

RACE, POWER AND DEMOCRACY: SYNTHESIS OF SELECT PHILANTHROPIC EFFORTS FOLLOWING KEY FLASHPOINTS

Flashpoints: Los Angeles '92, Cincinnati, 9/11, Katrina, Detroit Bankruptcy, and Trayvon Martin

~Maggie Potapchuk, MP Associates

“We invite funders and activists to reflect upon some of this history to perhaps learn more about work that might have taken time to take hold, or perhaps recognize missed opportunities that nevertheless might still inspire future work for racial justice. ... “The great force of history,” James Baldwin wrote, “comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do”

~From Timeline of Race, Racism, Resistance and Philanthropy 1992-2014, *Critical Issues Forum*, Vol. 5. *Moving Forward on Racial Justice Philanthropy*. June 2014. Larry Raphael Salomon, Julie Quiroz, Maggie Potapchuk and Lori Villarosa.

This report provides descriptions of philanthropic responses to a few key events that gained national and international attention over the past 22 years. This report is not a compilation of all that was written; rather it is a targeted literature review, highlighting a few different retrospectives of six key events. The review focused on implications for philanthropy and its work to advance a racial equity agenda. Most of the publications and articles were funded and/or written by foundations. Racial justice activists' points of view are included in some of the reports, though not all.

This report was created for the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity's meeting on September 24, 2014 sponsored by Ford Foundation, Kellogg Foundation, and Open Society Foundation. Opening comments by Eric Ward, program officer at the Ford Foundation, provide a helpful context for the discussion at the meeting. He posed these questions to the 55 funders and activists gathered (by phone and in-person):

"We are here because of the shooting death of Michael Brown, which sparked some small violent responses, which were then responded to by police. We gather here today to address this issue, and to encourage people to step back and look at this in a broader view; and to consider how we respond to the needs of the community. The ability of our movement to marshal the resources to respond to each flashpoint in advance is quite beyond our boundaries today. So how do we respond to these emerging issues around the country? ... Is there something different about people's push for democracy, is there something different about emergency management-like curfew, and other responses like those in Katrina and South Africa and Detroit? What kind of democracy will we have? Inclusive or exclusive? I propose we look at tangible ways to build power, and how we prepare for backlashes using Ferguson as a case study... It's time for us to begin to discuss how we frame what the future looks like – what inclusive democracy looks like – and what's the path forward?"

In reviewing the critiques, lessons and recommendations from a range of reports over the past 22 years, some themes emerged for philanthropy to address, which are highlighted below. These themes are not new; they have been discussed at many meetings, though this synthesis report is another reminder of the ongoing consequences of these issues not being addressed, especially in the context of these flashpoints. We know there will be more flashpoints, so how can we—philanthropy and racial justice activists—work collectively to ensure these persisting issues are resolved.

Below are some themes that emerged across the lessons, recommendations and critiques as well as some reflections:

Truly Investing in Justice Work Demands Increased Risk-Taking: Almost all of the reports were consistent in highlighting philanthropy's risk aversion, which actually clashes with the principles of crisis management. To address the complexities and history of structural racism, foundations need to support creativity, experimentation, and bold acts. Philanthropy is primed for an infusion of courage so collectively it can embrace and endure risk in its commitment to racial justice, given that progress toward racial justice has never come without struggle, set-backs and danger.

Engaging the Community to Support Building Power Rather than Solely Data Gathering Expeditions:

With community engagement activities, some of the questions that arose were: Who is defining community? How is the community being engaged? Is the community's input, insight, and lived experience being used to further the foundation's goals or the community's goals, needs, and leadership? Is the community engagement part of a process to invest in building power of the community, or just an exercise in data collection? Is the information from the community analyzed strictly by researchers or also community members? When information is shared, is care being taken to understand the potential consequences and backlash to members of the community?

Mitigating Consequences of Unequal Privilege and Power among Communities and Foundations:

Power dynamics will always be present within foundations' work in communities. The consistent call is for foundations to address these dynamics by integrating accountability measures focused on: developing relationships with grantees, practicing transparency in their decision-making practices, and institutionalizing equitable policies. Suggestions were made to develop a strong and open feedback loop with grantees and assess the impact of decisions regarding creating and changing grant portfolios with communities. Another idea is to create an evaluation in which the funder's work is the unit of analysis and is being assessed by the community, in terms of its usefulness and effectiveness at addressing what the community deems as important.¹

Clarity of Role in Supporting Investments in Community Change: Also noted, in many cases, there is a challenge of having differing theories of change between funders and grantees. As discussed on National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy's recent webinar, *"Freedom Funders Then and Now: What Lessons Foundation Can Learn from Philanthropy During the Civil Rights Movement,"*² it was important for foundations to have respectful relationships with the movement activists and be taking cues, rather than defining and advocating through grantmaking policies, a particular strategy. Another question raised during the webinar was, what is the role of foundations in movement-building activities? Gara LaMarche, Executive Director of the Democracy Alliance, commented on the webinar, "Philanthropy, at times, needs to ... recognize social movements - and help to enable it [movements], and support it [movements], put some wind behind the sail, but you cannot create movements, it has to come from someplace else."

