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Filling in NoVo's void

By Brandi Collins-Calhoun

The foundation's decision is the latest example of philanthropy abandoning Black women and girls

Many of us painfully remember that abrupt moment in May when we received the news that Peter and Jennifer Buffett had eliminated NoVo Foundation's gendered violence program and let go of most of the program's staff.

I was floored by the announcement; more disappointed than surprised really. Establishing a relationship with foundation leaders was going to be key to the work that brought me to work at NCRP.

It wasn't just because they had the largest footprint for gendered violence prevention in the sector (96% to be exact). It wasn't just because they had been prioritizing gendered violence, securing 37% of all the domestic funding for women's rights and services, specifically for Black women.

It was because the staff at NoVo were holding their work in such a

necessary way that it fueled hope that philanthropy could really show up for Black women and girls.

Coming from the frontlines where organizers were often underpaid and underappreciated, it shocked me to know this funding even existed. That NoVo Foundation staff were aware enough of past issues to pay Black women to help lead their strategy.

IT WASN'T JUST RHETORIC – I SAW IT WITH MY VERY OWN EYES.

In my first few weeks at NCRP my colleagues urged me to register for a conference that was around the corner, the Grantmakers for Girls of Color Conference (G4GC). Still new to the role, nothing my colleagues could have said would have prepared me for what I was getting into.

I arrived, understandably nervous, in New Orleans, a city I had never been in, with a network of people I have never met.

Yet, stepping into the hotel ballroom full of folks of color felt like walking into the warmest group hug. Familiar faces from the frontlines let me know I was in good company without a single touch, but the true affirmation came when the panels began.

I sat in awe when Tynesha McHarris, who was then still a program officer at NoVo, grounded us in quotes from poet and activist Nikki Giovanni:



Peter and Jennifer Buffett

“Life is only about the I-tried-to-do. I don’t mind the failure, but I can’t imagine that I’d forgive myself if I didn’t try.”

“Mistakes are a fact of life. It is the response to the error that counts.”

The quotes at once affirmed the decision to come to New Orleans and the work that lay ahead of me within the sector. Prior to that, between imposter syndrome and premediated defeat, I wasn’t quite sure how I would settle into my role at NCRP.

Yes, I was excited about bringing an activist mentality to the work needed to ensure equitable funding of our movements and communities.

Yet there was also a deep reservoir of hesitation, as I wondered whether I could safely insert my whole self -- Black, queer, woman -- in the often perceived as respectable, but still overwhelmingly systematically racist, sector known as philanthropy.

McHarris continued her talk by uplifting the committed work her colleagues were doing. But before passing the mic, she named the reality that NoVo and their partners were mindful of when creating the space we were in.

They curated that space with the understanding that they could not commit themselves to this work without creating a safe space for ourselves, and that G4GC was a commitment to provide a safe space for us to do this work and space to practice liberation safely and unpack all we hold in this work.

As silly as it may sound, those first 5 minutes of the panel was all the affirmation that I needed to feel safe in this work.

I found so much solace in those words and held on to them when I left the conference. They carried me over the next few months, anytime my imposter syndrome decided to attend a Zoom call or my anxieties around philanthropy got too heavy, I would go back to that moment and feel just a bit lighter.

To see that this kind of money was going towards the welfare and -- dare I say -- the survival of Black women and girls continued to be a liberating moment in the weeks that followed.

I immediately began thinking about the programs and resources I needed as a Black girl and later a Black woman. What if the spaces that were supposed to keep me safe had access to these kinds of funds and support? What could this kind of funding mean for my daughter and her future?

NoVo was supposed to be the face of a sector that was beginning to listen and learn from the painful lessons of the past. For more than decade, they had invested in a host of projects for women and girls that worked on replacing systems of exploitation and domination with local partnerships centered on the most impacted communities.

Their Initiative to Empower Adolescent Girls emphasized building the capacity of girls to reach their full potential and shifting social and cultural norms so that girls are valued, while efforts like their Initiative to End Violence Against Girls and Women sought to achieve long-term policy and cultural change, while building the leadership of the most impacted communities.

