

# Responsive Philanthropy

NCRP'S QUARTERLY JOURNAL

WINTER 2015/2016

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*Dulce Gutierrez learns of her election to the Yakima City Council on November 4, 2015. Photo by Gordon King/Yakima Herald-Republic.*



## Systems Change in the Yakima Valley

By George Cheung, EJ Juárez and Kristina Logsdon

The 2015 election of the first Latinas to the Yakima City Council was a historic moment in central Washington State. Though the most visible driver for this major breakthrough was an ACLU voting rights lawsuit that successfully challenged the city's at-large voting system, advocates and funders had worked together diligently to lay the groundwork for systems change. This long-term, mul-

tifaceted strategy can provide important lessons for grantmakers interested in civic engagement and promoting democracy.

### BACKGROUND

The Yakima Valley lies in the heart of Washington State. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the local economy has been dominated by agriculture, which produces world-famous apples along with grapes and hops. This industry is largely fueled by the labor of Latino farmworkers, who increasingly call the region home. In fact, recent census estimates show that Latinos are the largest ethnic group in Yakima County, comprising almost 48 percent of the total population; they also make up more than 40 percent

of the City of Yakima, the region's only urban center and the county seat.

However, before 2015 these changing demographics did not translate into increased political representation. Historically, only one Latina had been elected to the state legislature (Mary Skinner) and one to the county commission (Jesse Palacios), both Republicans in the mid- to late-1990s. One Latina, Sonia Rodriguez, had been appointed to fill a Yakima City Council vacancy in 2008. When she ran for a full term, she was overwhelmingly defeated by David Ettl, a talk radio host.

A major reason for the disparity in representation lay in the structure of elections. The *(continued on page 13)*



challenging grantmakers  
to strengthen communities

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# A Message From the Executive Director



Dear Colleagues,

The 2016 election season is already in full swing, and voters are likely already experiencing fatigue from the endless news coverage and debates. Even still, before we know it, the election will be over, and many of the voter outreach efforts currently in progress will fade away. However, the smartest people in philanthropy know that civic engagement must take place all the time, not only in election years. This edition of *Responsive Philanthropy* is a special issue devoted to civic engagement and the important work of fostering democracy in the U.S.

In our cover story, “Systems Change in the Yakima Valley,” sector leaders affiliated with the Win/Win Network, George Cheung, EJ Juárez and Kristina Logsdon, discuss a years-long, multifaceted campaign to make the local government in Washington State’s Yakima Valley reflect the local population. They emphasize that, to achieve lasting change, foundations and other actors must support efforts that employ a complementary set of charitable (501(c)(3)) and political (501(c)(4)) strategies.

Next, PICO National Network’s Kristee Paschall shares “How Integrated Voter Engagement Builds Power and Changes Policy.” Paschall offers two case studies from local PICO federations in Indiana and New Mexico that show how year-round voter engagement and community organizing can achieve success on key issues like criminal justice reform and living wage, and even help prepare leaders for public office.

In “Democracy Is the Best Theory of Change,” elections expert and political leader Steve Phillips argues that instead of trying to change hearts and minds to foster democracy, progressive philanthropists should engage the already-existing voter blocs aligned with their beliefs. Phillips draws on data and analysis from his new book, *Brown is the New White: How the Demographic Revolution Has Created a New American Majority*.

Gara LaMarche, president of the Democracy Alliance and vice chair of NCRP’s Board of Directors, offers his insights in “Control, Disruption and Democracy: Philanthropy’s Role in Inclusive Civic Engagement,” a piece adapted from his keynote speech at last fall’s Funders Committee for Civic Participation conference.

Our Member Spotlight looks at the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, whose work with civic engagement contributed to the Supreme Court win for marriage equality.

The issue also contains information about recent publications and projects relevant to civic engagement.

As always, we hope *Responsive Philanthropy* is a useful resource for everyone in philanthropy. We are always looking for ways to improve; let us know how we’re doing at [readers@ncrp.org](mailto:readers@ncrp.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'A. Dorfman', written in a cursive style.

Aaron Dorfman  
Executive Director, NCRP

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**Responsive Philanthropy** is the quarterly journal of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy.

2016, Issue No. 1  
Yearly subscription: \$25  
(free to members)  
ISBN: 1065-0008

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# How Integrated Voter Engagement Builds Power and Changes Policy

By Kristee Paschall

With a collective membership of more than one million families working through 54 local federations, PICO National Network is the nation's largest network of faith-based community organizations. A growing majority of the communities we organize are predominantly communities of color, and our clergy and grassroots leaders have strong representation from African American, Latino, white, Asian Pacific Islander and other ethnic groups. As part of the larger social justice movement, PICO is bringing thousands of new people of faith into political life to make fundamental changes in our economy and society.

As Pastor Kenneth Sullivan of New Direction Church, a member of PICO's IndycAN, said:

"People are tired of this polarizing political climate. Inspired by Pope

Francis' call to end a 'throwaway culture,' we made a conscious choice to make [the 2014 mid-term elections] about reaching out to those who feel most overlooked in our society and to working families typically ignored by partisan politics to say, 'Your lives matter. Your vote matters.'"

## PICO'S HISTORY OF INTEGRATED VOTER ENGAGEMENT

In 2012, PICO embraced Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE), a year-round program that connects voter engagement to issue-based organizing to build power, sustainability and impact over multiple election cycles. By contrast, traditional electoral programs are seasonal operations that leave no infrastructure behind.

To maximize both our impact and learning, we made a commitment in



Photo courtesy of Kristee Paschall.