Supporting Movements means Increasing Grants for Operating Funds: Some of the observations in the reports were regarding foundations' apprehension about providing grants for operating funds. However, the feedback regarding these types of grants was their usefulness for grantees to build capacity, to be more responsive to communities, and pivot for movement-building activities.

Part of this critique was also the tendency for many foundations to follow the newest trend, which is not necessarily always negative, though there can be a negative impact. Grantees are sometimes placed in an aggravating situation of deciding whether to follow the trend to ensure financial sustainability or continue their work with limited capacity and reach. In addition, many foundations adopting a trend will invest deeply in their own learning about it, but in foundation-only events. This inward view is often a missed opportunity for greater understanding about the potential consequences for promoting a particular trend within a community, and for placing the trend more thoughtfully and appropriately within the context of systems thinking.

Investing in Addressing Underlying Causes and Reduction of Structural and Systemic Racism: In some of the reports there was strong encouragement for foundations to increase their organizational capacity and individual competencies to integrate a structural racialization analysis into their internal operations, community engagement, and especially their grantmaking. Too often investments made after flashpoints continue to be based on paternalistic grantmaking with limited community involvement and leadership. Other critical roles foundations can play apart from grantmaking are sometimes missed. For instance, foundations might help provide political cover for grantees to get things done in the short term, or act as conveners to bring disparate parties together, or use their bully pulpit to name structural racialization.

¹ "Doing Evaluation Differently," Sally Leiderman and Barbara Major from *Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building*. Potapchuk, Maggie, Sally Leiderman, Donna Bivens, and Barbara Major. MP Associates and the Center for Assessment and Policy Development, 2005: 91-101. <http://www.mpassociates.us/uploads/3/7/1/0/37103967/flippingthescriptmostupdated.pdf>

² For more information - <http://www.ncrp.org/events#FreedomFunders>

Realistic and Strategic Assessment of Defining Success: Evidence-based work continues to be prioritized by many funders. To invest primarily in evidence-based work, raises questions about whether this may be unrealistic if foundations are truly working toward systemic transformative change. Structures are complex and relational, and therefore grantees need to invest grant dollars in creating strategies that are nimble and innovative, so they can respond well to changing conditions and the evolving nature of structural racialization. At a recent Leadership Learning Community meeting with funders and evaluators, Sally Leiderman, President of the Center for Assessment and Policy Development (CAPD) shared a need for a more nuanced understanding of when short-term evaluation metrics are or are not effective. She emphasized that of course accountability matters – particularly given the enormous investment in things that haven’t worked – and the need to track innovations. But she also noted that false accountability is counter-productive, because it privileges doing what’s measurable over what’s just.

OBSERVATIONS AND SYNTHESIS REFLECTIONS

At the end of this document is a helpful section: a list of questions for funders to discuss. This set of questions is from PRE’s latest Critical Issues Forum, which included a [*Timeline of Race, Racism and Resistance*](#) over the past 20 plus years, including philanthropy’s role. There are two additional points to be made after review of these articles and reports:

The Need for ‘Collective Branding’ Community Change

It is important to note that there is a history of foundations coming together to create joint funding initiatives for all of the flashpoints. In the past 10 plus years or so, foundations have also been hyper-branding their investments, which can impede these collaborative funding opportunities. How can foundations be encouraged to focus on the “collective branding” of systemic change in communities to advance racial justice rather than focusing so heavily on their individual grantmaking? One of the consequences of hyper-branding can be lack of coordination among foundations. Impacts for grantees have included escalating administrative requirements, struggles to navigate political waters between foundations, less time towards their own missions in favor of responding to funders’ requests, and grantees’ time and capacity being spent to fulfill funders’ programmatic goals. The ongoing hyper-branding among foundations also reinforces competition between funders, which, by definition, is counter to the principles and practices of movement building.

Progressive Philanthropy needs to Organize Within Philanthropy

In these flashpoint communities there is not always a strong philanthropic infrastructure and/or track record of funding with an equity analysis. Activists have spoken about the need for organized rapid response teams immediately after these flashpoints. It is also imperative that philanthropic organizations be responsive to community needs at later points following flashpoints, too. Though the concern is that once a flashpoint occurs, if philanthropic organizations do not have credibility or relationships with grassroots organizations, or remain focused on funding within their established portfolios rather than responsive to community needs, then grassroots organizations’ work may be impeded, stalled and/or diminished. Progressive philanthropists need to step up to support their peers in flashpoint communities, not just through funding, but also by building the capacity to use a racial equity analysis and respond to the needs of the community, with the community leading.

In conclusion, as we reflect on the last 20 plus years’ lessons and critiques of philanthropy’s role in responding to flashpoints, the question is, *how can progressive philanthropy organize peers to actively change and invent new ways of grantmaking that will address these issues and be more effective funders to advance racial justice?*



LOS ANGELES CIVIL UNREST – 1992

HIGHLIGHTS of Philanthropic Interventions

“LAUF [Los Angeles Urban Funders] has a bi-modal funding structure: its pooled fund supports the core costs of the collaborative strategy in each neighborhood; while its alignment approach encourages funders to make independent grants to the neighborhoods within the context of the agreed upon outcomes, based on each foundation’s individual interests and expertise. ... In addition, the collaborative plays an intermediating role by providing technical assistance, brokering funding and other resources, and overseeing an innovative measurement and accountability system.”

