

**Panel on Philanthropy
In Troubled Times**
March 14, 2003

Moderator

John Taylor
President and CEO
National Community
Reinvestment Coalition

Panelists

Rick Cohen
Executive Director
National Committee for
Responsive Philanthropy

Kae Dakin, President
Regional Association of
Washington Grantmakers

Terri Freeman, President
Community Foundation for
the National Capital Region

Mark Kramer
Managing Director
Foundation Strategy Group

Gara LaMarche
Vice President and
Director of U.S. Programs
Open Society Institute

Madeline Lee
Executive Director
New York Foundation

Milton Little, Vice President
National Urban League

George McCarthy
Program Officer
Ford Foundation

William Merritt
Executive Director
National Black United Fund

Adam Meyerson, President
The Philanthropy
Roundtable

Andrew Plepler
Senior Vice President
Fannie Mae Foundation

Barbara Taveras
Executive Director
The Hazen Foundation

The Rev. John Vaughn
Executive Director
Peace Development Fund

Mark Willis
Executive Vice President
Chase Community
Development Group

Panel Ponders 'Philanthropy In Troubled Times'

By Rachel Maleh



Barbara Taveras of the Hazen Foundation (right) emphasized the importance of long-term foundation impact. Also pictured are Gara LaMarche of the Open Society Institute (left) and George McCarthy of the Ford Foundation (center).

At its annual conference last March, the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) hosted its yearly philanthropy forum, in collaboration with NCRP. "Philanthropy in Troubled Times" was the topic.

Community groups, led by NCRC President and CEO John Taylor, asked what they could expect from foundation spending in 2003 and 2004.

"Economic growth is the answer," stated Adam Meyerson, president of the conservative Philanthropy Roundtable. "A strong, vibrant private sector is essential for generating the wealth that makes philanthropy possible and the income that makes government revenue possible."

But how can growth be achieved effectively and equitably? And what role should foundations play?

George McCarthy of the Ford Foundation said, "While we might all applaud the idea of economic growth, I really think it is well outside the reach of foundations."

Other panelists agreed that foundations' limited resources should be leveraged more strategically.

"The most important use of philanthropic resources at a time like this is to support those people working for some vision of social change," argued Gara LaMarche of the Open Society Institute. "What we are going through right now makes the point that politics matter. We need to support those people changing the country's priorities."

Working toward change, however, requires foundations to invest in organizing and advocacy.

"The philanthropy field seems to operate in the short versus long term," stated Barbara Taveras

of the Hazen Foundation. "Many times, foundations want to fund programs. Advocacy and organizing are not programs; they are processes that develop human capital and leadership. As a funder, you have to have the flexibility and the vision to understand that you might have to wait seven to 10 years to see some tangible results."

To improve their long-term effectiveness, NCRP's Rick Cohen recommended that foundations fund advocacy, strengthen nonprofits by providing operating support and speak up for economic and social justice issues.

The audience concurred.

One thing everyone seemed to agree on is that the challenges abound for philanthropy in these troubled times. ○

Rachel Maleh is vice president for communications and marketing at the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (www.ncrc.org), representing 600 community groups advancing economic justice and fair access to credit, capital and financial services.



Panelists William Merritt of the National Black United Fund (left) and NCRP's Rick Cohen. Cohen observed, "Nonprofits are facing a triple whammy. First, they have less resources. Second, they receive less government money, especially at the state level. And third, today's economy is bringing more people to these nonprofits that need their services."