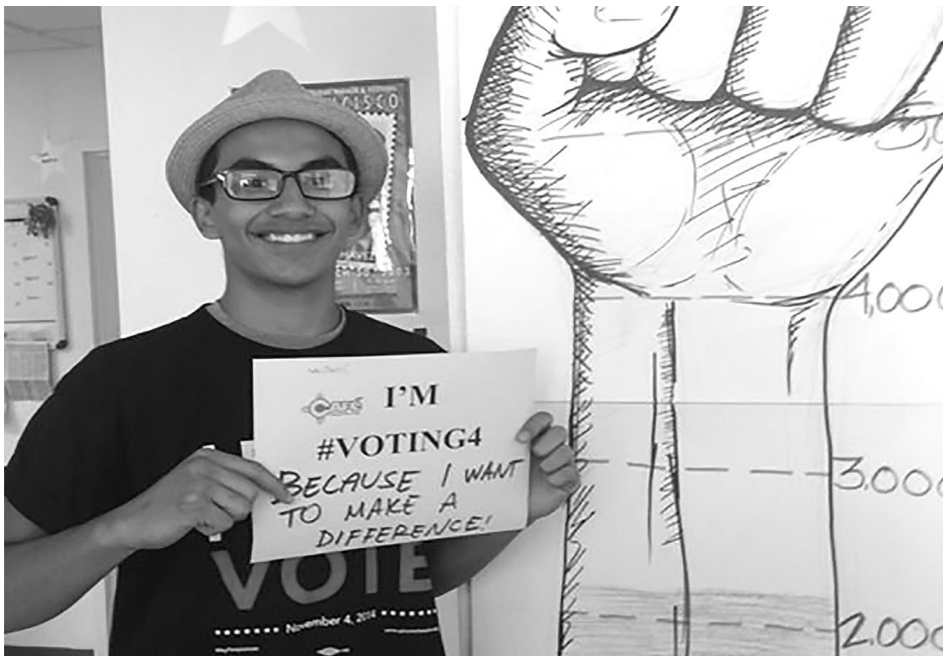


Photo courtesy of Kristee Paschall.

2014 to launch a research program to study our voter engagement work.<sup>1</sup> Consistent with PICO's DNA as a learning organization, our goal was to improve over time and contribute new knowledge to the field of IVE for both organizing and voter engagement. To support our research, we convened a team of experts from the Analyst Institute, Dr. Hahrie Han from University of California at Santa Barbara and Dr. Paul Speer from Vanderbilt University.

We believe the real return on investment for IVE programs extends far beyond election day. PICO's research seeks to broaden the metrics our movement uses to assess voter mobilization programs and identify metrics that capture not only whether people turn out to vote, but also the extent to which they become full participants in our democracy. In other words: Does the way we invite people to participate in our democracy move them to reconsider their role in it? We aspire to measure:

- The impact of organizing on voters' and volunteers' sense of agency and political efficacy.

- Our collective capacity to organize across race, gender and other differences.
- Our ability to translate the power built during elections into far-reaching policy change.

During the 2014 midterms, PICO led the largest nonpartisan volunteer-driven direct voter contact program in the country. While overall the midterms suffered from a low level of public interest, it marked a new chapter in PICO's Let My People Vote (LMPV) program. LMPV is a hybrid of IVE, leadership development and issue-based organizing designed to empower thousands of volunteers to effect change in their communities.

LMPV has been most successful in places where ballot initiatives created the possibility for concrete and positive change or where the organization did an exceptional job framing the election around an issue platform. Two of our federations participating in LMPV programs, Indiana's Indianapolis Congregation Action Network (IndyCAN) and New Mexico's Comunidades En Acción

Y De Fé (CAFé), demonstrate the enduring power of IVE programs that integrate issues and elections. Not only do they impact election turnout, they also secure policy victories and develop powerful constituencies.

### BUILDING POWER FOR CHANGE IN INDIANA

IndyCAN amplified its influence by building a new bloc of faith voters often marginalized by traditional "get out the vote" efforts. Now that we are several cycles into IndyCAN's program, we see a growing IndyCAN constituency aligned around a set of issue platforms that are not only building powerful organizing campaigns, but also are having a ripple effect on the local elected leadership. This is especially clear in their work around criminal justice reform, a huge issue in the state with the nation's fifth-highest incarceration rate.

Leading up to the 2014 midterm elections, IndyCAN talked to thousands of voters through their "Redemption Voter" program, infusing each conversation with clarity about their issue platform to elevate jobs and treatment over incarceration. Volunteers garnered more than 15,000 pledges to vote, building a new cross-racial alliance to end criminalization and mass incarceration of people of color, expand good jobs and keep families united. This included talking with more than 5,000 unlikely voters, predominantly low-income people and people of color, who, based on these shared values, pledged to vote in both 2014 and 2016.

Furthermore, under the banner of its Opportunity for All Platform, IndyCAN brings together people of color and white people of faith who have a different vision for Indiana than the prison pipeline status quo. When Indianapolis announced plans for a new \$1.75 billion criminal justice center in

the summer of 2014, residents feared it would only intensify the rampant criminalization of generations of African Americans and Latinos. Fueled by their own experiences of families torn apart by the misuse of jails, IndyCAN's leadership base of formerly incarcerated people and people of faith organized to successfully stop construction of the facility.<sup>2</sup>

IndyCAN's campaign brought together an unparalleled coalition of business, government and community leaders that convinced the Indianapolis City Council to stop the project from advancing and commit to criminal justice reform strategies such as transitional jobs and community-based services. Following the victory, IndyCAN clergy and community leaders reached out to 4,925 voters to understand how the racialized criminal justice system impacts families, and invited them to give feedback on IndyCAN's work.

IndyCAN's campaign  
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community leaders.

IndyCAN has been particularly successful at leveraging the existing social networks within congregations to strengthen its voter program. Researchers have long confirmed the value of interpersonal relationships in organizing voters. PICO's strength comes, in part, from its ability to build on congregations as networks for social relationships. For instance, our research found

that people who signed pledge cards in their congregation were more likely than other pledge card signers to turn out to vote weeks later.