Moving Ideas and Money: Issues and Opportunities in Funder Funding Collaboration. Ralph Hamilton, Chapin Hall Center for Children 2002.

“LAUF’s founders also believed that collaboration would allow foundations to support work that was “too experimental or formative” to be funded by a single foundation.”

Building Community Capacity in the Rebuilding of New Orleans: The Role of Philanthropic Funders Post-Katrina

“A new philanthropic willingness to fund organizing innovation. While the action happened on the ground and at the grassroots, such action requires resources. Philanthropy has traditionally been timid about the sort of strategies L.A.’s organizers took on, often funding projects that would demonstrate what is possible rather than resourcing the power building that makes the possible a reality.”

LA Rising: The 1992 Civil Unrest, the Arc of Social Justice Organizing, and the Lessons for Today’s Movement Building
Manuel Pastor & Michele Prichard, Los Angeles, April 2012.

CRITIQUE of the Philanthropic Response

“The **precise goals of many foundation supported community-change efforts are unclear, potentially competing, or even contradictory.** At a fundamental level, respondents note that there is often confusion about whether a community-change effort is intended to improve the lives of people in poverty, or to eliminate poverty. This distinction is critical because it goes directly to issues of scale, ambition, and type of intervention. At another level, foundations’ goals often include divergent ends. For instance, is an effort primarily about building the capacity of organizations, individuals, or communities to promote change? Shifting power relationships? Addressing structural racism and inequity? Connecting individuals and communities to economic opportunity? Reforming public systems? Promoting democratic participation? Fostering social capital? Building intermediary institutions? Or all of those things? **These goals are often treated as compatible, but they can involve quite different assumptions, points of intervention, and outcomes.**”

“Moreover, their differences are often not reconciled in foundation thinking or doing. In considering these potentially competing insights, some respondents suggest that difficulties arise primarily if funders assume that broad principles — such as comprehensive change or collaboration — are substituted for goals, such as improved quality of life or poverty reduction, or if funders develop goals too quickly and without enough understanding of the on-the-ground realities.”

Toward Greater Effectiveness in Community Change: Challenges and Responses for Philanthropy, Prudence Brown et. al. Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago 2003.



Cincinnati 2001 – Timothy Thomas

On April 7, 2001, CPD officers shot and killed Timothy Thomas, a young Black man. The shooting sparked three days of unrest in Cincinnati, causing the mayor to declare a state of emergency and decree a dawn to dusk curfew.

HIGHLIGHTS of Philanthropic Interventions

Cincinnati Community Action Now (CAN) and successor, Better Together Cincinnati (BTC)

- “BTC established a model for community response to issues of concern, both in confronting a crisis and in tackling less volatile matters. A large group of funders came together to establish shared goals and strategies for dealing with the underlying causes of the unrest. They pooled resources in order to support robust responses and remained engaged over eight years. They moved from programmatic responses to efforts to change systems.” ...
- A group of programmatic responses to address the causes of the unrest continue to operate successfully, carrying on the work of the BTC partnership. These include the Community Police Partnering Center (CPPC), the Minority Business Accelerator, and Cincinnati Arts and Technology Center.
- Today, following the BTC example, an impressive group of collaborations has been formed to address the city’s core problems, with greater emphasis on longer term systemic changes. Even broader and more diverse groups of community stakeholders than those around the BTC table are being convened to address the system-wide problems. These include Place Matters, a community-development initiative; the Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network, an employment initiative; Strive Partnership, an education initiative; and Weathering the Economic Storm, a safety-net initiative responding to the recent recession.
- The formation of BTC built on GCF’s experience with shifting from a traditional framework of responsive grantmaking to a more strategic outcome-driven grantmaking approach for systemic community issues. The idea took hold because funders came to believe that pooling resources allows for grantmaking that has greater impact, both in dollars and in terms of informed decision making, more knowledge assembled around the table.
- BTC’s early work led the collaborative to move in the direction of system-wide approaches that included strong, public leadership by government, community, philanthropic, and private leaders. The partnership provided a model for bringing large groups of important stakeholders together to develop shared goals and strategies and muster the collective will to tackle large problems and invest the necessary resources over the longer term to make an impact. In the last five years, this model has been developed into full-fledged broadly-based system-level efforts.”

Cincinnati in Black & White Better Together Cincinnati - A Decade Later March 2011, The Cornerstone Consulting Group.

CRITIQUE of the Philanthropic Response

“When asked what barriers have prohibited Cincinnati from addressing racial tensions, the most frequent responses included: lack of honest conversations and actions regarding race and class; lack of city leadership and real action; media; divided communities; and Cincinnati’s struggle with its history. There was a strong sense that there was denial amongst the leadership in the city that there were issues with racial tensions at all. ... When asked how they saw economic development affecting race relations, answers included: tensions between people of color in low-income and in middle-income communities; lack of inclusion of “minority” businesses in planning and implementation; not creating real economic opportunities; and “displacement” and “gentrification” causing movement out of the city. ...

The report states that perhaps Cincinnati CAN’s most important accomplishment during its work (2001–2003) was to keep the spotlight on the need for action, generating public discussion about Cincinnati’s racial disparities and keeping the issues on the public’s mind. One of the recommendations from the report is the development of a “report card” on race relations and disparities in the region that will be widely disseminated annually.”

