

Responsive Philanthropy

NCRP'S QUARTERLY JOURNAL

FALL 2012



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Willie Turner, a Hope Community tenant. Photo by Bruce Silcox. Courtesy of The Minneapolis Foundation.

Responsive Philanthropy in Black Communities

Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from Karen Kelley-Ariwoola's 2012 James A. Joseph Lecture titled "Responsive Philanthropy in Black Communities: Mobilizing Our Resources for Impact," which she delivered during the Association of Black Foundation Executives (ABFE) Annual Conference in April 2012.

Everywhere – in your city and mine – the reality of where we are and where we want to be are miles apart. In Minneapolis, the disparities faced by people (both American-born and foreign-born) are stark. Though we are surrounded by more Fortune 500 companies per capita than any place in the country (including the headquarters of Target, General Mills and Best Buy), need and poverty surround us. For example, although only 19 percent of Minneapolis residents are black:¹

- Just 67 percent of black kids are ready for kindergarten versus 94 percent of white kids.
- Only 39 percent of black kids are reading-proficient at third grade compared

to 88 percent of white kids – that is a 50-point gap at third grade – one of the highest black/white achievement gaps in the country.

- Only one in three black Minneapolis high schoolers graduate on time compared with seven in 10 white students.
- More than half of all black children (some 11,000 children) in Minneapolis live in poverty.
- While only 60 percent of Minneapolis residents are white, they hold 83 percent of the jobs – leaving a 25 percent employment gap between white and U.S.-born blacks (one of the largest gaps in the country).

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challenging grantmakers
to strengthen communities

A Message From the Executive Director



Dear Readers,

As I write this note, election season is entering its final two weeks and the presidential election looks too close to call. By the time you read this, however, we will be talking about a second term for President Barack Obama or a first term for President Mitt Romney. The choice has profound implications for our world and for those with the least wealth, opportunity and power in this country. I'm thankful, therefore, for those foundations that invested robustly this year in nonprofit voter registration, voter engagement and other strategies that help encourage all Americans to be active politically.

In "Responsive Philanthropy in Black Communities," Karen Kelley-Ariwoola urges African American foundation executives to "speak up and stand up for the needs of our black communities" and mobilize for change in her James A. Joseph Lecture, which she delivered during the Association of Black Foundation Executives' annual conference in April 2012.

Christine Doby and Christine Reeves look at the critical role that specialists and generalists play in philanthropy. In "Specialist or Generalist: A False Dichotomy," they offer some advice on how to avoid the common traps that may prevent both types of expertise from serving their constituents to the fullest.

In "Bolder Together: Collaboration to Strengthen Civic Engagement Capacity in California," we learn about the unique approach of the California Civic Participation Funders to helping their nonprofit partners achieve sustainable policy wins on social justice issues.

Finally, our Member Spotlight highlights the work of MALDEF, the country's leading Latino legal civil rights organization.

We want *Responsive Philanthropy* to be an important resource as you navigate the world of effective, responsive and transparent philanthropy. Please email us at readers@ncrp.org to share your comments, story ideas and suggestions for improvement.

Thank you for your continued support of NCRP.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director

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

2012, Issue No. 3
Yearly subscription: \$25
(free to members)
ISBN: 1065-0008

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Specialist or Generalist: A False Dichotomy

By Christine Doby and Christine Reeves

Many of our colleagues have shared the same observation about a staffing trend in philanthropy: Foundation leaders seem to be hiring more program or issue “specialists,” believing specialists can then gain “softer” generalist skills somewhat easily. It seems less popular to assume accomplished generalists can gain specialized expertise as easily.

We believe that the multifaceted skills of a generalist are neither soft, nor easily attained. Furthermore, thoughtful grantmaking requires us to address struggles and limitations that specialists and generalists (as well as those who fall somewhere on the middle of the continuum) have with their skill sets. Upon doing so, we realize that the struggles of specialists may be more difficult to overcome than some might expect, while the underrepresentation of generalists is at the root of some growing problems in our sector.

Specialists and generalists are both vital for philanthropy. Yet, we cannot expect every philanthropic practitioner to express only the best qualities of both specialists and generalists. So, we hope to catalyze a dialog that disabuses us from thinking generalist skills are soft, lets us better understand and overcome common struggles, and helps correct the specialist-generalist imbalance.

