

The legacy of longform: A retrospective on the Responsive Philanthropy journal

By Suhasini Yeeda

When the first *Responsive Philanthropy* (RP) journal was published, it did not have a fancy cover, website presence or social media platform on which to promote its content. It was born from the need to really dive into difficult or misunderstood subjects and expand the means of how language can create impact. Sure – it did not have the fancy frills of modern technology. What it did have, however, is what it still offers today – one of the nation’s few platforms for longform narrative within the philanthropic sector. A unique space for the best actors in our little world to share trade secrets, hail wisdom from lived experience over data points, see things from perspectives beyond our own and learn from the very best. It’s for folks in local settings to share their experiences as they undeniably relate to the national conversation.



Suhasini Yeeda

While nonprofit websites, like our own, carry the strength of efficiently speaking to and about the sector in 800 words or less, sometimes we need more space to tell the whole story. Inside our flagship publication, you’ll hear from real experts about the most pressing issues facing our sector. *RP* and NCRP broaden the defini-

tion of expertise beyond data alone and value lived experience as a vital source of wisdom for the sector. In choosing depth over immediacy, *RP* prioritizes thoughtful reflection over speedy rapid-response statements. Longform storytelling becomes an art in itself, creating space for nuanced meaningful dialogue at a time that rarely allows for thoughtful reflection.

Our journal has covered a myriad of themes. In recent years, we have tackled issues like [abortion and reproductive justice](#), [the climate change movement and its funders](#), [the growing threats to our democracy](#), and [the power of antifascist storytelling](#). The increasing importance of voice, the very real threats we are facing in losing our rights to free speech, and how much we have to say during increasingly unprecedented times are not lost on us. As writer and activist Arundhati Roy said,

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Six Local Groups Assessing Philanthropy

IMPACT FELT IN CHICAGO

A Special Issue

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Responsive Philanthropy
The voice of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy

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Responsive Philanthropy
THE NCRP QUARTERLY | SPRING 2023

Funding Fair Voices of Faith

By the Rev. Dr. C. Wilton Gallo

On Sept. 31, 2021, nearly 3,000 people converged on the Denver Islamic Center mosque. Siddiqi, Jiwon, Christiana, Huda, and others embraced the building, holding hands. They came not to vent their anger about the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon but to stand with Muslim Americans in their community in the face of racism, racial profiling and religious discrimination. More than 40 local religious groups participated in an interfaith vigil, according to the Rev. Bill Krizan, pastor of Denver's Cameron United Methodist Church, and president of The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado, which organized the event. During comments and prayers to various deities, the Rev. Orlando of the Denver Buddhist Temple said 1 was born in a concentration camp for Japanese Americans during World War II. We don't want American Muslims to feel the same racism we feel then," the Denver Post reported.

In Colorado Springs, just a two-hour drive from Denver stands the national headquarters of Dr. James Dobson's media empire. Focus on the Family, Clipping their

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—Sahasini Yeeda

“there is no such thing as the voiceless, there are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.” At NCRP, we take our responsibility as a leader in our field seriously to create space for voices that are too often silenced. By intentionally amplifying their perspectives, we not only broaden the conversation, but also encourage changemakers with greater resources, visibility and institutional safety to do the same.

A LOOK BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF RESPONSIVE PHILANTHROPY

RP was born from the principle that philanthropy is at its best when it listens to and learns from the groups it seeks to serve. NCRP’s members – funders and nonprofits – recognized the need to organize locally and do better. From the begin-

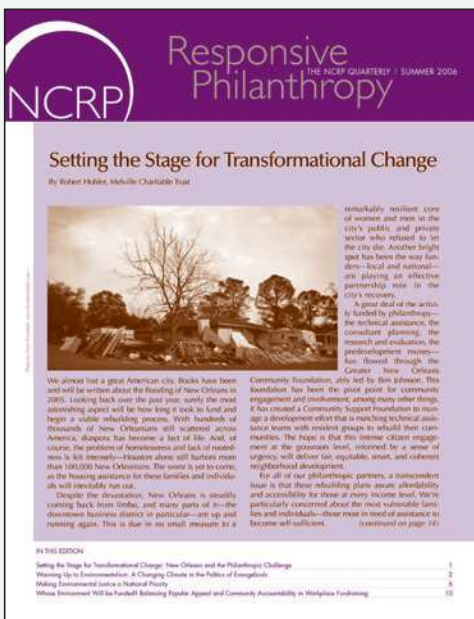
ning, the journal has amplified frontline voices by inviting stories from the field and showcasing them across the sector.