**BUILDING LEADERS IN NEW MEXICO**  
CAFé is a PICO federation that recently combined leadership development and civic outreach to raise wages for 18,000 residents of Las Cruces, New Mexico. A multiracial coalition of community leaders collected the signatures of nearly 10 percent of the voters in the city – three times the number needed – to put a minimum wage increase on the 2014 ballot. From there the measure went to the City Council, which, in a surprise vote, declined to refer it and instead passed an alternative policy. While there was a historic wage increase, it was a very mixed victory for CAFé's organizing staff and the hundreds of volunteers who worked with CAFé, including Kasandra Gandara, a long-time Las Cruces resident. The new

## Research & Experimentation Working Group



If funders and field organizations are to make the data-informed decisions needed to move civic engagement beyond election-cycle work, we must cultivate a shared understanding of research and develop a set of best practices for conducting experiments. To this end, in 2015 the Funders' Committee for Civic Participation (FCCP) created a Research and Experimentation Working Group with goals to:

- **Build a network** of researchers interested in civic engagement.
- **Foster collaboration** between researchers and practitioners to create a common agenda, identify research priorities and develop a better understanding of field organization needs.
- **Support creation of a clearinghouse** accessible to grantmakers and grantees for key research findings.
- **Ensure support for "translating" research results** into materials funders can use.
- **Create a forum for funders** to share research priorities and funding strategies and align them when possible to create greater impact.

### ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Employing strategies like empirical and qualitative studies, public opinion research and legal and policy analysis, the research will cover a broad spectrum of subjects including:

- **Electoral issues** such as campaign finance; election administration and protection; redistricting; and voter registration, education and turnout.
- **Non-election activities** such as civic education and leadership, organizing and engaging around the policymaking process, mobilizing and advocacy around specific issues or constituencies.
- **Good-government policies, tools and strategies** pertaining to immigration reform, budgeting, civil rights, rule of law, open government and government performance.

For more information, visit <http://www.funderscommittee.org/resources/publications>.



## Doing Good, Done Better

# Are You on the Map?

## Funders Share Data to Strengthen Civic Engagement

Relaunched in 2015, the Foundation Center's Foundation Funding for U.S. Democracy (FFUSD) is a free mapping database that gives a clear picture of philanthropy's role in our democracy by showing who's funding what and where. Survey the field, find collaborators and fine-tune your strategies at <http://democracy.foundationcenter.org>.

While FFUSD is poised to become an indispensable tool for civic engagement grantmakers and grantseekers, it needs input from as many funders as possible. FFUSD relies on data from "Get on the Map," an e-reporting project that combines the analysis power of the Foundation Center with the convening power of the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers. If you're not already on the map, consider joining at <http://foundationcenter.org/grantmakers/ereporting/gotm.html>.

policy ignored the will of thousands of Las Cruces, bent the interpretation of the city's own charter, and shut citizens out of the democratic process. It really confirmed how out of touch the elected leadership had become from the interests of Las Cruces.

This is why we at PICO and CAFé were thrilled when Kasandra decided to run for City Council. One of the added values of integrated voter engagement is that it creates a pipeline for leaders who reflect the experience and diversity of our communities to seek elected office. At PICO, we are committed to dismantling structural barriers that exclude women, people of color and young people from seeking and winning public office. In our research studies, including our efforts to assess volunteer leadership in Let My People Vote, we found strong indications that women of color are drivers of increased voter turnout and increased volunteer mobilization. These findings make clear that the leadership of women, and particularly women of color, deserves focused investment and research in future cycles.

Kasandra won her election, and entered her new role on the City Council grounded by her past experience in organizing and bolstered by CAFé's values of accountability to the Las Cruces who work hard and want a city that works for them.

One of the most valuable outcomes of organizing-based IVE programs is that they increase their participants' sense of personal agency by developing leadership skills and political efficacy. We've found that feelings of personal power and impact explained increased civic participation more than the demographic indicators like race or education most often used to explain gaps in civic engagement. The way that Kasandra's leadership developed through the minimum wage

campaign and her subsequent decision to run for City Council presents a vivid example.

### BUILDING A FUTURE

Because integrated voter engagement is an alternative to a typically transactional and commercialized voting industry, our volunteer-based infrastructure ensures that people make meaning of democracy through relationships and not mass communications.

This long-lasting model allows us to build real independent political power to govern. Today, tens of millions of people are sitting on the sidelines of democracy, ignored by traditional voter engagement programs. Campaigns and candidates aren't speaking to the kitchen-table economic and racial pressures these people experience. Many are not registered to vote. When they are turned off from voting, there are profound consequences for our country. As Let My People Vote in IndyCAN and CAFé show, this is not inevitable. Instead, we can transform our country when we give those with the least power and agency the resources to hold elected officials accountable – and to join the political process on their own terms. ■

*Kristee Paschall is political director at PICO National Network.*

## Notes

1. See Kristee Paschall, Michelle Penson, Dr. Joy Cushman, Dr. Hahrie Han and Dr. Paul Speer, "Integrated Voter Engagement Research Report," PICO National Network, Fall 2015, <http://www.piconetwork.org/ive2015>.
2. Brian Eason, "Criminal justice center likely dead," *IndyStar*, May 12, 2015, <http://www.indystar.com/story/news/politics/2015/05/11/criminal-justice-center-likely-dead/27151755>.

# Democracy Is the Best Theory of Change

By Steve Phillips

Many philanthropists believe that society's problems stem from polarization, inadequate relationships between opposing forces and insufficient information to win hearts. Armed with this worldview, favored "solutions" include changing minds, connecting people on opposite sides of conflicts and conducting research and studies. But if we're being honest, there is little evidence that these types of strategies are successful. Fortunately, there is a different approach with a demonstrably better and more effective track record: Fostering greater democracy is the best theory of change at this point in U.S. history, one that too many in the donor world fail to appreciate as a powerful anchor for their work.

The demographic revolution that has unfolded in America since 1965 has created a New American Majority supportive of the goals of progressive philanthropy. Catalyzed by the historic events in Selma, Alabama, 51 years ago, America has seen a seminal shift in the country's population and electorate. The 1965 passage of the Voting Rights Act and Immigration and Nationality Act removed race-based barriers to entry into the country and participation in its elections. The results have been nothing short of revolutionary. The percentage of people of color in our population has grown from 12 percent in 1965 to 38 percent today, paving the path to the election of the country's first African American president in 2008. Today, a majority (51 percent) of America's eligible voting popu-

lation consists of progressive people of color and progressive whites, and that majority is growing every day.