They believed that by supporting not just the goals of movements, but also their leaders, we could achieve a more equitable and just change in the world.

That is why NCRP gave them an Impact Award in 2013. As we wrote back then, “the foundation understands that solving the most intractable problems in the world requires mass mobilization.”

That was before Peter and Jennifer Buffett chose to prioritize their white wealth over my Black body.

DOES PHILANTHROPY EVEN VALUE MY LIFE?

That day in May was another personal and professional reminder that way too often, my safety is a one-dimensional, optional effort for philanthropy.

The murder of freedom fighter Oluwatoyin Salau and the back-to-back homicides of trans women Dominique Fells and Riah Milton. The illegal raid that killed Breonna Taylor. The unconscionable hysterectomies of detained immigrant women in Georgia. The disproportionate percentage of the economy’s essential jobs held by women that puts them in danger of contracting and dying from COVID-19. Not a day goes by where women, femmes and girls -- especially Black ones -- are in the crosshairs of harm by men and systems of power.

Even without a pandemic or all the events of the past year, the Buffets’ announcement made little sense. Their selfish actions unceremoniously terminated not just the work of intelligent and innovative Black women, but also set back the work of those who were actively trying to renew the faith of those impacted by a funding pattern that until recently seemed more interested in harming us rather than keeping us safe.

A longstanding funding pattern that fuels a lack of trust that many Black institutions and women have for philanthropy to this day.

While the traumatic residue that philanthropy’s past broken promises has left on the movement can’t be worsened or even improved by one action of one funder, the forced exit of NoVo out of the reproductive access and gendered violence movement is still significant.

When will funders make the necessary long-term investments that will stop the erasure of our trans kindred? When will Black bodies stop being just data points and Black narratives become enough?

Understandably, NoVo’s own grantees have been hesitant to talk publicly about the situation, fearful of being perceived as being willing to bite the funder who helps keep the doors open and the bills paid. (Disclosure: NCRP is a NoVo Foundation grantee.)

Still, those who did speak to me were not nearly as surprised as some of the rest of us. While they all named having a

positive experience with the NoVo Foundation staff, they had inherited too much trauma from other philanthropic interactions and foundations to think that these positive experiences could last long.

Similar to grantees, waking up and finding out that all this amazing work would be discontinued was such a familiar feeling. I wish I could say it was the first time white greed stole my joy, but I would be lying if I did.

HOW THE WORK GOES ON

Current NoVo grantees await the Buffetts' commitment to a responsible exit accompanied by an explicit strategy to tie-off the existing grants. Their silence continues to add weight to the uncertainty of funding for the vital work current grantees are holding.

So, what can those gatekeeping power and white wealth do in this moment to make the weight Black women hold in this moment a little lighter? While some foundations have offered heartfelt excuses and virally insightful Black Lives Matter posts, my hope for the future is rooted in the Black women and femmes that continue working at repairing the cracks that white wealth has created.

There is a need for new funders to commit approximately \$95 million dollars towards combating gendered violence in order to fill the gap in funding the Buffetts have created. However, we know that there's more funding and action needed to invest in the safety of Black women and girls.

To start, don't just follow their lead. Fund their vision.

Efforts like the Black Girl Freedom Fund, which is challenging the sector to invest \$1 billion dollars over the next 10 years explicitly in the safety and survival of Black women and femmes.

Co-founders like G4GC's Monique W. Morris and Girls for Gender Equity's Joanne N. Smith and outside supporters like McHarris remind us all that we still have champions that will not shirk from their moral responsibility to serve

current and future generations.

That "all social justice efforts benefit when we place value in Black girls' and women's lives and leadership."

They do so not because philanthropy has earned it, but because human dignity and rights demands it. That we all deserve to live in spaces where we are free from harm and free to be safe.

On my worst days, the thing that keeps me going is knowing that I get to wake up the next day and be a Black woman.

Sure, that may sound to some people as super vain and radical. However, it's that mindset that keeps me and so many others who do this work most grounded.