Staff expertise and experience are crucial ingredients for a foundation’s success and usefulness. Therefore, discussion of the generalist-specialist dynamic can help us all better serve our constituents, as we continue to strive

for grantmaking that improves the conditions and life opportunities for people living in poor, low-income and working class communities.

SPECIALISTS, THE EXPERTS

For the purpose of this article, we define a philanthropic specialist as an individual at a grantmaking foundation who has an impressively deep and specific range of expertise. Specialists enter philanthropy having previously honed their highly-developed expertise and resolute perspectives in a particular area. Many times, specialists will concentrate on one or more *issue areas*, such as environmental quality or the arts, or *recipient groups*, such as preschool children or the homeless.

It is possible for someone to specialize in a certain *geographic areas*, but working on a variety of issues and with a variety of recipient groups in Miami or the Northwest, for instance, will likely yield highly-developed generalist skills. Likewise, someone could specialize in certain *strategies*, such as direct service of food distribution that could alleviate suffering for the hungry in the short term, or advocacy for job creation legislation that could alleviate suffering for the hungry in the long term. However, due to the diversity of their work, strategy specialists soon will acquire generalist skills. They know that seldom does one strategy work in isolation; constellations of strategies create more benefits.



New and Renewing Members

Alliance for Justice
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Arca Foundation
Atlantic Philanthropies
Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc.
California Community Foundation
CalNonprofits
Carnegie Corporation of New York
Cleveland Foundation
Compton Foundation, Inc.
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
Consumer Health Foundation
David and Lucile Packard Foundation
East Bay Community Foundation
Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund
Forsyth County Public Library
Foundation for the Mid-South
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
Greater New Orleans Foundation
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Korean American Community Foundation
Levi Strauss Foundation
Melville Charitable Trust
Mertz Gilmore Foundation
Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund (MALDEF)
Miami Coalition for the Homeless
Nathan Cummings Foundation
National Partnership for Women and Families
Needmor Fund
New Mexico Environmental Law Center
Northwest Area Foundation
PICO National Network
Retirement Research Foundation
Robert Bowne Foundation
Rosenberg Foundation
Scherman Foundation, Inc.
Stewart R. Mott Foundation
Surdna Foundation, Inc.
The California Endowment
The Daphne Foundation
Tides Foundation
UM School of Social Work
United Way of Greater Los Angeles
United Way of the Bay Area
University of Illinois, Chicago
Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation
Walter and Elise Haas Fund
Women's Foundation of Minnesota
YWCA USA
Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

Specialists are necessary to philanthropy; they provide rich analysis and deep knowledge, and can give expert advice to grantees and communities. Additionally, their esteemed and respected reputations, earned from their previous sectors of work, help their new foundation to leverage the legitimacy of their programs and foster new and valuable relationships.

GENERALISTS, THE OTHER EXPERTS

Like specialists, generalists are experts, too. The difference between the two is not simply a question of depth versus breadth, but of one kind of expertise versus another. Generalists also leverage their foundation's legitimacy, limited dollars and relationships. However, on the whole, generalists collect a broad network of contacts and relationships, having built their careers on their ability to compare, contrast and connect a variety of disciplines and approaches.

The skills of a generalist include, but are not limited to, building and managing complex partnerships, developing and implementing interconnected strategies, listening to and synthesizing divergent ideas without predetermining the outcomes or approaches, and finding commonalities and shared goals among people who normally work in different or competing fields.

We view philanthropic generalists as skilled Broadway producers or investors who perceive value in connecting writers, actors, directors, choreographers, musicians, costumers, set designers, publicists and even the ushers to each other and to audiences. Their craft is to gather talent and assess risk, so each person shines individually and the ensemble dazzles collectively. Their job is not to be silent partners who mail a big check during preproduction and then read critics' reviews after opening night. Broadway producers and investors don't write the script – though they may occasionally assist on a necessary rewrite; they don't direct the show –

though they may wait in the wings, should the director seek their advice; they don't design the sets – though they may set financial limits on the extravagance of the set; and they don't take a bow at curtain call – though they may applaud heartily from their front-row seats.