Stressing the importance of people of color in this historic shift is not to say that "demography is destiny" in a metaphysical sense, or that the melanin content of one's skin determines one's receptivity to social change. Rather,

the sad truth of U.S. history is that the melanin content of one's skin has been used to enslave, discriminate, disadvantage and oppress entire groups of people. The subsequent racial inequality in America, seen in all sectors from household wealth to quality of health to access to education, creates a situation in which democracy and equality are co-equal imperatives.

If people of color and those whites who support equality are now the majority of people – and they are – then expansion of democracy is a powerful tool in the arsenal of philanthropists seeking improved societal outcomes and conditions. California offers an instructive example of how philanthropic dollars can be leveraged tenfold by aligning investments with the demographic revolution. People of color now comprise the majority of people in California, and multiple studies have shown that the residents of communities of color are more likely to live near toxic waste dumps, breathe dirty air, eat unsafe and unhealthy food, and struggle to access quality health care.<sup>1</sup>

In 2006, California's Democratic-controlled legislature passed legislation to fight global warming that was signed by Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Despite this bipartisan agreement on needing to fight climate change, the cap and trade formula developed by the state did little to address the conditions in California's communities of color. From 2006 to 2010, the governor, legislature and state bureaucracy failed to take meaningful action

Philanthropic  
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revolution.

to tackle the environmental problems in disadvantaged communities, even though research shows these communities are especially vulnerable to environmental hazards.<sup>2</sup>

During this time, California’s philanthropists were similarly stymied in efforts to foster change. Typical tools in the philanthropic arsenal, such as studies documenting the problem and convenings to “bring both sides together,” were ineffective. Over time, expanding democracy ultimately made the difference. People of color – a majority of the population – comprised just 32 percent of California’s voters in 2006, but by 2010 that percentage had grown to nearly 40 percent of all voters. This more representative electorate elevated both a new governor more responsive to communities of color, Democrat Jerry Brown, and a legislative champion

himself from a low-income community, State Senator Kevin de Leon.

This new electorate also transformed the public policy landscape, making the elected leaders more responsive to the multiracial majority, and the legislature passed – and the governor signed – a “Polluter Pays” bill. SB 535 requires that 25 percent of the funds from the earlier cap and trade legislation go toward disadvantaged communities in the form of funding for improved public transportation, housing and energy efficiency. In 2016, those funds will exceed \$500 million, a sum that dwarfs the amount of philanthropic dollars directed to inequities in those communities.<sup>3</sup> California’s expansion of democracy is responsible for similar public policy success stories in the fields of education and criminal justice, such as the passage of Proposition 47 in

2014, a ballot measure that resulted in much-needed criminal justice reform in California.<sup>4</sup>

It’s important to be clear about exactly what fostering democracy means. At its most basic, it involves increasing the percentage of people of all racial groups who are voting so that the pool of voters reflects the total population. Because of existing structural inequities, this includes supporting efforts to eliminate barriers to registration and voting, disseminating information about where and how to vote, communicating the significance of what’s on the ballot, and investing in groups and leaders who are rooted in under-represented communities and working to expand the civic participation of those groups. For example, even in the progressive state of California, Latinos comprise 34 percent of the state’s

**COMPOSITION OF THE NEW AMERICAN MAJORITY**  
(Percentage of all U.S. Eligible Voters)

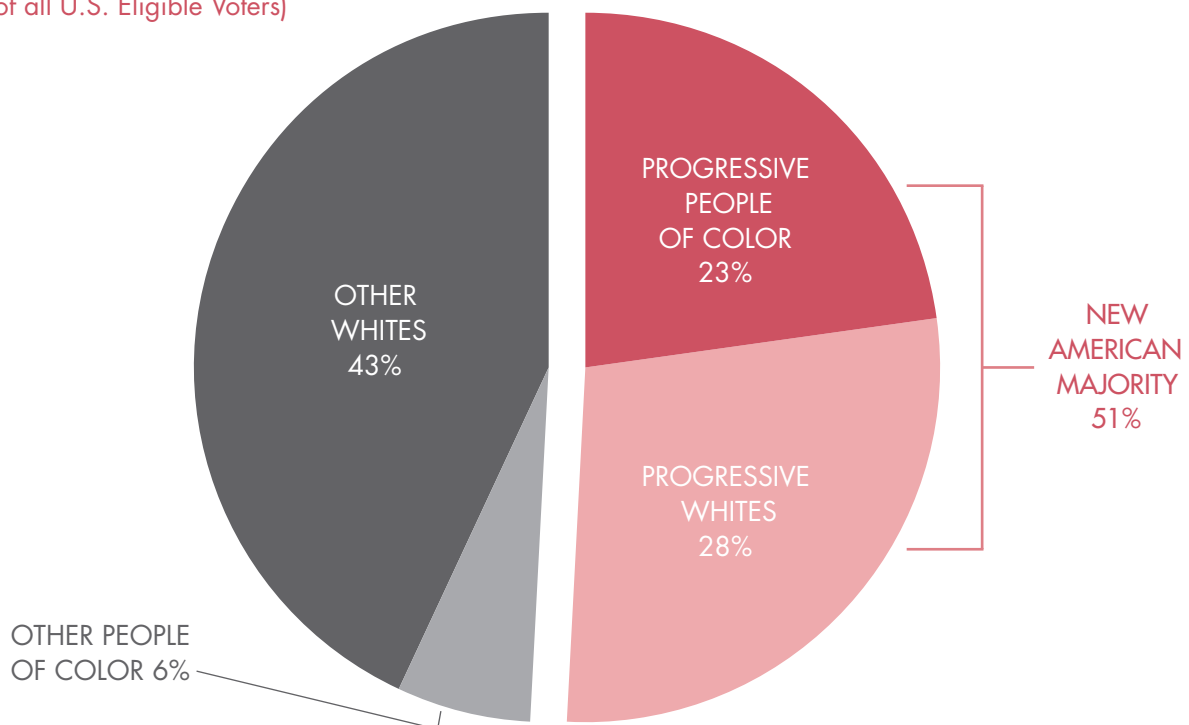


Chart from *Brown is the New White: How the Demographic Revolution Has Created a New American Majority*, an activist treatise by Steve Phillips on how changing demographics are having a profound effect on the political climate. For more information, visit <http://thenewpress.com/books/brown-new-white>. Source: Based on American Majority Project Research Institute’s analysis of U.S. Census Data.



adult population, but just 18 percent of likely voters.<sup>5</sup> Nationally, people of color remain underrepresented in the voting population – and ameliorating this should be a priority for foundations committed to social justice.