When every system is rooted in harming me and the movements that claim to fight for my Black life erase me, what choice is there but to find the beauty in my existence?

My survival, my safety and how people like me unapologetically take up space, are all true acts of resistance in the

shadows of the people and systems that root for or actively enable our demise.

The truth is that this past year – and those that follow – may continue to leave *me* struggling to find a sense of safety in the sector, on the frontlines or even in my own neighborhood.

Yet, because of the work of so many of my colleagues, I hold fast to the promise that I made to myself when I first became an organizer. It's that I would not just make my well-being and protection my highest priority. It's that I would also expect it be everyone else's.

Honestly, how do you seek to achieve Black liberation without investing and prioritizing the safety of Black women and girls? How can any of us be free, if one of us isn't?

Peter and Jennifer, we are still waiting for an answer. ■

Brandi Collins-Calhoun is NCRP's senior movement engagement associate.



The National Committee for Responsible Philanthropy congratulates the NoVo Foundation on being nominated for a 2013 NCRP IMPACT Award.

NoVo Foundation
create. change.



In 2013, NoVo Foundation received one of the inaugural NCRP Impact Awards for being an "exemplary grantmaker and leader among the country's large private foundations," largely due to its funding for Black women and girls.

Donors and foundations are increasingly supporting movements

By Aaron Dorfman

The best philanthropic initiatives from 2020 can show us the path for giving in 2021

It's easy to get depressed about the state of the world this year. The coronavirus pandemic, racial injustice, wildfires and the breakdown of democratic norms have many of us feeling down. But 2 things are giving me hope these days: the massive demonstrations for racial justice and philanthropy's increasing willingness to fund movements.

Millions of Americans have taken to the streets this year to demand racial justice. Maurice Mitchell and Ash-Lee Woodward Henderson – who are co-leading a great new initiative called The Frontline¹ – estimate that 26 million people have been part of the protests, making this the largest mass movement since the Civil Rights Movement.

You might be surprised to hear this from someone who is usually highly critical of the sector, but I think philanthropy has come through in some major ways this year. Foundations and high-net-worth donors are moving real money to the organizations driving change. This is different than with the Civil Rights Movement, when only 4 foundations really stepped up.

Here are what I see as some of the bright spots:

WOMEN DONORS ARE LEADING THE WAY

MacKenzie Scott's first round of giving² was the best initial foray into philanthropy by a billionaire that I've ever observed. She did a ton of things exactly right with that first \$1.7 billion in grants: She gave a huge sum of money



MacKenzie Scott

quickly, prioritized equity and funded amazing organizations that strive to make our nation more just.

Importantly, she didn't try to get groups to work on her preferred campaigns, but instead gave unrestricted gifts. There's a lot to celebrate, and I hope other donors will follow her lead.

Susan Sandler stepped up in a big way this year, too. The giving of the Sandler Foundation has been fantastic for a long time. In fact, we awarded the foundation an NCRP Impact Award³ in 2016.

In September, Sandler announced⁴ she would invest \$200 million in racial justice organizations. Importantly, she communicates incredibly clearly why she believes that power, not persuasion, is key to transforming society. She's also prioritizing investments in the South and Southwest.

NCRP's *As the South Grows*⁵ reports with Grantmakers for Southern Progress

show the importance of funding in the South. Sandler rightly understands that we have to invest in those regions that have historically been underfunded by philanthropy.

LARGE PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS ARE MOVING HUGE SUMS TO RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Ford Foundation made headlines⁶ in June when they decided to issue social impact bonds so they could spend \$1 billion more in 2020 and 2021.

Hilary Pennington, the foundation's executive vice president of programs, shared with me by email that, "A big category of social impact bond grants will be to support organizations working on racial justice. At least \$180 million from the proceeds of the bond will support racial justice advocacy in the U.S. Together with regular grantmaking, this doubles our annual commitment to this work to more than \$330 million over 2020 and 2021."

Additionally, Pennington told me that the foundation's grants for Black, Indigenous and people of color-led arts organizations "was made possible entirely by the social impact bond." The total investment in those organizations is \$160 million, and \$85 million of that is coming from Ford.

