unit meeting, and learn about what the community is dealing with, and what are some of the issues, go to a city council meeting, and understand what's happening in your community. So you can start making those connections now? Because chances are, they're going to need you. Although the dollars will flows, a lot of them directly to the CBOs. What are they going to do with it, when they get it, they've got to implement it. And who can help them best with that? The colleges and universities, the Oregon and minority based or minority business enterprises like my own, were the we are the technical experts that can go in and help them with their issues. And so yeah, I think that that really is is like the best model like go and find out what these communities need. Immerse yourself in the community. So they know who you are, and

where to find you when they do get these dollars or when it's time to apply for these funds. Because again, even though the funds go to them, they still gotta come with two or three partners to make sure that that funding works. So get to know your communities.



**Eric Benson 46:30**

Yeah. You're also involved with a pretty great, you're on an advisory board with is it Jedi? Is it?



**Pamela Fann 46:38**

How do you sum it? Yeah, Jedi advisor with the Department of Energy in Israel, for their innovation prizes. And so they originally brought myself, I think there were about six of us, that either people from community or diversity experts that helped them with their first innovation prize, what they wanted to do was really changed the landscape of who was applying for these awards, and not continuously giving them to the same people over and over again, and bring about some diverse folks who haven't typically received the government funding before to help them do some great work in their community. So they brought us on to help educate them around how they diversify their network. Again, we talked a little bit about that earlier. Yeah, ensuring that the program itself was not exclusionary, meaning that it was so difficult for people to do it that they were excluding those organizations, that one only had like two or three people already working for them. And then they've got to fill out this 40 Page Innovation Grant, do they have the capacity to do that? You know, so they have helped them through the whole process. And they picked some wonderful, wonderful organizations, they had over 200 applicants, which they had never had before. And they were very diverse applicants. And so yeah, they're doing a lot of great work. They, they're they brought me back to continue forward with their collegiate innovation prizes. I know you're going to share the link with everyone. There are several different programs in there that that colleges and universities can be a part of, and work within community and get some really great work done and some really nice grades.



**Eric Benson 48:27**

Yeah, there's a lot of my listeners are working as design educators and a college university and I'm on the website right now from the Department of Energy. Here's an [energy.gov](http://energy.gov) that you sent me. And there's a lot of really good opportunities here for students interested in similar work that you do with internships, fellowships, and competitions. Can you talk to us more about actually those internships and fellowships, and the competitions?



**Pamela Fann 48:57**

Yeah, so I don't know a whole lot about the internships and partnerships, although I do know some people who have been fellows. I remember, I personally know one of the first African American fellows that they brought on to work in their group. He's now actually a full time person there. Hey, we had a lot of this. Yeah. And so we had a lot of discussions. It was about four almost probably almost five years ago when we were introduced when he started doing this work. And I was helping him think through some of the equity pieces of his work in also

helping because she was the only one of him at that time in the organization, the only person that looked like him, helping him navigate the challenges of being the only one but still trying to lead the way for others. Now, there's so many others. Yeah, now there's so many others. I've met a couple of the fellows is a great program they look for, they tend to look for my new Ready people in particular, to do their fellowships. Their internships are great opportunities. If you are especially right now with the teams that they have a deal II, I've never seen it this diverse nobody ever has, since they brought on a person Shalonda Baker to lead the equity work within do E, they have really had a great focus of making sure the department and the group of people doing this work reflect the communities that they serve. And we are talking about nationalities across the board, they have a really, really great representation there, which makes you really proud to see. But with that, you know, they're always looking for great people. So I think if equity is your is your jam, if that's something that you believe in, especially in this climate and energy work, I, you know, employee to go in there and take a look at the jobs or a lot of jobs out there now with the Department of Energy as well. Because what it mean is that if you get people in a position that they are, you know, they already come with the sense of diversity in diversity, dexterity, and they know and they are engaged with diverse people and diverse thoughts. And we have them in these positions. That's going to make for better programmatic work that's going to come out of these offices in the long run not for the short term, but for the long term.



Eric Benson 51:31

Yeah, reminds me of there was a guest I had on last season named Brooke Havlik and and she was talking about this idea of two truths where Yeah, it's it's bad. There's some bad climate stuff going on. But there's also some a lot of good stuff happening and hearing the stuff that you're telling me right now. Just kind of reinforces that that. Yeah, there's there's hope here. And we can do this.



Pamela Fann 51:58

There absolutely is there's so much going on in this space. I think God or diversity initiatives, I'm happy that many utilities have a diverse spend requirement, whether that be through their their prime cause. That's great. Yeah, through their subcontract, not all of them. They're not all of them have it, but many have like a 40% and diverse spend requirement, which means they have to engage minority owned businesses in this space. So you know, I'm happy to see, to see all of the equity work that's being done. What makes me most excited is that I, I can actually see a vision for communities to become whole, not only to benefit from the dollars that will flow into their communities to do the upgrades on homes, streets, infrastructure, get some of the technologies, communities, solar projects, Evie, charging station, possibly even wind who know, for rural communities to see that those things come into their community and create economic impact. Like this is the first time that there is a directive from the United States government to ensure that that happens. And so I'm really excited that those opportunities are there. But I'm also nervous. Yeah. Because we know that we have a short window in which these dollars are out there. Because, you know, as the changes happen with administration's, we can guarantee that will this administration will still be there,



Eric Benson 53:38



right to make sure something positive is still happening. Yeah,

P

Pamela Fann 53:42

to make sure something positive continues. Yeah, from this. So all of these fundings and funding and dollars and partnerships that are being created, the people who want to see change like us, we've got to keep it going. You got to keep talking about it. We've got to keep the connections together, and we have to keep it going. So it can be a permanent sustainable thing. Yeah,



Eric Benson 54:05

totally agreed. I mean, this it's it seems like just just from this from the idea of trying to do things better environmentally is is one hardship, and then you realize to continue to do that you have to join all these other fights because it's all connected.