Undeniably, the expertise that generalists bring to philanthropy proves absolutely indispensable for the development of refined and effective strategies. We believe that this expertise holds the same degree of importance as what specialists bring to the table.

HOW TO AVOID SOME COMMON TRAPS

The "traps" we can fall into are many and deep. So, let's explore some practical ways we can help ourselves and others to avoid them.

(1) Connecting Silos

Grantmakers cannot afford to limit their horizons to a point of devaluing and not fully considering the multitude of interconnected issue areas, recipient groups, geographic differences, strategies or approaches, and social contexts that all border their grantmaking goals.

The comfort of working in silos may be particularly tempting for specialists, who have often devoted their academic and practitioner careers to a specific, refined approach to solving a social problem. For the generalist, this may be less of a danger.

For instance, even a specialist who works for a foundation that focuses exclusively on one goal would realize that no goal exists in a vacuum. However, whether a generalist or a specialist, s/he would know that affordable housing connects to low-income workforce development; low-income workforce development connects to childhood education; childhood education connects to health; health connects to environmental conditions; and environmental conditions connect back to affordable housing.

(2) Shedding One's Previous Role

Let's say an education policy academic joins a foundation, becoming a philanthropic practitioner. That person can no longer identify as an education policy academic who now just happens to work at a foundation and can fund the ideas s/he had spent decades endorsing at universities or think tanks. His or her field of practice is now philanthropy – certainly philanthropy informed by previously attained expertise – but s/he can no longer afford to be an academic with predetermined ideas about a specific problem and the corresponding solution.

As we all come to learn in philanthropy, grantees will listen to what you say. To have authentic conversations with grantees, it is crucial to shed that previous field role and assume the role of informed, responsive grantmaker. This way, as much as possible, specialists can avoid the danger of thinking that a grantee is only listening to learn about their specialized opinions.

This also helps specialists avoid an even worse danger: grantees contorting their work to align with the specialists' opinions. To secure essential funding, grantees might even risk their own judgment and some community needs or buy-in (trying to fit the proverbial square peg in a round hole). Grantees certainly will value specialists' knowledge, experience, relationships and insights. However, once you leave the field, you've left the field; you are no longer the practitioner you once were, and there are new skills and disciplines to acquire in philanthropy.

(3) Acquiring New Skills

Anyone moving into philanthropy must acquire new skills, including but never limited to building partnerships; managing staff and developing their talent; carrying out an ambitious, yet achievable strategic plan; being responsive to the community; developing and maintaining a grantmaking portfolio; welcoming new opinions; providing

financial and nonfinancial support to grantees; and learning from failure (and knowing that failure to a foundation is starkly different than failure to a grantee or community).

When generalists or specialists generously share their knowledge, expertise, relationships and insights with grantees (and philanthropic colleagues), they are appreciated. However, when they humbly share their questions, challenges, limitations and eagerness to gain more information, they are admired.

Money does not equate to expertise, but it often produces power. So, it is helpful when a philanthropic practitioner addresses the power/money elephant in the room. S/he need not remind grantees of the experience and money the foundation gives to initiatives, but should remind grantees of the capacity grantees have for carrying out initiatives. This fosters more honest and unfiltered dialogs, symbiotic relationships, and learning experiences from both successes and failures. For generalists and specialists, this is a formidable series of tasks that are neither easily attained, nor easily maintained. Honing these skills require constant practice, reflection, patience and eagerness to acquire new skills outside of comfort zones.

We challenge the bias that a foundation can hire a specialist and expect that person to easily and quickly acquire the skills a generalist has spent a career developing and refining. No one thinks you can hire generalists, and by auditing a few classes they can gain the specialized skills and knowledge associated with a master of public health degree. Likewise, specialists in public health cannot attend some conference workshops and expect to master the skills associated with the generalist – such as pursuing collaboration and inquiry; seeking a variety of perspectives in order to inform, design, implement, evaluate and reassess a theory of change; and refraining from driving toward a particular approach or outcome.

BOTTOM LINE

Our sector must value both specialists and generalists. By doing so, we as philanthropic practitioners, our institutions and our sector will foster environments wherein specialists gain a diversity of knowledge and networks from generalists, while generalists garner more specific understanding from specialists.