Pennington also noted that the foundation's \$10 million investment in Puerto Rico⁷, a part of the U.S. often ignored by philanthropy, was also made possible by the proceeds from the bond issue. (NCRP, Hispanics in Philanthropy

and others have called on philanthropy to increase support for Puerto Rico⁸.)

In June, the Andrew Mellon Foundation announced⁹ it would prioritize social justice in all of its grantmaking. This is a huge and welcome evolution. The foundation has been giving about \$300 million in grants annually in recent years and is increasing that significantly in 2020 and 2021.

Open Society Foundations is also backing movements in a big way. The foundation announced¹⁰ in July a new influx of \$220 million for racial justice, mostly for Black-led organizations. (OSF received an NCRP Impact Award¹¹ in 2015.)

Back in May, Omidyar Network pledged¹² \$35 million to help workers build power. The shift in the philanthropy of the Omidyars the past few years is really exciting.

Recently, the Surdna Foundation announced¹³ it would spend an additional \$36 million for racial justice over the next 3 years. It's the first time in its 103-year history the board has increased the foundation's grantmaking.

"We're boosting our spending by 29% over the next 3 years because our board members believe that our resources could make an outsized difference now, when the U.S. is experiencing a reckoning on race and there's a period of heightened public will to address systemic racism," said Don Chen, president of Surdna Foundation. "For us, the most challenging part was determining how to spend more during a time of great economic uncertainty, so we deliberated over the pros and cons of different levels of increased spending and eventually agreed to step up our grantmaking in a strong way."

SMALLER FOUNDATIONS ARE MAKING BIG MOVES, TOO.

I've been impressed with the grantmaking of several smaller foundations, too.

Wallace Global Fund, Hill-Snow-

don Foundation, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation and others have increased spending and are funding movements and community organizing. (Hill-Snowdon received an NCRP Impact Award¹⁴ in 2014.)

Meyer Memorial Trust (MMT) made a \$25 million commitment to Justice Oregon for Black Lives¹⁵. (MMT received an NCRP Impact Award¹⁶ in 2017.)

Nellie Mae Education Foundation announced¹⁷ an additional \$20 million in funding to combat anti-Black racism and for COVID-19 relief.

The Libra Foundation was one of the first funders to announce they were doubling grant spending in 2020 in response to this urgent moment. They had been planning to give \$25 million and they increased that to \$50 million, noting their "deep commitment to supporting organizations led by and building power with those most impacted by systemic oppression."

Then, in September, Libra spearheaded the creation of the Democracy Frontlines Fund¹⁸, which is providing \$36 million "to fund Black-led organizers fighting for free and fair elections and working to defund prisons and police." The funding comes from 10 foundations, including Libra, William and

Flora Hewlett Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, Schmidt Family Foundation, Sobrato Philanthropies and others. (Libra received an NCRP Impact Award¹⁹ in 2019.)

The Kolibri Foundation, a new family foundation, made a commitment²⁰ to fund the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) with \$500,000 a year for 10 years.

"We decided to fund M4BL with a decade long legacy grant. Our hope was to allow the movement to continue to build towards Black liberation and secure their base for the long term," said Eileen Farbman. "Our family believes M4BL is uniquely positioned to be a catalyst for change. We believe M4BL's vision will benefit all of us, our children, grandchildren and build a more beautiful world."

EVEN COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS ARE FUNDING RACIAL JUSTICE

Community foundations have historically been risk-averse in their funding, choosing to fund services rather than organizing and advocacy. I'm pleased to see, however, that a few community foundations are stepping up in this urgent moment.

The Silicon Valley Community Foundation is encouraging their Donor Ad-



Demonstrators in Temecula, California, protest the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Foundations and wealthy donors have shown an increased willingness to fund racial justice movements in recent months.

vised Fund holders to support local Black-led organizations. They include a list of these organizations²¹ on their website with easy links to donate. So far, more than \$3 million has been given through this effort.

The Cleveland Foundation is investing \$2.5 million in Black-led and Black-serving social change organizations through its Cleveland Black Futures Fund²².