### WHAT SHOULD PHILANTHROPISTS BE DOING?

During our continued period of demographic transformation, an effective philanthropic focus entails using the full suite of funding tools and levers to expand civic participation. Foundations have the power to promote awareness and paint a picture of what true democracy is.<sup>6</sup> Encouraging victories in expanding voter registration show the way for foundations looking to get involved in this kind of work. In 2011, I helped organize donor support for the efforts of California Common Cause, [PowerPAC.org](http://PowerPAC.org) and other nonprofit organizations that succeeded in getting California to adopt an online voter registration system. As soon as the system was put in place, 800,000 people registered to vote in just five weeks.<sup>7</sup>

Oregon has gone even further with expanding democracy by enacting an automatic voter registration program that turns historical voter registration on its head. Rather than assuming citizens are not registered to vote and requiring busy people with complicated lives to take active steps to fill out registration forms, Oregon has instituted a system whereby everyone in the database of the Department of Motor Vehicles who is eligible to vote is automatically registered. You have to opt out if you don't want to be registered. It's a revolutionary approach that shows what's possible when elected leaders actually want full democratic participation. Philanthropists can and should be doing everything they can to increase public awareness of these promising reforms.

Foundations should also encourage – rather than discourage – grantees to

Philanthropy

would do well

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change.

make full use of their lobbying resources as allowed under law. Most 501(c)(3) organizations can use up to 20 percent of their resources for lobbying, which includes contacting voters about pertinent ballot measures, if they take a simple 501(h) election, which amounts to filing an extra tax form.<sup>8</sup>

In 2003, I worked on a statewide ballot measure campaign with a coalition of groups that defeated an attack on affirmative action laws. That campaign worked day and night to scrape together \$5 million, most of which came from teachers' unions. But if the participating 501(c)(3) organizations had all ex-

ercised their 501(h) election, the available funds would have exceeded \$20 million. That's an incredibly powerful leveraging tool available to, but infrequently used by, philanthropy.

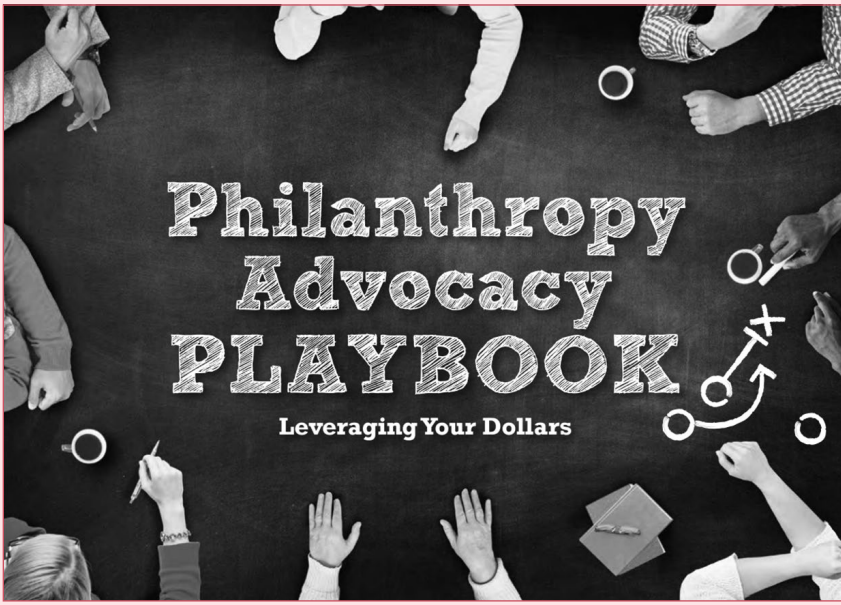
Additional specific steps that could make a meaningful difference include supporting naturalization of the nearly 9 million immigrants who could quickly become citizens and promoting online voter registration which, as noted above, resulted in hundreds of thousands of Californians registering to vote in just over a month.

Philanthropic organizations are spending millions of dollars on pursuits unsupported by data and evidence. Instead of changing hearts and minds, philanthropy would do well to tap into the substantial majority already eager for progressive change. Too many funders are blind to the transformative implications of the demographic revolution. As a result, the potential of the movement to make America more just and equal is hampered, to say nothing about the reality that the effectiveness of much philanthropy is not maximized. Intellectually investing in the New American Majority can leverage and accelerate change by connecting with the larger social trends that are transforming the country. ■

*Steve Phillips is a national political leader, civil rights lawyer and senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. He has spent the past 30 years working at the intersection of racial and economic justice and electoral politics. He is the author of Brown is the New White: How the Demographic Revolution Has Created a New American Majority, released by New Press on February 2.*

## Notes

1. Vien Truong, "Addressing Poverty and Pollution: California's SB 535 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund," 2014,



*The Philanthropy Advocacy Playbook: Leveraging Your Dollars*, a new guide from the Alliance for Justice, sheds light on how foundations can effectively and legally support advocacy within their foundations and through their grantmaking.<sup>1</sup>

Many foundations shy away from advocacy, in part due to legal concerns – not realizing “the overwhelming majority of advocacy activities, including lobbying and nonpartisan electoral activity, are permissible.”

Divided into 11 chapters, the guide gives foundation leaders the resources to pursue their goals by embracing organizing, civic engagement, public policy, voter registration, grassroots work and other advocacy strategies. These resources include initial considerations for foundations first looking into advocacy, a clear explanation of the related legal rules, profiles of foundations that have successfully incorporated these strategies into their work, and a list of ten best practices for effective grantmaking to support advocacy.