Economic Development Through a Racial Lens, James Head and Tanya Clark Marston. The San Francisco Foundation, September 2007.



HIGHLIGHTS of Philanthropic Interventions

“Foundation information and networking organizations activated mechanisms through which grant-makers could learn what was being done and planned by others. The Foundation Center, the nation’s leading source of information about foundations, began collecting detailed information about the philanthropic response and posted the data on its website.

The Foundation Center reported in February that 19 large independent (non-corporate related) foundations had each donated \$1 million or more for 9/11 purposes, amounting to a total of about \$166 million. This represented 78 percent of a total of about \$212 million in donations by 215 independent foundations for which information was available. The \$166 million donated by the 19 large foundations amounted to about 3.7 percent of their aggregate annual giving in the most recent year.”

The Philanthropic Response to 9/11, Tom Seessel, Thomas Edison State College. 2002.

CRITIQUE of the Philanthropic Response

- “One of these limitations is essentially structural in character. The very pluralism and diversity that gave the charitable response its flexibility and innovativeness also significantly limited its coherence and coordination. Despite some notable collaborative ventures, such as the September 11th Fund formed within hours of the tragedy by the New York Community Trust and the United Way of New York City and the United Services Group formed some months later, the charitable response was splintered and diffuse. At least 369 separate organizations entered the 9/11 relief field. ...**Inevitably, delays and inequities occurred: many people fell through the slats, while others benefited from multiple sources of support. What is more, misunderstandings arose between donors and nonprofit groups over how contributions were to be used, and these misunderstandings tarnished the reputation of the philanthropic effort in ways that are still being felt.**
- Beyond its structure, the charitable response to 9/11 also suffered from limits of scale. At the end of the day, American charity, for all its effort, was able to supply only 10 percent of the resources ultimately made available to cope with the 9/11 disaster. The remaining 90 percent — approximately \$27 billion out of the \$29.8 billion total — came from government. Charitable resources comprised a slightly larger share of the victim compensation aid, but even here it constituted only \$800 million out of the \$5.8 billion ultimately made available. Philanthropy did carve out some unique niches not addressed by government support, such as ensuring the continued viability of New York’s important nonprofit arts institutions as well as of hundreds of other nonprofit organizations in the disaster area.
- In this, however, the response to 9/11 is emblematic of a broader challenge to American charities, and to their governmental partners as well. **Increasingly, the scale of our public problems calls out not for a government or a charitable response, but for a response that marries the advantages of both and engages the business sector as well. Regrettably, however, despite extensive interaction between government and nonprofit groups, our systems for achieving such effective partnerships remain under-developed at best.** This certainly was the case in the 9/11 response, which suffered from the start from inadequate coordination between public and private authorities, and among private ones themselves.”

September 11 The Philanthropic Response, The Foundation Center, 2004.



HURRICANE KATRINA 2005

HIGHLIGHTS of Philanthropic Interventions

"...one study estimates that foundation and corporate philanthropies dedicated approximately \$1 billion in grants and program-related investments to the whole Gulf region between 2005 and 2009."

An overview of Greater New Orleans: From Recovery to Transformation,

Amy Liu and Allison Plyer, Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program and Greater New Orleans Community Data Center. August 2010.

- *"Philanthropy has taken risks.* The Rockefeller Foundation and Greater New Orleans Foundation walked right into the middle of a hornet's nest when they provided the backing, both financial and political, for the United New Orleans Plan, a process that successfully involved many residents and put an end to the endless planning processes that kept springing up as the city tried to get off the mat.
- *Philanthropy has focused on building capacity.* The Gulf Coast Fund for Community Renewal and Ecological Health has been advised by a committee of local grassroots leaders and has focused on supporting emerging activists and initiatives. In addition to strengthening the local nonprofit sector, foundations have even experimented with building the capacity of the public sector.
- *Philanthropy has collaborated.* Central City's renaissance has been catalyzed in part by a group of almost twenty foundations and corporations that have been intentional in integrating their approaches and communicating regularly about their work.
- *Philanthropy has been an advocate.* The policy advocacy capacity of the Louisiana nonprofit sector was weak prior to the storm, and foundations both local and national have made significant investments to strengthen it and give it real voice at the federal, state, and local levels."

New Orleans: Moving from Muddle to Model, Tony Pipa, PhilanTopic, August, 2009.

"Within a month, the 21st Century Foundation raised \$400,000 for black Katrina victims and, within three weeks, it handed out grants to 30 organizations in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. More has come in and gone out since then. By contrast, in 2004, just more than \$1 million flowed into the coffers of the foundation, which in its 35-year history of working for social and economic justice had never done relief work."

Shock of Katrina Pushes Black Charities to New Fund-Raising, Judith H. Dobrzynski, November 14, 2005.

CRITIQUE of the Philanthropic Response

"This market-driven approach pretends that neighborhoods can be rebuilt relying mainly on the benevolence of private foundations. The reliance on private funding not only perpetuates an inequitable recovery process, it also adds to the disorganized and slow pace of recovery because each neighborhood project needs to find and assemble funds from any available private sources. **This laissez-faire approach reinforces historic inequalities in the city and produces limited progress, as neighborhoods do not have the capacity to organize and seek funding for their own recovery. It also perpetuates the deep political fractures across neighborhoods that have plagued community groups in New Orleans for decades and that have prevented the forging of the broad political will needed to achieve massive reinvestment and comprehensive equitable rebuilding.**"

Assessing Post-Katrina Recovery In New Orleans Recommendations For Equitable Rebuilding,

Anna Livia Brand and Karl Seidman, Community Innovators Lab, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. ND.