The Greater New Orleans Foundation is investing \$3 million in racial equity work through its Greater Together Fund for Racial Equity²³.

I expect more community foundations will follow their lead later this year and next.

IMPERATIVES FOR GIVING IN 2021

These examples of great giving in 2020 offer us lessons for what is needed from donors and foundations in 2021. Here are 5 of the most important things funders can do:

1. **Increase grant spending.** Many nonprofits are reeling from the economic impact of the pandemic. Additionally, the opportunities for winning significant policy change in 2021 are substantial. Increased spending is essential.
2. **Make long-term commitments to social and racial justice work.** We might well have some important wins in 2021, but long-term support for movements is needed if we want to truly build a better society.
3. **Invest in organizations led by Black people, Indigenous people, other people of color and immigrants.** For too long, philanthropy has underinvested in these organizations. This useful guide²⁴ from ABFE and Bridgespan can help you get started.
4. **Give general operating support.** Organizations always need flexible dollars, and especially so in this chaotic time.

5. Invest in the South. If we don't fund social change in the South, our nation won't move forward.

Philanthropy can contribute in meaningful ways to building a more fair and just society. If foundations and major donors make the right moves this year and next, it will make a tremendous difference for those with the least wealth, power and opportunity. ■

Aaron Dorfman is president and CEO of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy.

NCRP resources Power Moves, Movement Investment Project and As the South Grows can help donors and foundations learn more about how to do this work well.

Disclosure: Many of the foundations mentioned in this piece support NCRP financially.

Notes

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Performative philanthropy and the cost of silence

(continued from page 1)

how internally devised “solutions” will affect Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities.

While working at the foundation, I made well-documented efforts to highlight these concerns for members of the CZI leadership team, all while contending with numerous incidents of racial discrimination, including pay inequity, threats to my job security from senior leaders and acts of retaliation made against me.

While these incidents made my experience at CZI contentious and oppressive, I was equally disturbed by accounts from Black colleagues who were facing similar issues at the foundation. These are not my stories to tell, but I must note that the most egregious acts of bias and discrimination were those perpetuated against Black women, who were consistently undervalued, underutilized and treated with callous disregard and disrespect.

Noting that my previous efforts to see these issues brought to light had gone unanswered, on Aug. 20, 2019, I met with Priscilla Chan. I told her that incidents of racial discrimination were occurring at CZI and requested that she investigate these issues further.

My appeal was met with the all-too-familiar sophistry of a leader who wishes to avoid responsibility by minimizing the experiences of their employees. Although she initially expressed concern regarding my statements, she quickly veered the conversation toward a broader discussion of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) practices.

Priscilla explained to me that “DEI may look different for each of us” – seeming to imply that claims of discrimination could simply be matters of misinterpretation. I countered this line of reasoning, stating that CZI’s DEI strategy was inadequate and amounted to a tokenizing quota-based approach to diversity.



I explained that, while CZI had successfully recruited Black talent, it had failed to empower and integrate the perspectives of Black employees into the work – a point supported by multiple engagement surveys that indicated Black employees suffered a significantly lower sense of inclusion and belonging at CZI, and further evidenced by the exponentially higher rate at which Black employees left the organization.

Knowing that I had only been afforded 10 minutes to discuss these issues, I came prepared to offer a course of action, suggesting that Chan prioritize hiring a seasoned DEI professional with a proven record of success working with similarly stunted organizations.

She pushed back on this idea, indicating that she preferred to select a more junior individual for the role, out of a desire to “give them the opportunity to develop in the role and in their understanding of these issues. In the same way we’ve been able to develop you on the Criminal Justice team.”

This patronizing comment told me all I needed to know about my employer and confirmed the old adage: A fish rots from the head.

While on the Criminal Justice Reform team at CZI, I was paid significantly less than non-Black colleagues in the department, less than employees across the organization who held similar responsibilities and less than the originally advertised salary for the position I held.

