

Responsive Philanthropy

NCRP'S QUARTERLY JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER 2018

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Michelle Dione captured the viral video of "BBQ Becky" calling the cops on a group of Black people for having a barbecue at Lake Merritt on April 2018. View the video on https://youtu.be/Fh9D_PUe7QI.



The gentrification of movements: 4 Ways funders can stop putting raisins in the potato salad

By Vanessa Daniel

Last year my family moved to Tacoma, Washington, after 17 years of living in Oakland, California. The decision to move was a heart-wrenching one.

My partner and I had spent our entire adult lives in Oakland. We'd built a vibrant community of friends, most of whom were involved in movement work to advance racial, economic and gender

justice. We were part of a local group called Baby-buds, a queer women of color community that supported each other through the process of having children. Our kids were growing up together like cousins. We love Oakland. However, as rents skyrocketed, we could no longer afford the standard of life we wanted there.

GENTRIFICATION HAD FINALLY PUSHED US OUT.

On our last night in Oakland – a full year before BBQ Becky¹ and Permit Patty² – we went to our favorite Ethiopian restaurant on Grand Avenue with some members of our Baby-buds crew. It was a lovely summer evening, and we were enjoying ourselves.

Suddenly, a white woman at the table sitting next to us turned and snapped at our friend's 6-year-old son, who had flipped the light switch to a small lamp on the wall behind him on and off. One of his moms calmly told the woman that they were happy to tell him not to flip the light switch again but would appreciate her using a kinder tone and addressing them rather than their child. The woman was incensed; she glared at us and spat out her words, "You should know better than to let your kid play with a light switch in the first place. No one should have to tell you that." She threatened to call the police on us and then proceeded to finish eating her plate (*continued on page 12*)



challenging grantmakers
to strengthen communities

The gentrification of movements

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of delicious Ethiopian food, apparently oblivious to the fact that threatening to call the police was a threat on our lives – particularly for the Black people at our table.

GENTRIFICATION IS INFURIATING AND, FOR THE COMMUNITIES AND CITIES WE LOVE, HEARTBREAKING.

The gentrification of cities involves affluent white people moving in, sometimes because they are attracted to the culture, i.e., the “ethnic” food, etc. The trouble is, they often don’t like the people of color who created that culture.

So they call the police on us (in Oakland, this included an attempt to shut down a 65-year-old Black church³ because the singing was “too loud” and to ban the playing of any musical instruments⁴ without a permit around Lake Merritt, a popular spot for drumming).

They displace us (between 2000 and 2014, 31 percent of Oakland’s Black population⁵ was pushed out, an indicator of a similar trend of push out among other groups of color).

And they engage in theft and appropriation of the culture.

Before you know it, there are white women donning saris and putting their image on their own line of “artisanal” Indian ghee. There are white hipsters opening soul food restaurants. The restaurants look OK from the outside, but something isn’t right.

*There are raisins in the potato salad.*⁶

THE GENTRIFICATION OF MOVEMENTS IS NO DIFFERENT.

In recent months, I have noticed it picking up steam as, particularly in this treacherous political climate, strategies that have been used for decades by people of color are finally gaining the attention of funders.

Black women, in particular, are killing the game. They are literally preventing entire states from plunging over the

Roy Moore-esc cliffs that the majority of white voters (including white women) are trying to drive them over. These women launched #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo, two of the boldest movement moments of our time – movements that are changing the weather, culturally and politically, in this country.

Women of color are running for office in record numbers – and winning – with some of the most courageous platforms we’ve seen, dispelling the myths that candidates must water-down their messages and pander to white swing voters in order to win.

Women of color-led organizations in particular, such as BlackPAC, Texas Organizing Project, New Virginia Majority and CHIRLA have spent years honing year-round voter engagement approaches that treat voters not just as a tactical means to win elections but like, well, people, i.e., whole people deserving of candidates and organizations that bring an integrated race, class, gender and decolonization analysis. They make voters actual partners in the long-term, shoulder-to-shoulder work of transforming material conditions and the balance of power toward social justice in neighborhoods, cities and states. They have focused on talking to voters directly, and they have prioritized the New American Majority (people of color, millennials and single women).

Yet organizations led by people of color, especially women of color and particularly Black women, are seeing precious little of the surge in philanthropic giving that has occurred post the election of 45.

As these strategies gain traction with funders, well-funded, white-led organizations that dismissed these approaches and the people of color who developed them are now declaring to funders, “Look! we have a new innovation!” They are announcing that they

will no longer just run TV ads during elections; they will knock on doors and talk directly to people. They will no longer ignore women voters, voters of color and young voters but, instead, will reach out to them. Some are Elvising and Columbusing, claiming full credit for major wins like those in Virginia and Alabama that were clearly delivered by Black women.

These movement gentrifiers are essentially telling funders, “Everything that people of color-led organizations can do, we can do it better and ... at scale. So don’t fund them. Fund us!”

Some funders are responding affirmatively. It can be a relief to check the “diversity” box without ever having to change who you are writing a check to, without having to deal with the minefield of implicit bias and outright racism that keeps foundation staff and trustees from trusting people of color organizations with money and without having to pull back the curtain on the allure of scale to find that big numbers often lack the depth of relationships in a community that translates into the real power to win in the short- and long-term.

THE PROBLEM IS THIS: THERE WILL BE RAISINS IN THE POTATO SALAD.