"Instead of prioritizing efforts led by people who are from the communities most affected, we have seen millions of dollars that was advertised as dedicated towards Gulf Coast residents either remain unspent, or shuttled to well-placed outsiders with at best a cursory knowledge of the realities faced by people here. ...We have seen attempts to dictate to us what we should do, instead of a real desire to listen and struggle together. We have heard offers of strategic advice, but there have been very few resources offered to help us carry it out. We ask you, as concerned friends and allies nationwide, as funders and organizations, to look critically at your practices. **Has your organization raised money on New Orleans' behalf? Did that**

money go towards New Orleans-based projects, initiated and directed by those most affected? Have you paid New Orleans organizations that have acted as consultants? Have you listened directly to the needs of those in the Gulf and been responsive to them? Have you adjusted your practices and strategies to the organizing realities on the ground??”

[Letter from the People of New Orleans to Our Friends and Allies, *Left Turn Magazine* \(2006\).](#)

- “... foundations have specifically served as institutional traps to capture resources, mostly financial contributions made during the immediate aftermath of the hurricanes. **National foundations have channeled funds through a relatively small number of favored regional foundations controlled by local elites who in turn have granted out tens of millions to specific political and economic projects serving the interests of particular parties, harming others.** Foundation directors, executives, and staff have exercised power as key social change-managers in concert with elite allies across multiple levels of government and industry. ...
- By their design and implementation, **foundation commitments have been about shaping state policies and facilitating new forms of capitalist accumulation around newly enclosed land, both by generating higher rents** and drawing in desired industries (the growth coalition’s attempt to create a biotech industrial district around their planned LSU hospital, for example); by **privatizing housing, and previously public spheres such as education; and creating private-parallel governance methods to serve business interests.**
- ...foundations and NGOs has been to **emphasize abstract concepts like “choice,” “information,” “flexibility,” “quality,” “asset building,” and above all the leitmotifs of “opportunity and equity,”** across the board for the Gulf South’s social and economic institutions (Turner 2006). While these sound all right and good in the abstract, the **actual reconstituted political-economy and the policies guiding it so far have created very real results with winners and losers.**
- The detrimental effect of foundation power on social movements has been less about co-optation, steering, or underfunding, and more the case that **dominant civil society organizations have been serious opponents and antagonists of many grassroots activists.** The mainstream criticism of philanthropy has so far been that while it was successful in picking up some slack, it ultimately failed in its role to support grassroots organizations (New Orleans Based Activists 2007).”

[Building the New Orleans: Foundation and NGO Power, Darwin BondGraham. Rev Black Polit Econ, Springerlink.com Jan 2011.](#)

- “Just as deplorable as the small sums poured into the region are the choices foundations have made about where the money should go. ...Meanwhile, **just a trickle of foundation money has gone to grass-roots, advocacy, organizing, or other activist causes.** That situation is unlikely to improve soon, because the community foundations that received so much money from big national foundations to distribute to local groups have a poor record of supporting such causes. ...
- Grantmakers also seem to have been preoccupied with the issue of accountability. **Many foundations wondered how they could be certain that grants to local groups would be well spent and, therefore, publicly accountable** Yet the question of accountability didn’t seem to bother the large foundations that gave so generously to the Red Cross, which had a questionable record of competence to begin with and attracted even more criticism in the aftermath of Katrina over its unwise use of funds, high administrative costs, and lack of outreach to minorities.
- The capacity of nonprofit organizations will have to be restored and improved; a **generous dose of unrestricted grants will be required for such an undertaking. And the time for foundation decision making will have to be shortened, so that debilitating uncertainties can be removed from the philanthropic process.**
- One might have expected the **Council on Foundations ... to be urging its members and other foundations to increase their giving to meet the urgent needs of the gulf states.** It should be encouraging foundations to put pressure on the federal government and Congress to grant more money to the regions harmed by the hurricanes and to improve the performance of the governmental bodies that failed to do a good job in response to the hurricanes.”

[After Katrina: What Foundations Should Do, Pablo Eisenberg. *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, January 26, 2006.](#)



DETROIT BANKRUPTCY 2013

HIGHLIGHTS of Philanthropic Interventions

“This week our four philanthropies joined several others to publicly announce a \$330-million commitment to help speed the City of Detroit’s path to revitalization. ...As we considered our support for this effort, we asked ourselves many questions. Is this the best use of philanthropic dollars? Is this the right time for such an investment? What kind of precedent does this set, especially considering the economic difficulties many American cities face? ... We know that some will ask what this means for foundations around the country and whether we advocate aggressive intervention and high-dollar “emergency” grant making to fill gaps in our communities. So let us be clear: We do not think philanthropy can be a replacement for social capital or that any foundation has the resources or wisdom to successfully play the role of civic savior. Rather, we encourage others to ask the hard questions that we asked ourselves when Judge Rosen came to us with this compelling proposal: Does this fit our mission? Does this advance our current grant making? And does this reflect a wise investment of dollars and energy in Detroit?”