P

Pamela Fann 54:28

Yeah, it's a holistic approach to people many times before that we have to take this as a holistic we have to take a holistic approach to fixing the systemic problems because they not did they did not these systemic problems did not just get there from utility, no energy part me know, I started with, you know, it can get there from real estate. You know, we know that health care has a stake in this because if we get homes to be, you know, weatherized properly and sealed up and energy efficient homes. If people are able to pay a lower cost on their electric electric bill, then they can put money towards other things. And they won't necessarily be spending as much money going to the doctor for asthmatic or God. It's all. Just Yes, COPD issue. So you I mean, it's all connected. So they didn't get this problem did not happen by itself. But that's when I go back to say it's a systemic problem. There are a number of roots, and it's all rooted is all rooted in racism is rooted in racism. And out of that all of these other things have happening. So it's not one industry problem to worry about. It's not just the climate everybody's everybody's problem. And in order to make these these communities whole, we do have to take a holistic approach in into into rectifying them.



Eric Benson 56:07

I agree. I just wish more people could can see that. That's,

P

Pamela Fann 56:14

that's a challenge. That is the challenge. Yeah. Well, we hit them were the ones that are workable now. Right. And



Eric Benson 56:22

we have to go along with that. Yeah. Well, I'm sad to say we're almost at a time. And I got one more question for you. And I'm gonna have you put on My metaphorical shoes and turn turn into a design educator, for a minute. And the question is, is what would you do? If you were asked to teach a design class? What project would you assign? How would you structure the class, whatever, you can be as long or as short as you want it to be?

P

Pamela Fann 56:54

I would, I would actually base equity in the for design the course looking at it from an equitable lens. So thinking of the makeup of the students who take this course, I'd want to know what their lived experiences are, how it will relate to this course? How could they utilize this in real world examples and case studies, building equity into adult equity into everything, I don't think that we do that enough. And I think that that's the lens that I want all the students and everyone who, whether they're students, younger students, or lifelong students like myself, I would want us to put an equity lens, to all of that work that we're doing and figure out how to help us all if we can solve the problems for the most at risk people in this world. Just think about that, yeah, if we can solve the problems for the most at risk people. Don't you think that that then solves all those other layers in between and higher up? So if we put an equity lens on all of that, and think about designing in solving problems for the most at risk people? That's what I would do.



Eric Benson 58:18

Wow, I love it. Thank you for that. And it's been a wonderful conversation today. Pamela, I'm really inspired by your story, and wanting to continue my own work in this world of climate justice, just like you. So let's stick together. Keep in touch on this. Because Absolutely. We need a community. Right.

P

Pamela Fann 58:42

Yeah. And you have one you know, we we've got there's a community MSI, you're trying to do get things in and do get work. And so but for the first time, ever in history, we've got some financial models that might be able to really help us do that. So yeah, let's, let's all get together and think through how we how we



Eric Benson 59:02

can sometimes I feel so alone, I don't know if you feel alone in it, but it's good to hear that. I guess I'm not Yeah,

P

Pamela Fann 59:08

yeah, it can be lonely, especially doing diversity work and doing environmental justice work. It can feel a bit there's a community out there. And I'm telling you, it's so beautiful, to see when these communities come together in really want to focus on on one seeing that change in their

community and knowing that there's a real opportunity right now to do it. Yeah. I would just implore everybody listening to this. There's a real opportunity to make some change right now. And if we can all pull together our resources and in thinking caps, and work together, oh, we can do some amazing work for communities. Maybe we won't hit every community, but we can get a lot done.



Eric Benson 59:50

Yeah, well, where can we find you online so we can help connect and support you?



Pamela Fann 59:57

Absolutely. So again, we're at [impactenergy.com](https://www.impactenergy.com) you can also reach out to me on LinkedIn under Pamela Fann. And that's F isn't Freek a in in. And you can also follow us on LinkedIn through and Twitter. So we're on twitter as well under impact energy, or you can follow us there. But yeah, happy to reach out, reach out if you have any questions, any thoughts, happy to respond back again and create this larger community of resources. So we can begin to really start seeing, you know, we can be the change that we want to see, we really can and so let's I'll put those efforts together to do that.



Eric Benson 1:00:39

Agree. Well, it's nice to have you on the show. And thank you for taking about an hour of your time to be with me. Oh, it's



Pamela Fann 1:00:46

no problem. I enjoyed it. Thank you so much.



Eric Benson 1:00:51

Climify is produced, edited and engineered by me. A huge Special thanks this season to Ellen Keith Shaw and Christine Piolet for their gorgeous work on our new brand. Batul Rashik, and Mark O'Brien for their continued design help. Bianca Sandiko as our new podcast manager, and Brandee Nichols and Michelle Nguyen, for their strategic guidance, and always supporting me on helping to improve the offerings of this podcast. If you enjoy the work, we all do here and you have a spare minute or two. We would truly appreciate it if you left a rating and review over at Apple podcasts. The more folks that review our program, the higher the algorithm pushes up, Climify in the search results, and in turn, the more likely we all can learn how to become climate designers.