Also, we believe posing “specialist vs. generalist” is a false dichotomy. Clearly, someone can be both a specialist and generalist. One's generalist side supplies nimble, adaptive and collaborative skills, while his or her specialist tendencies help differentiate strong ideas from weaker ones, provide deep analysis and call upon time-tested advice on particular areas of concern. However, expecting all those qualities in all grantmakers is asking a little too much. Thus, we suggest, to the degree possible in staffing patterns, that foundations employ both specialists and generalists and value all roles and contributions equally.

“My business is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.” These words of Mary Harris Jones, a nineteenth century labor rights leader, should make us – comfortable philanthropic practitioners – reflect, discuss and then afflict ourselves with tougher questions.

At the end of the day, let us not forget that our work is not about us, our careers or even our theories of change. We aren't simply posing esoteric arguments about abstract concepts. Rather, we are learning how to improve ourselves and our philanthropic sector, so we can better meet the responsibility and privilege of helping improve the lives. ■

Christine Doby is program officer at the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Christine Reeves is field associate at the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy.

Bolder Together: Collaboration to Strengthen Civic Engagement Capacity in California

Submitted By Mary Manuel, McKay Foundation

How can foundations help build movements and opportunities for social change – and win?

This is the question at the heart of a funder collaborative launched in California in early 2010. The California Civic Participation Funders was born out of a series of conversations among a group of us who invest in various social justice issue areas. We realized that we shared a common sense of frustration about the lack of sustainable policy wins among the social movements that we supported.

To achieve real and lasting progress on issues from immigration reform to economic justice, we understood that civic engagement could not come and go with each election cycle. We wanted to support nonprofits around the state as they worked to build and strengthen the capacity of people and communities to get involved in local statewide issues – and to stay involved over the long haul in working for social change.

In our early meetings, we focused on identifying the critical capacities that nonprofits need (either on their own or as part of broader networks) to achieve their goals. We developed a framework modeled after State Voices¹ that included several of these cross-cutting capacities, such as community organizing, strategic communications, voter mobilization, leadership development, policy development and research and fundraising. This list of capacities then helped us identify our priorities for funding.

We also began to settle on a shared goal: to strengthen local organizations and networks in targeted regions of the

state so they can mobilize and engage underrepresented voters more effectively.

The four regions we targeted were San Diego, Orange, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. These areas of the state were selected based largely on demographic and political trends. As they are among the fastest growing counties in the country, we believed that investing in local infrastructure now would prepare underrepresented communities (who by now make up a majority of the counties' population) to have a voice in local and statewide decision-making to both protect and advance their own interests. For example, Riverside County grew by 42 percent in the last decade. Two-thirds of that growth was due to a surge in the Latino population; the number of Asian Americans doubled over the same period. However, the county's political and local leadership remains overwhelmingly conservative and white despite these

dramatic increases in the local population of people of color.

Upon reviewing these numbers, we decided that the changing demographics of the four counties made them promising laboratories to explore how best to promote higher levels of civic engagement among the populations that are the focus of the collaborative's work. As funders interested in social justice, members of the group saw a clear connection between higher engagement among these populations and sustainable progress on priority issues from education to civil rights. Among the reasons: many of the newer immigrant populations that comprise the target population for this work tend to be more open to government efforts to reduce discrimination and advance equality, and to boost investments in education, health and social services for people in need.

One of things we wanted to accomplish with the California Civic Participation Funders was to take a fresh look at how to build and sustain a successful funder collaborative. We have some key elements to our approach that we believe makes this effort distinct from other funder collaboratives:

- **We are an intentionally diverse group.** The 10 participants range from large foundations to smaller family foundations and private donors. We bring a variety of perspectives and interests to the work of increasing civic participation. For some of us, the spark is an interest in advancing immigrant rights and integration; for others, it is promoting racial justice or getting a broader

CALIFORNIA CIVIC PARTICIPATION FUNDERS

- California Endowment
- Color of Democracy Fund
- Evelyn and Walter Hass Jr. Fund
- James Irvine Foundation
- McKay Foundation
- Mitchell Kapor Foundation
- PowerPAC Foundation
- Rosenberg Foundation
- Tides
- Women's Foundation of California

cross-section of the public involved in health care advocacy. By focusing on a common denominator that strengthens all of our work, we are able to step out of our issue silos to invest in a core strategy that will contribute to the success of the movements we support.