RP illuminated emerging practices like the federation model, which highlights how local communities are responding to challenges when their resources are aligned with their realities. It showcased how fully funded community foundations operate differently and more effectively through community-led change.

RP served to fill a gap in the philanthropy ecosystem around accountability, calling out bad practices and lifting up exemplary grant making. It was also a window into a sometimes-secret world of philanthropy for nonprofits. It pulled back the veil and showed how philanthropy worked or didn’t work for nonprofits. This was especially true for organizations

led by and representing those with the least wealth, power and opportunity. This was the founding vision for RP and NCRP. We know that nonprofits have historically gotten plenty of money from philanthropy. The missing piece was bringing an explicit class, gender, race, migrant and climate justice lens to that process in order to question whether philanthropy’s “business as usual” is neutral. That was and remains a cornerstone that we explore through RP that many others do not. It made the issue plain and understandable.

It’s amazing to see that the journal’s first objective of organizing philanthropy has now inspired a career field that includes formal trainings, academic programs, and a new generation of practitioners committed to creating a more responsive and equitable world.



Preserved in the archives of the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University, *RP* acts as both record and roadmap. Its history reminds us that philanthropy's role is not neutral, but as a provocateur and partner with the social movements pushing for justice today and in the generations to come.

OUR AUTHORS AS ANCESTORS

We could not produce this journal without the talent and expertise of our authors. The wide perspectives we publish, including executive directors of nonprofit organizations, frontline organizers and activists, funder intermediaries, and NCRP's own board members and former staff mates, also help us build a fair and true-to-form journal.

RP authors are often taking time out of their already-busy careers and personal lives to really dive into these longform articles, and they do it all with great passion as well as courage. For some of our nonprofit and frontline organizer authors, they take risks to write honestly about their expertise within philanthropy and speak truth to power in a way that should be inspiring to those with more privilege who are cowering in a moment when they

have less to lose. Each of these articles, in their own little way, builds a blueprint for our sector to – simply put – do better.

We must not allow the temptation toward cowardice during ugly regimes like the one we are facing to win. Instead, we must run so far in the opposite direction that we create something so beautiful and free that we can really be proud of one day.

Our hope is that *RP*'s authors can look back in 50 years to these articles and see manifestations of the world we will build.

THE FUTURE OF NCRP AND RESPONSIVE PHILANTHROPY

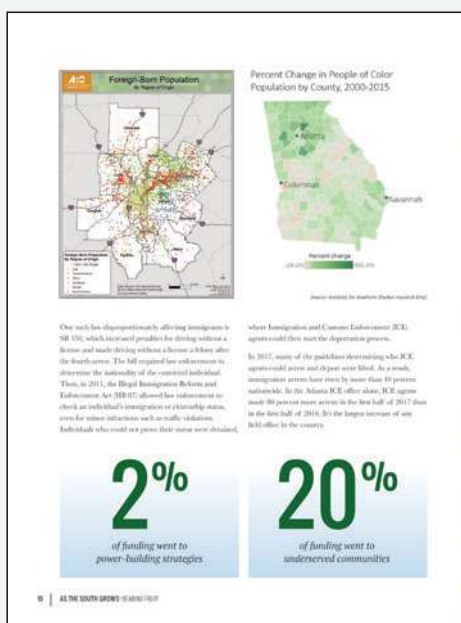
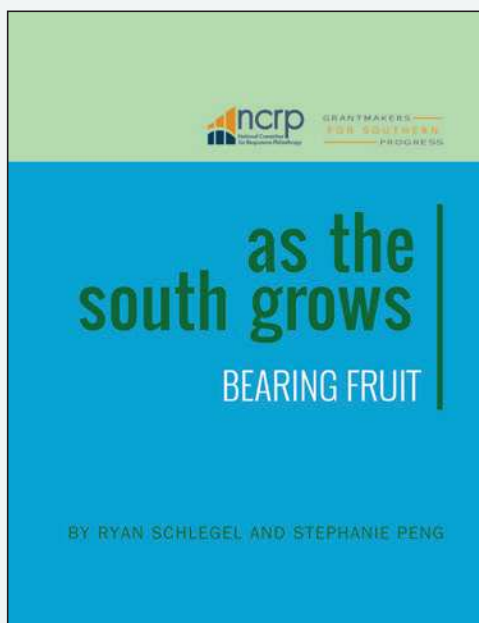
Philanthropy must continue to progress – not retreat. Founded in 1976 on the eve of the Reagan administration, NCRP emerged during a period of retrenchment that mirrors the challenges we face today. Then and now, social justice movements and the communities they serve have been under threat, and philanthropy has been asked to respond with courage rather than restraint.