Advocacy strategies are effective because they help foundations and their grantees address the root causes of social problems – a cornerstone of NCRP’s work. In fact, the Playbook cites NCRP’s report *Leveraging Limited Dollars*, which found that every dollar invested in advocacy, organizing and civic engagement provides a \$115 return.<sup>2</sup>

As AFJ President Nan Aron declares in the preface, “The record is clear: for foundations seeking to leverage the impact of their limited grant monies, the highest payoff comes from investing in advocacy strategies.” ■

## Notes

1. *Philanthropy Advocacy Playbook* (Washington, D.C.: Alliance for Justice, 2015), <http://bolderadvocacy.org/focus-on-foundations/philanthropy-advocacy-playbook>.
2. Lisa Rangelhelli, *Leveraging Limited Dollars* (Washington, D.C.: National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, January 2012), <http://ncrp.org/files/publications/LeveragingLimitedDollars.pdf>.

*Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, [http://harvardcrcl.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/493\\_Trucong.pdf](http://harvardcrcl.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/493_Trucong.pdf).

2. Sarah Hansen, *Cultivating the Grassroots* (Washington, D.C.: National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, February 2012), [https://www.ncrp.org/files/publications/Cultivating\\_the\\_grassroots\\_final\\_lowres.pdf](https://www.ncrp.org/files/publications/Cultivating_the_grassroots_final_lowres.pdf).
3. *Ibid.*
4. For more, see Shelley Whelpton and Loren McArthur, <http://www.arabellaadvisors.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/August-10-prop-47.pdf>.
5. Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, David Kordus and Lunna Lopes, “California Voter and Party Profiles,” Public Policy Institute of California, August 2015, [http://www.ppic.org/main/publication\\_show.asp?i=526#.Vqu699g3UOY](http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_show.asp?i=526#.Vqu699g3UOY).
6. For more information about how nonprofits and foundations can engage in this kind of activity, two essential guides respectively are, *The Rules of the Game A Guide to Election-Related Activities for 501(c)(3) Organizations* (Washington, D.C.: Alliance for Justice, 2012), <http://bolderadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Rules-of-the-Game.pdf> and *Philanthropy Advocacy Playbook* (Washington, D.C.: Alliance for Justice, 2015), <http://bolderadvocacy.org/focus-on-foundations/philanthropy-advocacy-playbook>.
7. Lisa Garcia Bedolla, “Nativity and California Online Voter Registration and Turnout in November 2012,” *California Journal of Politics and Policy*, 6(3), 2014, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/1bs3p2j2>.
8. Ballot Measures and Public Charities: Yes, You Can Influence That Vote,” Alliance for Justice, [http://d3n8a8pro7vh.mx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy\\_url/3172/BallotMeasures.pdf](http://d3n8a8pro7vh.mx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/3172/BallotMeasures.pdf).

# Control, Disruption and Democracy: Philanthropy's Role in Inclusive Civic Engagement

By Gara LaMarche

*The following is adapted from the keynote speech at the Funders Committee for Civic Participation conference in Washington, D.C., on October 6, 2015.*

In *Citizen*, the poet Claudia Rankine, writing about the abandonment of Black lives after Hurricane Katrina – a signal event in the shift toward the current political moment – says “the fiction of the facts assumes innocence, ignorance, lack of intention, misdirection; the necessary conditions of a certain time and place.”

To overcome the fictions we tell ourselves requires us to acknowledge that the way the criminal justice system operates for Black and brown people, like the way our national security system has operated since 9/11, and the way our immigration system has functioned for virtually all of American history, is to restrict and confine participation in American democracy – to squelch civic engagement in the most literal sense.

Many funders are leading the way toward a broader approach to civic engagement that narrows the (too-often racial) divide in our approach to social justice issues. Admirable as this is, this broader approach should acknowledge two ideas. First, that the way the criminal justice system works should be seen by philanthropy, as it is clear it is seen by those taking to the streets, as a core democracy issue; and second, that tactics and approaches that advance democracy also can be found well outside the ballot box.

To that end, our civic engagement framework must make room for the growing use of direct action tactics and the role they play in sparking a more responsive democracy. It's important to note that, beyond providing more core, flexible, rapid response support for the new, emerging infrastructure of, say, The Movement for Black Lives, philanthropists cannot control how direct action tactics are used. But we can control our responses to direct action and disruption.

As Washington State Senator Pramila Jayapal wrote in response to disruption by Black Lives Matter protestors at a recent Bernie Sanders rally in Seattle:

“If we want to win for ALL of us on racial, economic and social justice issues, we need multiple sets of tactics, working together. Some are disruptive tactics. Some are loving tactics. Some are truth-telling tactics. Some can only be taken on by white people. Some can only be taken on by people of color. Sometimes we need someone from the other strand to step in and hold us up. Other times, we have to step out and hold them up.”<sup>1</sup>

While, of course, it can be an unsettling experience to be blocked from speaking, as Sanders was, the angry reaction of his largely white supporters reveals a great gulf in priorities. To be told this is not your time or place to speak is toxic to the cross-movement solidarity

needed to achieve social justice for all.

In that same vein, in the last several years, many more traditional progressive activists have decried the failure of movements like Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter to take a form they see as familiar and effective. Among the questions they ask are: “Who are the leaders?” “What are their specific demands?” and “Why don't they work through the system and mobilize for elections like the Tea Party does?” If a movement does not emerge in a form they easily recognize, they'd do well to ask, “Is the fault with us and not the movement?”

Moreover, let's be blunt and recognize that the direct action tactics of Occupy, the Dreamers, the fast food workers and carwashers and Black Lives Matter, while not taking a traditional civic engagement-electoral form, have achieved the philanthropic Holy Grail of impact at least as much as any other campaigns, electoral or otherwise, of recent years. Administrative relief from deportation, body cameras on cops, the shift of an entire public discourse around the economy and policing – these are real and tangible achievements and must never be minimized or discounted even as longer-term campaigns and strategies develop. How we, as funders, make space in our thinking and planning for the resurgence of effective and coordinated direct action will vary, as is always the case given the pluralism of philanthropy.