- **We are committed to community engagement.** We began our work in the four counties with an effort to convene community leaders, learn about the unique conditions in each county, and explore local priorities and perspectives. For example, in San Diego, we convened 20 local leaders from the labor and faith communities, representatives of local foundations, political leaders and community organizing groups. Over the course of seven months, these local leaders codeveloped the plan of action to increase civic participation in San Diego County. From this was born Engage San Diego, a county-wide table whose mission is to increase civic participation in underrepresented communities to ensure that the electorate and civic leadership of the region matches the area's diversity. Engage is also the first regional partner of the national State Voices network of similar tables in states around the country.
- **Participants retain a high level of autonomy.** Rather than pooling our funds and adopting the necessary policies and procedures for making joint grant decisions, we settled on an approach whereby each of our organizations still makes its own grant decisions, but does so in a way that is highly coordinated. We all have an understanding of the broader goals and objectives, and of how our investments fit into a bigger puzzle. In other words, once everyone agrees on what the finished puzzle should look like, each member then contributes its respec-



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

tive pieces to complete it. This approach has helped us avoid some of the common complaints in collaboratives with pooled funds: getting bogged down in cumbersome and protracted joint decision-making processes; tensions over which organizations or communities should receive support; and concern over whether there is an adequate, mission-related return on investment.

We also feel that this collaborative structure allows us to take on a shared assumption of risk. By working collectively to identify and support the full range of investments needed to boost nonprofit capacity across the four counties – from training and technical assistance to leadership development, peer learning and base building – we are able to do work on a scale that would be impossible to accomplish on our own. The risks in this work look different in each county. For example, in San Diego, we knew that organizations already were in place that could be supported to engage in the work of boosting civic participation among underrepresented groups. The challenge was to bring people together around

shared strategies and goals, and to introduce innovations and new ways of working collaboratively to reach greater numbers of voters. We did not know when we started whether such a collaborative approach would take hold among the organizations and movements involved.

Perhaps the most important part of our collaborative is its emphasis on learning. We have created an intentional learning community in which, through joint site visits, periodic get-togethers and shared sponsorship of research, we work together to develop a more fine-tuned understanding of problems and possible solutions so we can work with nonprofits to achieve better results on the ground. In our quarterly meetings, we first spend time discussing updates on the work in each of the four counties. We are continuously assessing what we have learned and adjust our strategy based on the information we are receiving from the groups we are working with. We then devote the last hour to a presentation on a learning topic that affects the entire state. These topics have included upcoming ballot measures, redistricting, election reform and shifting demographic trends.

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Responsive Philanthropy in Black Communities

(continued from page 1)

As we heard from the National Urban League earlier today, these are the sobering facts that are mirrored in many of your communities around the country. As we begin to think about the impact we wish to have in our communities, we need to know how we are doing – but we also need a vision of where we want to go. Knowing the data on your community and disaggregating them by race is fundamental to ABFE's Responsive Framework. In the absence of good data, we cannot design effective strategies for closing the gap.

During my last year at the Minneapolis Foundation, I had the privilege, along with my colleague Jo-Anne Stately, of designing a community indicators project we call One Minneapolis. We commissioned Wilder Research to develop it. Embedded in One Minneapolis is a vision of *one* city where everyone benefits.

In One Minneapolis, we identified 24 community indicators in the three areas of The Minneapolis Foundation's strategic plan – education, economic vitality and building social capital – and we painted a picture of Minneapolis that most people do not see. The dirty little secret is that Minneapolis is two cities and not one: one where many people (primarily white) thrive and another where primarily low-income people of color suffer from disparities on every indicator. The data on each of the indicators, broken out by race and ethnicity, and in some cases home language, gender and whether residents were born in the U.S. or abroad, revealed gaps that we in this room are so familiar with – what we call the equity gap. I refer to the report as the Community's Dashboard because it provides that high-level overview of how we are doing and speaks the truth about our community without placing blame. The facts are the facts.