Why Our Foundations Are Investing in Detroit Alberto Ibarguen, Mariam Noland, Rip Rapson, and Darren Walker, January 17, 2014.

CRITIQUE of the Philanthropic Response

- “In a post for *Nonprofit Quarterly*, Rick Cohen posed some of them: **“Can private foundations, accustomed to operating often with a large measure of immunity from the public (and the press), participate in a process requiring accommodation of the pressures and dynamics of local politics?** Can local governments take advantage of the presence of large foundations willing to put dollars on the table without feeling that foundation dollars come with too many strings and too much pressure for foundation control of the process?”
- ... **city officials were growing tired of perceived foundation imperiousness and believed the city’s leading foundations were seeking to usurp power from the mayor.** It also said the foundations were growing impatient with the city’s sclerotic and often politicized decision-making process. Ultimately, Detroit’s experience suggests a paradox that often attends PPPs: As the situation that births the partnership becomes increasingly dire, the stakes for both partners rise, and the need for the collaboration to succeed becomes more urgent, the potential for discord and mutual distrust escalates.”

Public-Philanthropic Partnerships in the U.S.: A Literature Review of Recent Experiences, Alan Abramson, Benjamin Soskis, and Stefan Toepler , George Mason University Center for Nonprofit Management, Philanthropy, and Policy. 2012.



TRAYVON MARTIN - 2013

HIGHLIGHTS of Philanthropic Interventions

"During this past year's Council on Foundations meeting, the Endowment was instrumental in bringing together a couple of dozen other foundations to pledge "to form an alliance to address the issues, explore promising strategies and research the data to support action...on issues facing black men and boys of color."

Based in Miami, the Knight Foundation offers a Black Male Engagement program with grantmaking in Knight communities like Detroit, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Miami for "engaging black males in what matters to them" (the example cited a \$492,000 grant for an e-mentoring program) and "challeng[ing] negative stereotypes of black males by engaging thousands of others in the real life stories and positive community actions led by them." The Schott Foundation website describes its multi-partner Black Male Donor Collaborative aimed at "identify[ing] successful program interventions and policy levers to address the achievement disparities impacting the most extremely underperforming group in New York—black males." The focus on identifying and overcoming disparities is apparently—and positively—key to these programs."

...Eric Braxton of the Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing ...also pointed out the role of Dream Defenders, which maintained a 31-day vigil at the Florida Capitol until just last week. Dream Defenders got the House Speaker, Will Weatherford, to promise to hold a hearing on Florida's stand-your-ground law, and brought consistent attention to Florida's policies and practices regarding racial profiling and disproportionate sentencing of blacks. To some degree, the Dream Defenders' agenda suggests directions for a rounding out of philanthropy's potential response to the killing of Trayvon Martin and the jury decision regarding George Zimmerman."

The Possible Philanthropic Response to Trayvon Martin,
Rick Cohen, August 2013

"The California Endowment and others, such as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Open Societies Foundation, and Bloomberg Philanthropies, have announced initiatives focusing on black men and boys aimed at problems such as "disproportionate rates of poor health, inadequate education, high unemployment, and incarceration" affecting young black men, but not really addressing the prevalence or expansion of stand-your-ground state statutes. ..."

A Year of No Progress Against Stand-Your-Ground Laws, Rick Cohen, *Non-Profit Quarterly*. January 8, 2014.

"The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation said Tuesday it will not make future grants to the American Legislative Exchange Council, a conservative group that has come under fire for promoting controversial legislation—including "stand-your-ground" self-defense laws like the one that drew national attention after an unarmed black teenager was shot to death in Florida. However, liberal activists want the foundation to go further and stop payment on a 22-month grant for \$376,635 that it awarded to the council in November to educate lawmakers about school finance and teacher effectiveness—something the grant maker does not plan to do."

Gates Fund Says It Won't Give New Money to Controversial Legislative Group, Suzanne Perry, *Chronicle of Philanthropy*. April 11, 2012

CRITIQUE of the Philanthropic Response

'However, the challenge for foundations is to turn this concern for black men and boys into concrete grantmaking programs built not from national experts' social engineering, but from the explanations of groups on the ground in local communities as to what is specifically needed from foundations there. ... **Foundations need to focus on a more comprehensive attack on the disparities affecting the black population of the U.S., but make their focus concrete.** The hard but necessary route of action is to fund organizing by people-of-color-led organizations mobilizing for policy changes that address and help reverse the persistent and increasing disparities between whites and blacks in this nation. Is philanthropy responding? ... **Despite some good initiatives, it appears that philanthropy has a long way to go before the commitment of a dozen or so**

foundations to issues concerning black men and boys turns into broader philanthropic commitment to address persistent social and economic disparities between blacks and whites in this nation.”