At the Democracy Alliance, which, like all institutions, has a far from per-

## New and Renewing Members

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Common Cause

Deaconess Foundation

Fund for New Jersey

Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation

Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund

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Foundation for the Mid South

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*Black Lives Matter activists disrupt an August 2015 Bernie Sanders rally in Seattle. CC image by Tiffany Von Arnim.*

fect history where race and gender are concerned, we have infused a race and gender lens across our new priority areas of economic justice, democracy and climate change. Among other reasons, if civic engagement strategies don't take account of the urgent concerns of people of color, young people, women and others for many years left out of the political process, and if they are not present at every key decision-making table, how can those strategies possibly succeed in bringing about the robust participation essential to progressive victories and to holding those we put in power accountable?

I want to return as I close to the three words in the title, which I chose for a reason.

**Control**, because those who fear a full participation democracy have many ways to control civic participation. This must change.

**Disruption**, because I want to embrace the more positive ring it has as a Silicon Valley buzzword, where disruption shakes up businesses and sectors and brings about a more productive

economy. I hope the civic engagement sector will start to see this kind of disruption in the same way.

And **democracy**, because every definition of it I have seen centers on a system of government in which power is vested in the people.

We need to make sure, always, that all the ways in which people challenge and exert their power are reflected in the way we think about and talk about civic participation. ■

*Gara LaMarche is president of the Democracy Alliance. He is also vice chair of the board at the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy.*

## Notes

1. Pramila Jayapal, "Guest Editorial: Why Saturday's Bernie Sanders Rally Left Me Feeling Heartbroken," *The Stranger*, August 9, 2015, <http://www.thestranger.com/blogs/slog/2015/08/09/22671957/guest-editorial-why-saturdays-bernie-sanders-rally-left-me-feeling-heartbroken>.

# Systems Change in the Yakima Valley

(continued from page 1)

state's bipartisan redistricting commission, which has drawn legislative maps since 1990, routinely breaks up Latino neighborhoods into several districts, limiting the community's ability to elect its preferred candidates. For offices in Yakima, candidates ran in districts for the primary elections but at-large in the general. Thus, the system diluted the voting strength of Latinos, who were unable to advance their community's preferred candidates past the primary election.

## A NEW APPROACH

In 2006, a group of individual donors came together to form the Washington Progress Alliance (WPA), a member of the Committee on States network. This pooled fund, in the form of both charitable (501(c)(3)) and political (501(c)(4)) vehicles, focused on building civic engagement and advocacy infrastructure in the Evergreen State. In 2007, WPA established the Win/Win Network (affiliated with State Voices) and Win/Win Action as collaboratives, or "tables," for nonpartisan civic engagement work and electoral organizing, respectively. Beyond its strategic coordination role, the Win/Win Network took the lead in identifying and leading organizing campaigns to increase representation for communities of color.

A major focus of this work was Latino political empowerment in central Washington. In 2008, Win/Win produced a landscape analysis of the region with a local researcher examining organizations, community leaders, current efforts around civic engagement and voter registration, and measuring the capacity of those efforts. Because of the long history of Seattle-based organizations conducting work with no local organizers or staff, Win/Win hired a full-time staff member to establish a local leadership team. This team then facilitated Central Washington Progress (CWP), a far-reaching program focused

on civic engagement, community building and campaign skill building.

One of CWP's highest-profile activities was leading the effort to pass a school bond measure in Yakima, through which the program trained allies in campaign mechanics, messaging and strategy. It passed with 70 percent after failing twice previously. CWP also served as a hub for large Seattle-based organizations to plug into central Washington, including a statewide immigrant rights group (OneAmerica), a campus organizing group (Washington Bus) and a candidate development program (Progressive Majority Washington). Additionally, CWP led a comprehensive census awareness program to prepare for future redistricting/voting rights advocacy, which included bilingual PSAs, a large block party and outreach to high schools.

The initial organizing success of Central Washington Progress led to significant support from a range of unusual funders, academics and legal advocates. Most central to this group was the Western States Center, a regional technical assistance provider for social movement building. With a \$3 million grant from the Ralph Smith Foundation in 2007, the Center set up the VOTE Project, which matched large, multi-year grants with training, mentoring and strategic planning.

As a grantee and part of a cohort of 14 VOTE Project organizations, Central Washington Progress was able to refine its long-term strategy and develop partnerships. This included the development of a parallel legal strategy with Joaquin Avila, former president and general counsel at Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the ACLU of Washington and Paul Apostolidis, political science professor at Whitman College, as well as a fundraising strategy that resulted in grants from a number of family foundations, labor unions and a giving project organized by Social Justice Fund Northwest.

This new strategy went beyond typical civic engagement activities and focused on electoral systems change in three parts. First, at the state legislative level, the objective was to create a majority Latino state legislative district in central Washington through advocacy and organizing around the state's bipartisan redistricting commission. To achieve significant change at the county level, the objective was to establish a county charter, which was necessary for any modification to the existing three-person commission elected at-large.

The last piece of the plan, focused on the City of Yakima, offered the best chance of success. The clear goal was to switch from at-large to district-based elections, and push for two majority Latino districts. Voting rights attorneys expressed interest in pursuing a case

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in consultation with Avila and the ACLU, but did not believe there was enough evidence of racially polarized voting patterns, a requirement under current voting rights jurisprudence. Central Washington Progress decided to run a charter amendment campaign to move from at-large to district-based elections. If the campaign, which required 501(c)(4) funding, was successful, then subsequent systems change, along with investments in candidate development and nonpartisan get out the vote campaigns, would likely lead to increased representation for Latinos. If the campaign was unsuccessful because of racially polarized voting patterns, the legal advocates would ideally pursue litigation to force a change in the system.

#### OUTCOMES

Though short-term outcomes were largely unsuccessful, the groundwork set the stage for dramatic longer-term social change. In terms of state legislative representation, a bipartisan redistricting commission held a series of public hearings around the state, which provided a clear organizing opportunity for Central Washington Progress. Not surprisingly, no other organized efforts were focused on achieving specific district boundaries, so advocates were able to shape the narrative through earned media. Behind closed doors, the commissioners agreed to create a majority people of color congressional district in western Washington, but split Latino voters into three legislative districts in central Washington.