REDEFINING OUR ROLE: BEYOND GRANTMAKING

So often as blacks in philanthropy, we do not think we have the personal or

institutional power to create the change we feel is needed in our community. Too often, we think of ourselves exclusively as grantmakers, thus leaving many opportunities for impact off the table. As we think about the resources we need to close the gaps in disparities for black communities, we need to think very expansively about the options and opportunities. I challenge you to think very differently about your role. While ABFE's framework touches on our roles beyond grantmaking, we need to be much more explicit about the other ways that we can lead.

Though I began in the field as a program officer and have spent my philanthropic career with varying degrees of accountability for The Minneapolis Foundation's unrestricted grantmaking (by my conservative estimate, influencing nearly \$90 million over my 18 years), I rarely call myself a grantmaker. I think of myself as more of a catalyst, a facilitator or even a broker. I think of myself as an advocate, a connector of dots, a community leader, an influencer of influencers, a puller of levers – a midwife of sorts, not always personally having the baby but helping to coach and support it along the way.

Perhaps this mindset comes from entering the field through a community foundation. On my first day of work, I was given a book called *An Agile Servant: Community Leadership by Community Foundations*, and was told that we had many tools in our toolbox. Grantmaking was only one of them. Others included community knowledge, relationships with donors, convening, communications and public information strategies, policy and advocacy, and in 2012 we would add social networking and support for our communities to register to vote and build the capacity for civic engagement. There is also one that we often forget: our foundation's reputational capital. One of The Minneapolis Foundation's trustees

once coined the phrase that the foundation has both “cash and cache,” and urged that we think strategically about when and how to use each. Many of these strategies lend themselves to digging beneath the symptoms of problems to truly understand the underlying and structural causes. It is at that macro, systems level that ABFE's framework is designed to have the greatest impact.

While I know that there are many types of philanthropic interests represented in this room, from our black churches and black Greek organizations to community, private and family foundations and to individual donors, staff and trustees, we all can think **beyond the grant** as we work to amass the resources we need to create impact in our community. I encourage you to ask yourself: what are the tools in my philanthropy's toolbox? What can I bring to bear in addition to grantmaking to help my community?

MONEY ALONE IS NOT THE SOLUTION

Over the years, one of my core operating philosophies has been not to lead with money. Doing so sells everybody short. If the exchange with the grantee or the receiving party is only about the money, then why not just send a check? My notion of working in community starts first with building relationships up and down and across the community, at all levels, across sectors, across race, political affiliation and role. *I believe that relationships are the most important currency that we have in building support for our community.* Building relationships starts with simply listening to the needs and concerns of the community, then sharing our perspectives – and then together exploring the best way that philanthropy can help.

I can think of hundreds of examples (and you probably can, too) where money was not the answer or at least not the complete answer. For example:



Left: A Twin Cities Rise! work skills and personal empowerment training. Right: Girls learning in CommonBond Communities children's space. Photos by Bruce Silcox. Courtesy of The Minneapolis Foundation.

- In Minneapolis, we would never have had the first accountability reports published by our school district back in 2000² if we had focused the conversation on the size of a grant we could give, and not on the size of the impact we could have.
- We would never have reduced youth violence in Minneapolis if we had only made grants to organizations helping young people instead of convening the community to get at the real underlying issues, engaging the mayor and the City Council and current and former gang-engaged youth, then building a Blueprint for Action³ that created a citywide infrastructure for reducing youth violence.
- In 2012, the state of Minnesota would never have received a \$45 million Early Learning Challenge Grant and a \$28 million Promise Neighborhood grant (both deeply benefiting black communities in Minneapolis) if funders across the state had not joined with the community to convene, advocate and influence new legislation and to compel the governor to create a new Office of Early Learning – and, yes, leverage a small pool of grant dollars for change.
- We would have never positioned a stellar black charter school called Harvest Preparatory School by offering a small grant, when, after

bringing a group of wealthy donors to see their gap-breaking work with the same black kids who are failing in Minneapolis public schools, in a single morning, we were able to leverage a combination of grants and a program-related investment totaling over \$800,000.