Days after joining the Criminal Justice Reform department, I was warned

by a senior member of the team that I should avoid pushing for grantmaking strategies that centered racial equity, as Mark Zuckerberg and Priscilla Chan did not believe race was relevant to the issue of mass incarceration. I was told that previous attempts to educate the couple on this matter had contributed to a former employee being terminated.

Every indication I received while working at CZI told me that this was a place that did not value my professional expertise, identity or lived experience and that if I hoped to keep my job, I would need to suppress my values, beliefs and opinions.

Despite having joined CZI with substantial nonprofit and philanthropic experience, Chan’s comment underscored her perception of me as someone who was enjoying the good fortune of “developing” my talents at the foundation. This stood in stark contrast to the reality of working at CZI, which had revealed itself to be an extractive and exploitative environment for me and numerous Black employees.

I left the conversation unsatisfied with her responses and her lack of leadership, but remained hopeful that she would take appropriate action to address the matters of racial discrimination.

That hope would prove to be naive. Following our discussion, no follow-up meeting was scheduled, no HR representative reached out to me, and no one intervened on behalf of myself or my colleagues. Nothing was done.

CZI’S BLACK EMPLOYEES SEND A LETTER TO PRISCILLA CHAN

I cannot speak to why Chan did not take our conversation seriously, but I know that her negligence allowed inexcusable stress and harm to continue against Black employees. Further, I know such negligence is not the mark of someone who truly believes and understands that Black Lives Matter.

As reported by *The Washington Post*¹ in August, the issues of racial bias and discrimination at CZI came to a head when CZI's Black employee resource group sent a letter to Priscilla Chan.

In the letter, the collective body of Black employees outlined the systemic racism, discrimination and anti-Blackness present at CZI, citing its treatment of Black employees, its underinvestment in the Black community and the lack of action taken by leadership to address these persistent disparities.

In addition, the letter included a list of recommendations that the group believed would serve as good-faith first steps towards building a more inclusive and just environment for Black employees.

Unfortunately, Chan once again failed to grasp the seriousness of the issues the letter raised, refusing to meet several of the group's requests, most notably, declining to provide transparency into CZI's pay equity data as it related to Black employees.

Instead of working through the plan of action that was put forth by Black employees, she tasked a recently hired chief operating officer with devising and implementing an alternative course of action. Having witnessed the dynamics of passing the buck and placating employees with half measures play out multiple times at the foundation, I recognized that further efforts would be in vain. On Aug. 31, I left CZI.

Earlier this week, I filed a discrimination claim² against CZI with the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on behalf of myself and fellow Black employees who have experienced racial bias and discrimination at the foundation.

In addition, I have chosen to publish the claim in its entirety here, detailing the discrimination and systemic racial bias I have faced and witnessed while working at CZI.

After careful deliberation and counsel from colleagues in the field, I felt compelled to take these actions to ensure that CZI and its leaders are held accountable. I believe it is irresponsible and dangerous for an organization of this magnitude and influence to operate without care or consideration for race, while tackling issues related to voting rights, housing, criminal justice, immigration and education – issues steeped in a history of systemic racial bias and inequity.

Further, I know that my experience of discrimination at CZI is indicative of a larger problem concerning the treatment of Black people in philanthropy, and I believe my silence would only serve to reinforce the acceptability of similar practices.



CZI is not the first philanthropy that has sought to portray a commitment to racial justice, while privately operating in a discriminatory and racially biased manner.

Too often philanthropy devolves into a grotesque performance, where funders court a public image as “progressive,” “trust-based,” “anti-racist” and “responsive to community needs,” all while failing to do the work required to earn those accolades.

Inevitably, Black employees become enrolled in this performance and are resigned to serve as window dressing for institutions that we ourselves recognize as deeply flawed.

Against our better judgment, we are expected to publicly uphold, defend and promote philanthropies that we are rarely positioned to shape or influence. Worst still, if we attempt to affect change from within these institutions, we are reprimanded, our voices are suppressed, or we are quietly asked to leave.

