

The Hidden Costs of Cause Marketing

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Stanford Social Innovation Review

Summer 2009

...Why amplify the voices of those who suffer? As we have seen in movements for workers' rights, African-Americans' civil rights, and women's and gender rights in the United States, when the aggrieved speak and the more powerful listen, policies, political processes, and public perceptions can change. Social movements are one of the principal ways in which "collectivities can give voice to their grievances and concerns about the rights, welfare, and well-being of themselves and others." 10 And social movements-such as the American Revolution and the abolition of slavery-have brought about some of the most significant developments and changes in human history.

For philanthropy to give voice to those who suffer, it needs to support grassroots social movements. Since at least the 1950s, a small but persistent group of foundations and donors has practiced social change philanthropy through its unfettered support of nonprofit groups and grassroots associations. These nonprofit organizations and grassroots associations, in turn, support the movements that give voice to the marginalized. This is in line with Tracy Gary's challenge to donors, in *Inspired Philanthropy*, to practice a philanthropy that "has a role in changing the inequities of society" by joining donor interests and experiences with needs in the community. The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy likewise calls on foundations to dedicate at least 25 percent of their grant dollars to advocacy, organizing, and civic engagement that promotes equity, opportunity, and justice.

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