These illustrate just a few ways that we can “act bigger” by being more than grantmakers, with a greater benefit to our communities. And we cannot do this work alone. We must link arms to do it together.

Each of us has more power than we realize, and so do each of our institutions. Most of us sit at various tables of influence, and yet so many of us are not maximizing those opportunities for the Black community. If we are honest, some of us are just happy for ourselves to be at the table for ourselves, for our own individual edification and career growth. Some of us want to be more effective in speaking up and standing up for the needs of our Black community, but we are timid and often quiet when we need to be speaking truth to power.

I remember my earliest years in philanthropy (as a closet introvert). I was quiet so many times when I should have spoken up. We need each of us, in all of the roles we play, to have zero tolerance for the disparities in our community, and

we need to speak truth to power at every opportunity we get. We don't have to engage in blame or beat people over the head with the problems in our community, but we have an obligation to be bolder and more forthcoming.

Philanthropy holds a very special place in our society where we can often speak truth to power in a way that others can't. We are that third-sector voice that can, on behalf of the community, share what we know and believe to be true. I urge you to challenge yourself and your institution to find new ways to do this.

BUILDING STRONG BLACK NON-PROFITS AS OUR PARTNERS

As we mobilize around change for black communities, I want to be sure that we take time to engage and strengthen our black nonprofits in the process. The African American Leadership Forum across the Northwest is thinking hard about this issue, as are some of our regional black philanthropic networks. I remember the folks at Bay Area Blacks in Philanthropy (BAY BIP), who honed the phrase “strengthening our house.”⁴ This reminds me of watching basketball games in my house (a house full of men, by the way) with a thunderous roar of “Whose House? OUR HOUSE.” Perhaps ABFE needs to co-opt this chant as its own as we think about working with our black institutions. “Whose House? OUR HOUSE.”

Although they are bursting with the very black people ABFE's framework purports to help, many of our black organizations are hanging on by a shoestring, reeling from years of disinvestment by government and philanthropy, lack of the most current technology, and board and staff capacity that cannot meet the demands of the work or the competition from their mainstream counterparts. And, like those of us who are black in philanthropy, many of our nonprofit heads feel isolated without a peer support network and without a talent pipeline of strong successors.

Our ancestors worked hard after slavery ended to establish an infrastructure of black organizations. To be sure, times have changed, and we can theoretically go anywhere we want for help. But as part of ABFE's Responsive Philanthropy in Black Communities Framework, ABFE and all of us on the ground must lead the effort to lift up

and partner with our NAACPs, Urban Leagues, the various former settlement houses named after our black heroes and she-roses, as well as other black nonprofits that must play a critical role in rebuilding our community. We should not be afraid to hold a high bar for the quality of the work and demonstrated outcomes while at the same time offering a hand of support as they remain a critical part of the fabric of black communities.

And if there are some organizations that cannot or will not or should not survive, let's not kill them by death by a thousand cuts, but let us help them find a humane and respectful way to close. We must strengthen "our house" in the context of ABFE's Framework for Responsive Philanthropy. We must not apologize for working to lift up our own organizations, just as others of various backgrounds do not apologize for lifting up theirs. ■

Karen Kelley-Ariwoola is former vice president of community philanthropy at The Minneapolis Foundation. You can read the full text of her ABFE James A. Joseph Lecture at www.abfe.org/FCDOCS\21st_James_A_Joseph_Lecture.pdf.

Notes

1. *The Minneapolis Foundation, One Minneapolis Report, Fall 2011.*
2. *The report was Measuring Up 2000, published by the Minneapolis Foundation, Minneapolis Public Schools and the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce.*
3. *Download the Blueprint for Action at: www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/www/groups/public/@health/documents/webcontent/convert_278139.pdf.*
4. *See <http://blog.mkf.org/2012/04/17/strengthening-our-house-capacity-building-seminar-april-24th/>.*

Bolder Together *(continued from page 7)*

Looking ahead, we are interested in applying what we are learning across the four counties and to further our understanding about innovative strategies to boost civic participation that might be working in one place and could potentially be applied in others.

The glue that holds our collaborative together is our relationship with one another. We do not have a formal management structure. It's loose enough so that each of us determines how to take part in the work in ways that makes sense for our organizations.