This is an unprecedented moment in our country's long and grisly history of racial and economic inequity. We find ourselves contending with a global pandem-

ic that has disproportionately ravaged the Black community, a renewed social movement to end the violence and brutality perpetuated against Black bodies, and a presidential election that has seen the topic of white supremacy become a central matter of discussion and debate.

Now, perhaps more than ever, philanthropy should be rushing to center Black voices and expertise and to build authentic partnerships with the broader Black community.

Yet, as I speak to colleagues, friends and associates in the field, I am disheartened by accounts of Black professionals who, like myself, have been disempowered and displaced in this moment.

Programs are being cut, positions are being eliminated and the established trend of Black professionals leaving the industry at an alarming rate³ seems likely to only continue in the face of the growing need for our presence and “lived experience.”

Even now, BIPOC professionals who have spent the last decade calling for foundations to embrace racial equity as a priority across their grantmaking, organizational culture and operations, are finding that their appeals continue to go largely ignored as institutions remain resistant to change.

All the while, many of these same institutions have been the quickest to capitalize on opportunities to publicize and self-applaud the marginal efforts they have undertaken to “respond to the moment.”

I think I speak for many of my colleagues in the field when I say I did not enter this industry to settle for the appearance of doing good. I am a Black man who grew up across the low-income neighborhoods of Queens, New York, and have experienced firsthand the effects of urban poverty and the intricacies of generational disenfranchisement.

I have faced many of the same barriers and challenges affecting the communities our sector purports to serve. My commitment to Black liberation and my deeply

held desire to empower BIPOC and historically marginalized communities is not a matter of academic curiosity or charitable sentiment – it is core to who I am.

I believe philanthropy, much like our country, has arrived at a critical juncture and the choice before us is clear:

- We can accept, as many of our harshest critics have indicated, that this industry is irredeemable and beyond self-reform.
- We can accept that justice cannot serve as a guiding principle for a sector that emerged as a byproduct of this country's history of racial and economic inequity.
- We can resign ourselves to “performative philanthropy” and accept that our work will remain inextricably tied to generating publicity for individuals who have often amassed their fortunes through extractive and unethical means.
- We can accept the status quo and allow this moment to pass, just as it always has.

Or alternatively, we can commit ourselves to doing the hard work of reimagining all that this industry is and can be.

- We – industry executives, practitioners and professionals who came to this work seeking to center the needs of the communities we cherish, only to find ourselves enrolled in shadow theater – can commit ourselves to holding institutions accountable even when that means prioritizing our duty over our jobs.
- We can commit ourselves to serving as true partners and co-conspirators for movements and communities entrenched in the fight for liberation.
- We can commit ourselves to denouncing acts of performative philanthropy, recognizing that when institutions fail to align their private actions with their publicized values, when they choose media attention over community empowerment and power hoarding over trust, and become bastions for bias and ex-

tensions of white supremacy – We can commit ourselves to calling these institutions to task and exposing them for what they really are.

This is the choice before us, and the stakes have never felt higher. ■

Ray Holgado is a grantmaking, finance and operations professional based in San Francisco. He currently serves on the board of directors of the Andrus Family Fund and worked at the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative from September 2018 through August 2020.

Notes

1. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/08/16/chan-zuckerberg-initiative-black-employees/>
2. <https://rayholgado.medium.com/chan-zuckerberg-initiative-racial-discrimination-claim-4d4637f054d8>
3. <https://www.abfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/ABFE-The-Exit-Interview.pdf>

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Black Funding Denied: Community Foundation Support for Black Communities August 2020

In light of the national uprising sparked by the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor (and building on other recent tragic movement moments going back to the 2014 murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri), NCRP analyzed grantmaking by community foundations across the country to find out exactly how much they are – or are not – investing in Black communities.

Won't You Be My Neighbor: Local Foundations, Immigrants & Refugee Populations May 2020

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed the deep-rooted inequities that have constituted an ongoing crisis for many communities in America. Many immigrants and refugees are people of color who are over-represented in the ranks of essential workers who are at highest risk of contracting and dying from the virus. This interactive digital dashboard from NCRP's Movement Investment Project provides data on funding for the pro-immigrant and refugee movement in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

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