Ultimately, while the county level effort failed, the effort to establish district-based elections in Yakima proved most fruitful. Central Washington Progress drafted legislation to shift to seven districts for the general election and gathered several hundred signatures from registered voters to force a vote on the city charter amendment. After

Success was largely based on seamlessly integrating public education, research, leadership development and ballot initiative organizing.

an intensive ballot initiative campaign, supported with 501(c)(4) funds, voters rejected the measure by a 16-point margin (42–58 percent). Though the result was disappointing to the local advocates, it provided the necessary evidence of racially polarized voting patterns for the ACLU to pursue voting rights litigation. On August 22, 2014, a federal judge ruled in favor of the ACLU and forced district-based elections with maps proposed by the civil rights attorneys. For the 2015 elections, six Latino candidates filed to run for City Council; three Latinas were ultimately elected, one of whom was selected as mayor.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

Yakima's story offers several important lessons for funders interested in civic engagement and equitable representation.

**1. Focus on long-term systems change and be willing to fail.** Though civic/voter engagement was a necessary element of this multifaceted strategy, it

alone was insufficient to reform a system that created barriers to representation for Latinos. Funders interested in using this strategy should ask, "Civic engagement to what end?" Even if their goals cannot be achieved in a typical one-to-three-year cycle of grantmaking, early funding can help solidify a game-changing strategy. In this story, the organizers failed to achieve their medium-term objectives, but succeeded in building momentum and capacity for a future win.

**2. Co-develop strategies across tax statuses.** For private foundations, proposals that include lobbying can certainly induce serious anxiety. Instead of running away to "safe" tactics, program officers should develop trusting relationships with grantees and other interested funders, particularly those with access to 501(c)(4) dollars, to co-develop strategies. In this story, success was largely based on seamlessly integrating public education, research, leadership development and ballot initiative organizing. Strive for a clear division of labor and funding.

**3. Leadership development is not just a frill.** A constant focus for this effort was the cultivation of local leaders. Hiring a local organizer, establishing a leadership team, and ultimately recruiting candidates to run under a new system all were investments in strong leadership that was not just the icing on the cake but the glue that held everything together. What good is systems change if no one is prepared to step up to be an elected leader and govern effectively? ■

*George Cheung is program director for a private foundation in the Midwest. EJ Juárez is executive director of Progressive Majority Washington. Kristina Logsdon is chief of staff for King County Councilmember Rod Dembowski. All previously served at the Win/Win Network.*

# Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund

San Francisco, CA

<http://www.haasjr.org/>

evelyn & walter  
HAAS JR. fund

ADVANCING RIGHTS.  
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES.

**NCRP: The Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund was founded in 1953 with core values of fairness, equality and opportunity. How has the foundation changed over time?**

**Haas, Jr.:** For many years, the fund's focus was on direct services in the Bay Area. The founders loved their local community and wanted to use their philanthropy to increase access and opportunity there. While the foundation continues to support direct services and local initiatives, the Haas family increasingly came to see how the issues they cared about in the local community were connected to bigger issues facing California and the country. As the appetite for transformative change increased, the foundation began investing in state and national policy advocacy efforts to advance rights and opportunities for all people, with a focus on immigrants and gay and lesbian people. The fund also supports education equity in San Francisco schools and is a major investor in nonprofit and social movement leadership development. The throughline remains the same, however: a deep commitment to our founders' vision of a more just and caring society and a desire to level the playing field.

**NCRP: The Haas, Jr. Fund is part of California Civic Participation Funders, which works to strengthen long-term civic infrastructure in historically underserved regions. Why is this strategy important?**

**Haas, Jr.:** The Haas, Jr. Fund and our nine funding partners believe in increasing civic participation to give people voice and agency so they can advocate more power-



Photo courtesy of Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund.

fully for their own families. Our country is growing more and more diverse every day. Because of this, it's critically important that our policies and government reflect everyone's concerns and priorities. We focus on increasing civic participation in parts of the state that are rapidly growing and facing profound demographic changes. And we focus on bringing Latinos, Asians and African Americans together on issues of common concern. We've witnessed firsthand how communities can make change happen and how our state and country are stronger when everyone has a voice.<sup>1</sup>

**NCRP: The Haas, Jr. Fund helped form the Civil Marriage Collaborative, a key player in the Supreme Court victory for marriage equality in June 2015. How did your role in the movement evolve, and how will it continue post-Obergefell?**

**Haas, Jr.:** The movement for marriage equality was successful because of hundreds of thousands of people across the country. In private conversations and public actions, people spoke up and said it was time for change. Our role – and the role of the Civil Marriage Collaborative –

was really about supporting the process of changing hearts and minds on this issue. It included support for research to identify those messages that could bring people together and move the conversation forward. It also included support for a state-by-state strategy that eventually took the issue to the Supreme Court. A new video and case study highlight lessons for funders from this work, starting with the importance of taking risks on bold and visionary ideas.<sup>2</sup> Now the challenge for the movement is to use the momentum from the marriage win to target other forms of discrimination against gay and lesbian people. ■

## Notes

1. For more information on the work of California Civic Participation Funders and a list of all 10 members, read the case study on the project: "Bolder Together," Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, April 2012, <http://www.haasjr.org/resources/bolder-together>.
2. "Hearts and Minds," Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, November 2014, <http://www.haasjr.org/resources/changing-hearts-and-minds>.



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## Select Publications

### ***John S. and James L. Knight Foundation - Can It Look Beyond #ShinyBrightObjects and Do More to Promote Equity?***

By Lisa Rangelhelli with Peter Haldis

December 2015

As part of Philamplify, NCRP assessed the Knight Foundation, a leader in risk and innovation, especially around journalism and technology. However, the report found that Knight lacks clearly articulated goals and strategies and that its support for marginalized communities has been declining.

### ***The Kresge Foundation - Will This Bold Grantmaker Become the Next Great Social Justice Foundation?***

By Elizabeth Myrick

October 2015

This Philamplify assessment examines the Kresge Foundation, which has moved from risk-avoidance to risk-pursuit since its 2006 strategic shift. While the foundation exceeds most of NCRP's criteria for effective social justice philanthropy, the report recommends that it incorporate an explicit racial equity lens across all programming and increase mission investing.

visit: [www.philamplify.org/foundation-assessments](http://www.philamplify.org/foundation-assessments)

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