In addition, no one dominates the group. We have strived to keep in good communication so that everyone knows and understands what everyone else is doing and can tailor the work accordingly. One of our partners has taken on the de facto lead in organizing meetings, docu-

menting the group's collective investments and generally keeping things on track. Each member plays a leadership role in a different way. While sometimes challenging, the informality of this collaborative has allowed us to be much more flexible in what we do, while still being very diligent about communications, learning and overall strategy. We also genuinely enjoy the time we spend together and try to always allot time for a bit of fun.

We hope that by sharing our approach and what we have learned so far, we can support other funders interested in collaborative funding for social justice. We do not presume that we have come up with the model for others to emulate, but rather offer up our approach as food for thought as funders and nonprofit partners weigh how best to build or strengthen our movements, especially in a moment

of declining resources for this work.

We look forward to further identifying shared innovative approaches that will help all of us be more effective in this work. ■

Adapted from "Bolder Together," written by William H. Woodwell Jr., a report commissioned by the California Civic Participation Funders. You can read the full report at <http://www.haasjr.org/what-were-learning/resource/bolder-together>.

For more information about the collaborative, please contact Cathy Cha at cathy@haasjr.org.

Notes

1. *You can find more information about State Voices here: <http://www.statevoices.org/>.*

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)

Los Angeles, CA

www.maldef.org

Est. 1968



NCRP: *What are the greatest civil rights issues facing Latinos today and how is MALDEF working to tackle them?*

MALDEF: The continued proliferation of state and local measures that encourage or, in some cases, mandate racial profiling by police and others in an attempt to enforce federal immigration law raises ongoing concerns about the civil rights of all Latinos. Extending back two decades to California's Proposition 187, MALDEF has been at the forefront of challenging the constitutionality of such laws through federal litigation. Our efforts continue today as we seek to identify and challenge each of the new legislative means being used to target the growing Latino population.

At the same time, MALDEF's long-standing work to increase equity of opportunity in education is needed today more than ever. With Latinos representing one in five public school children nationwide, and one in four of those of younger age, our nation must address our ongoing inability to eliminate the educational achievement gap. Through litigation and policy advocacy at the federal and state level, MALDEF continues to seek policy change to enhance equal educational opportunity from pre-K through higher education. If the Supreme Court further limits affirma-

tive action in university admissions through the currently pending *Fisher* case, these efforts will take on even greater significance.

NCRP: *Litigation is a key part of the organization's work to promote social change. How has this approach to advocacy furthered MALDEF's mission and positively affected the lives of Latinos?*

MALDEF: Throughout its history, MALDEF has had great success in litigating to defend and promote the civil rights of all Latinos living in the United States. We have successfully challenged laws restricting the right of access to education. For example, in *Plyler v. Doe*, a 1982 Supreme Court decision in a MALDEF case established the constitutional right to a free public education to every child regardless of immigration status. We have also successfully struck down laws restricting the free speech rights of immigrant day laborers and laws, like Arizona's SB 1070, that seek to improperly pursue separate state immigration regulations.

Through our voting rights litigation, we have successfully challenged discriminatory redistricting decisions and challenged at-large election systems that serve to exclude meaningful Latino participation. For example, in 2006, MALDEF prevailed in a case

that went to the Supreme Court, *LU-LAC v. Perry*, and our victory resulted in an additional Latino congressional district in Texas. We are currently engaged in similar cases following the 2011 redistricting process.

Finally, through our education litigation, we have successfully obtained significant additional support for Latino public school students throughout the nation. In cases challenging education resource distribution in states like Arizona, California, Illinois and Texas, MALDEF's litigation has positively affected the educational experiences of millions of Latino students and their classmates.

NCRP: *What's next for MALDEF?*

MALDEF: As the nation's Latino population grows in every region of the country, MALDEF looks to expand its regional office network to better serve the civil rights legal advocacy needs of the nation's largest minority population. With regional offices currently in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Antonio and Washington, D.C., and smaller satellite offices in Atlanta and Sacramento, MALDEF will be seeking the resources to expand its regional presence into the Southeast and Northwest and to strengthen its services in all of the states where we do not have a physical office. ■



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