NCRP has many examples of courageous narrative in our legacy. “As the South Grows” is a series of reports that addressed

decades-long disparity in grantmaking in the South. Power Moves – still one of our most-viewed resources – encourages foundations to leverage their full power for equity and justice. Without the foundation of reports like “The Strategic Philanthropy of Conservative Foundations” we would not have the success of one of our most recent initiatives “Regressive Philanthropy,” where NCRP showcased how philanthropic giving designed to resist progress, maintain inequities, and ultimately take us backwards as a society has played a significant role shaping the authoritarian present. “Black Funding Denied” is our report critiquing community foundation support for Black communities, has a throughline to our more recent report Cracks in the Foundation, Philanthropy's Role in Reparations for the DMV.

Our reports, infographic data drops, blog articles and organizational newsletter are all done with courage and in spite of adversity or who sits in office. The *RP* journal is just one of the many ways we use our voice and the voices of the communities we serve to convince philanthropy to do better.

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lenging philanthropy to be more accountable, equitable and community led. While its form has evolved – from newsletter to both printed and digital – it remains a vital space for learning from the sector’s best. In whatever form it takes in the future, we will remain steady in that mission – we can do better.

I am a firm believer that deep thoughts become clear words, and clear words have the power to create meaningful and impactful actions. NCRP is grateful to have multiple mediums to do that work: our immensely talented research team and the data we are known for, webinars and conference attendance where our movement leaders conduct and attend panels, and reports and publications that have helped built our reputation as a thought leader in this space. The keen perspective we offer is unique, provocative and not scared to explicitly name the difficult things.

We believe that longform narrative has the power to start and deepen dialogue to influence change makers and power holders. There are many vehicles for change, and no matter what form NCRP and *RP* take in the next 50 years, we will have the courage to challenge norms that don’t serve us, listen to and amplify the experts who hold the wisdom to know how to, and to be the conduit to change that we have been for 50 years.

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Select Publications

The Rise of Regressive Philanthropy in the 21st Century.

Research from the National Committee of Responsive Philanthropy explores the increased investment of regressive funding in recent years.

A Time for Solutions: Resources that Make Climate Justice Work

NCRP kicks off its Climate Justice Funder Intermediary Series with a special two-part blog. We hear from Gloria Walton of The Solutions Project on the creative and intentional resourcing that make the climate justice ecosystem work.

What Remains After Roe: The Crisis Pregnancy Center Empire in Appalachia

Reproductive Access and Gendered Violence team examines how the crisis pregnancy centers in the Appalachian area point to a larger national strategy by the anti-abortion movement.

visit: ncrp.org

STATE OF FOUNDATION FUNDING FOR THE PRO-IMMIGRANT MOVEMENT

A MOVEMENT INVESTMENT PROJECT BRIEF

A future that is inclusive, just and welcoming to all is not just aspirational, it is essential and within reach. Our country's success is rooted in the success of our communities. Immigrants are an integral part of our national resilience, vibrancy, accomplishments and growth.

This future is also increasingly in peril as immigrant communities face growing threats on all fronts. But responding to these attacks is a vibrant movement comprised of a diverse ecosystem of individuals and organizations nationwide fighting for human rights, equal opportunity, justice and full participation in society for all people regardless of legal status.

Philanthropy can invest in this frontline, intersectional movement and the thriving future it is fighting for by ensuring that it has the resources needed to succeed.

THE PRO-IMMIGRANT MOVEMENT UNDER-RESOURCED AND UNDER THREAT

According to Foundation Center data, between 2011 and 2015, barely 1% of all money granted by the 1,000 largest U.S. foundations was intended to benefit immigrants and refugees.



In practice, this means that the organizations and leaders responding to the current crises have been under-resourced for years and now must drive their efforts full throttle while running on empty. National networks and local grassroots groups focused on organizing have been particularly underfunded.

WHAT IS A MOVEMENT?

"While there is no formula for a social movement, they usually share a few features. It involves people who are mobilized around issues they care about, and who share a powerful vision about what is wrong with society and how it can be improved. These people are engaged in diverse activities that are not under any one leader's control, and that lead to a change in attitudes, practices and public policy."

JEAN HARRISTY AND DEEPA BHARGAVA
"Moving about the Right" in the Nation

A REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR RESPONSIVE PHILANTHROPY



MOVING A PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA: THE STRATEGIC PHILANTHROPY OF CONSERVATIVE FOUNDATIONS

July 1997