The Possible Philanthropic Response to Trayvon Martin, Rick Cohen, August 2013

“If we are living in a post-racial society, there is no better group to examine than African American men and boys—who without question have been subjected to harsh treatment throughout American history—to determine the veracity of the claim of a post-racial society. In 2010, foundations contributed \$29 million to programs exclusively focused on African American men and boys, a modest increase over previous years. While this amount may appear significant, it is **actually less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the \$45.7 billion awarded by America’s 76,000 grantmaking institutions in 2010. Such a small amount is only justified if one believes that African American men and boys face no systemic issues of racial discrimination or that their dismal socio-economic status has not reached a level of dysfunction that affects the larger society.”**

Foundations and the Fallacy of a Post-Racial America: African American Men and Civic Engagement, Emmett D. Carson, Ph. D. Clinton School of Public Service. March 29, 2013

“... Mr. Obama announced the initiative [My Brother’s Keeper] — which is principally financed by philanthropic foundations, and did not require federal appropriations — he noted that boys who grew up without a father were more likely to be poor. More likely than whom? Certainly not their sisters, who are growing up in the same households, attending the same underfunded schools and living in the same neighborhoods.

...Moreover, the presidential memo setting up My Brother’s Keeper requires government agencies to monitor outcomes and to recommend best practices to enhance life chances for men and boys of color. **The exclusion of girls of color from data collection means that there will be fewer “evidence based” interventions for girls — because there was no interest in marshalling evidence to support interventions for them in the first place. Supporters of My Brother’s Keeper use the analogy of “the canary in the coal mine” to justify both a narrow focus on individual-level interventions ... But the point of the canary’s distress was to alert everyone to get out of the mine, not to attend to the canary and ignore the miners. Implicit in rescuing only the males is the idea that the mine itself isn’t the problem — and that females are resilient enough to survive the toxic air or can hold their breath and wait.** What needs to be fixed are not boys per se, but the conditions in which marginalized communities of color must live.”

New York Times, “The Girls Obama Forgot.” Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. July 29, 2014.

“Foundations need to focus on a more comprehensive attack on the disparities affecting the black population of the U.S., but make their focus concrete. **The hard but necessary route of action is to fund organizing by people-of-color-led organizations mobilizing for policy changes that address and help reverse the persistent and increasing disparities between whites and blacks in this nation.”**

A Year of No Progress Against Stand-Your-Ground Laws, Rick Cohen, Non-Profit Quarterly. January 8, 2014.



HIGHLIGHTS OF LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS SHARED:

Each of the key reflection reports provide core recommendation that may be valuable regarding internal philanthropic processes, and grantmaking generally. The following are highlights of recommendations relevant to our conversation about race and democracy:

From LA Rising: The 1992 Civil Unrest, the Arc of Social Justice Organizing, and the Lessons for Today’s Movement Building

Manuel Pastor & Michele Prichard:

- **“Democratize philanthropic decision-making** - Liberty Hill was founded with the commitment to a community funding board (CFB) that brought movement activists together to read proposals, conduct site visits, learn about the changing landscape, and make strategic funding decisions. ... it created a real partnership between movement actors and philanthropic leadership – and most important, it helped Liberty Hill get the funding right.”

- **"Build metrics that matter.** Part of moving foundations along will involve understanding that the philanthropic world is increasingly (and perhaps rightly) focused on evidence-based giving. Fortunately, the evidence is in: investing in social movement organizing can transform the rules of the game in a metropolitan area as large and as disparate as Los Angeles. **The trick is to develop a set of tools that can capture transformations as well as transactions, that can measure movement effectiveness as well as organizational effectiveness,** and that can be embraced by both organizers and program officers."
- "practice what you preach by **engaging in appropriate funder collaboratives** (perhaps with less meetings than those usually involve)."
- **"fund grassroots organizing** so that the real heart of social movements continues to beat; offer **multi-year operational support** (i.e., "patient capital") **so that groups can pivot from issue to issue** as times change; support **capacity building**, particularly through peer-to-peer exchanges, so that groups can meet new challenges; **provide resources specifically aimed at deep collaboration**, recognizing that this takes attention and time and cannot be done just "on the side."
- "... another interpretation is that movements and their **funders must double-down on a new kind of leadership development, the sort of transformative approach that builds soul as well as skills.** This is particularly important because many of the Los Angeles groups and their national counterparts are at the point of key generational shifts and organizational successions – and all this is occurring in a very different world in terms of the technology, the role of social media in organizing, and even the strength and depth of the right."

*From the Politics of Philanthropy and Social Change Funding: A Popular Review of the Literature, Lisa Durán.
Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training:*

- ...*The Nation* criticizing more liberal foundations for refusing to respond to the juggernaut of right wing funding. Says David Callahan, "It is now beyond dispute that left-of-center funders have made a **calamitous strategic blunder by underfunding public intellectuals and policy thinkers.** This mistake is profoundly ironic. Who would have ever thought, thirty or forty years ago, that the right would come to believe more deeply in the power of ideas than the left?"
- "... foundation's **decisions to fund only discrete, defined issue areas, the practice of funding only program work (as opposed to giving general support dollars), and funding primarily on the short-term precludes the strategic, systematic kind of thinking** perpetuated by conservative foundations."

A memo from George D. Penick, former president of Foundation for the Mid South, which serves the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas:

- "Along the Gulf Coast, nonprofit groups have not had the strength or the standing in public debate that they do elsewhere, so **national grant makers must do far more than write checks.** National grant makers and charities must work with local nonprofit groups to **use their credibility, influence, and leverage to make sure that the voices of everyone are heard,** that the needs of the whole community are met, and that concerns about equity and fairness are considered in every step of the rebuilding process."
- "Since state and government resources will be much larger than those of private philanthropy, **foundations and corporations must support organizations that will work to ensure that policies are equitable, that the political process is fair, and that access to financing opportunities is available to all.**"
- "As philanthropy faces one of the biggest challenges in history, **can grantmakers be self-critical enough to change the way they typically do business and pursue this new form of giving? Are they willing to take risks to support groups that may not be well-established,** but that know how to help the poorest of the poor rebuild their lives with dignity and respect?"
- **"Grantmakers need to look for organizations that have a sound understanding of the people, the community, and the conditions** of the Gulf Coast, and they need to rely on organizations that understand how the power structure works. Otherwise, aid will never get to those who truly need it."

From *Weathering the Storm: The Role of Local Nonprofits in the Hurricane Katrina Relief Effort*, Tony Pipa, Nonprofit Sector Research Fund *Working Paper Series*, Aspen Institute:

- **“Vouching for an organization’s credibility to their funding peers, or marketing the organization on its website or other materials, or providing access to other potential donors.”**
- **“Providing new or additional funds to past grantees, sometimes in significant amounts, quickly and with little red tape.”**
- **“Turning grants previously restricted to a program or specific use into unrestricted funds, permitting the organization to apply them toward relief efforts or general operating expenses.”**
- **“Accelerating payments on planned multi-year grants so that money designated for future payments could be disbursed immediately.”**
- **“Conventional philanthropic planning and decision-making processes must be streamlined and made very flexible in responding to fast-moving emergency circumstances.”**
- **In a future event of this magnitude, the major philanthropies should expand their efforts to provide frequent in-depth media briefings on their activities,”**

From *Building Community Capacity in the Rebuilding of New Orleans: The Role of Philanthropic Funders Post-Katrina* Jainey K. Bavishi, Massachusetts Institute of Technology:

- **“Janis Foster, Executive Director, of Grassroots Grantmakers, explained that one of the biggest mistakes that foundations often make when launching a small grants and technical assistance program for community-based groups is that they have "romantic notions" about what will happen with limited resources and time; they assume that funding community-based groups will lead to a shift in the local power balance. ... important to be realistic about how much time such change will take and what kinds of resources, both grants and technical assistance, it will require.** Foster also explained that not all groups will carry out a larger social change agenda; beyond resources, such capacity requires "a clear cause and a champion." However, supporting these groups will more likely lead to stronger, healthier, more resilient communities, whether they have a voice in policy discussions or not.”



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The following are reflection questions to generate discussion about our recent history of racism and resistance, and racial justice funding. We hope these questions from the [Timeline of Race, Racism and Resistance](#) in PRE’s Critical Issues Forum will lead to a strategic discussion about the philanthropic field’s action and strategies for the future.

1. “How did particular moments contribute to an understanding of race and racial justice? How did foundations learn and shift? How did they communicate that learning and shifting? How did foundations’ responses make grantees more able or less able to respond to critical crisis and opportunity?”
2. What dimensions of structural racism were present in a given moment or situation? Did foundations help elevate the structural dimensions and potential responses? How can they do so today?”
3. How embedded was a racial justice commitment in the strategy and program of foundations as moments and situations arose? How did this readiness, or lack thereof, impact foundations’ ability to respond effectively? What lessons could help inform future actions?”
4. How was a particular funding approach or strategy informed directly by racial justice groups deeply engaged in the issue? What are some practices that worked well and could be replicated? What are the lessons?”
5. Did funding strategies include conducting a structural power analysis? Have grantmaking practices been reviewed to assure they are not contributing to inequity or unintentionally having a racialized impact? Who is defining success?”

6. How did the media shape interpretation of particular moments and situations? What racial justice media efforts have foundations supported that help shape meaning at a given time? Did the messages communicated by foundations provide structural context of the issue?
7. How could foundations have collaborated or leveraged resources in a given moment or situation? What were the barriers to the funders' collaboration (e.g., branding, turf issues) that might need to be addressed in the future?"



Resources from Key Lessons and Recommendations (In order):

- *LA Rising: The 1992 Civil Unrest, the Arc of Social Justice Organizing, and the Lessons for Today's Movement Building* Manuel Pastor & Michele Prichard, Los Angeles, April 2012.
- *The Politics Of Philanthropy And Social Change Funding: A Popular Review Of The Literature*, Lisa Durán Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training 2002.
- A memo from *George D. Penick, former president of Foundation for the Mid South, which serves the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas. ND.*
- *From Weathering the Storm: The Role of Local Nonprofits in the Hurricane Katrina Relief Effort*, Tony Pipa, Nonprofit Sector Research Fund *Working Paper Series*, Aspen Institute – 2006.
- *September 11 The Philanthropic Response*, The Foundation Center, 2004.
- *Building Community Capacity in the Rebuilding of New Orleans: The Role of Philanthropic Funders Post-Katrina* Jainey K. Bavishi, Massachusetts Institute of Technology 2007.
- *Timeline of Race, Racism, Resistance and Philanthropy 1992-2014*, Larry Raphael Salomon, Julie Quiroz, Maggie Potapchuk and Lori Villarosa. *Critical Issues Forum*, Vol. 5. *Moving Forward on Racial Justice Philanthropy*. June 2014.