There are entire movements in this country, with hundreds of thousands of people in their ranks that were founded expressly because people of color could not express their boldness and brilliance within white-led movements. Excluded worker organizing (such as domestic workers who were left out of 1935 National Labor Relations Act), environmental justice and reproductive justice, nearly every social justice sector has a people of color-led wing of the movement that was created for this exact reason.

The idea that philanthropy can simply fund people of color via white-led

organizations and fuel the boldness that people of color are generating is false. At some point (as has been proven again and again), there will be white leadership telling people of color to not talk about police brutality or to tone it down on immigrant rights or to go silent on transgender rights because they don't want to spook white swing voters. At some point, there will be raisins in the potato salad.

Aside from being ineffective in moving the needle on social change generally, this funding approach only reinforces white supremacy.

A helpful parallel is this: Hundreds of years ago, women were not allowed to obtain credit. Eventually, the law in the United States changed to allow banks to require women to have their husband or another male relative cosign their loan or credit application (this was permitted until 1974). Very few people today would point to the shift to this cosign situation and declare that it afforded women real freedom or self-determination. If we can see the problem with that, we are capable of seeing the problem with funding people of color-led work underneath the sign-off authority of white leadership.

Now, should white-led organizations working for justice engage people of color? Yes, particularly if they want to win. Are there some that are doing so in authentic and respectful ways and that are even deserving of funding? Certainly. But to say it is highly problematic for white-led organizations to be the majority of what philanthropy supports in order to reach communities of color is an understatement. It is a stark manifestation of white supremacy.

What can funders do or avoid doing?

- **Direct at least half of the dollars in your portfolio to bold and courageous social justice organizations that are deeply rooted in communi-**

ties of color and that have majorities of people of color – particularly women of color – in leadership positions at the staff and board levels.

This, it is worth noting, is not the same as a majority white organization with a single person of color as executive director or an organization with a majority people of color line staff and white people in most of the decision-making positions.

NCRP's thoughtful *Power Moves* guide is a helpful read for those of us in philanthropy grappling with how best to support marginalized communities. One of the tenets it lifts up is: "Fund under-resourced communities to build power and be their own agents of change." Yes, do this!

- **Recognize the difference between organizations with an extractive approach that seeks to use people of color as a means to an end and those with a collaborative and generative approach that see and treat people of**

color as partners in long-term work.

Defund the former. Fund the latter. For example, voter engagement campaigns aimed at mobilizing voters of color in a one-off way to elect candidates who have zero commitment to represent the interests of communities of color is not an original or effective means of winning social change. It is colonialist and imperialist in the most basic sense.

- **Stop offering people of color-led organizations small amounts of funding to hand their ideas and innovations over to white-led organizations who are deemed "capable" of taking them "to scale."**

Fund the organizations that had the great ideas in the first place to take them to scale.

- **Build your muscle to work against implicit bias, structural racism and misogyny on a daily basis.**

Beverly Tatum describes structural racism as a moving airport walkway. Virulent racists are running on the walkway. Some people who disagree with racism think they are disengaging from it by standing still, but the walkway still moves them toward the same destination of racial disparities and discriminatory outcomes.

In order to take an active role in dismantling white supremacy and any system of oppression for that matter, one must turn around on the walkway and walk faster in the opposite direction. This takes strength, backbone, endurance and tenacity. For many white people, it takes building muscle groups that they have never had to use.

Part of the reason total annual philanthropic giving to people of color has flat-lined at roughly 5 percent for more than a decade, despite the rising percentage that people of

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New and Renewing Members

The Alan Rabinowitz Trust
Allegany Franciscan Ministries
The Annie E. Casey Foundation
Arca Foundation
Arcus Foundation
Center for Popular Democracy
Citi Foundation
The Cleveland Foundation
The Colorado Health Foundation
Compton Foundation
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
The Cricket Island Foundation
The Educational Foundation of America
Faith in Public Life
GALEO: Latino Community Development Fund
The George Gund Foundation
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
Healthy Places by Design
The Heinz Endowments
Inner-City Muslim Action Network
Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation
Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation
Kansas Health Foundation
Korean-American Community Foundation
The Kresge Foundation
LA Voice
Liberty Hill Foundation
MACED
Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
Mass Story Lab/Create Forward
Mertz Gilmore Foundation
National Birth Equity Collaborative
National Housing Resource Center
The Needmor Fund
New York Foundation
Perrin Family Foundation
Prosperity Now
Public Accountability Initiative
Public Welfare Foundation
Retirement Research Foundation
Richmond Memorial Health Foundation
The Scherman Foundation
Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth & Reconciliation
Sobrato Family Foundation
Surdna Foundation
Taller Salud Inc
Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock
United Students Against Sweatshops
Virginia Organizing
Voqal
Western States Center
Woods Fund of Chicago

color makeup of the U.S. population, is because too many people in philanthropy are standing still on the walkway.

Build your muscle. Do the work to change the status quo.

Let's stop bankrolling the gentrification of movements. Let's fund toward the liberation of all people. And when it comes to freedom, liberty and potato salad, let's enjoy the real deal. ■

Vanessa Daniel is executive director of Groundswell Fund, which won the 2017 "Smashing Silos" Impact Award for intersectional grantmaking. Follow @pwr2thappl, @GroundswellFund and @NCRP on Twitter.

Notes

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3. Cheryl Hurd, "We Make a Joyful Noise: West Oakland Churches Respond to Noise Complaints," *NBC Bay Area*, October 7, 2015, <https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/West-Oakland-Churches-Responds-to-Noise-Complaints-331187662.html>.
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5. Olivia Allen-Price, "How Many Are Being Displaced by Gentrification in Oakland?" *KQED*, February 9, 2017, <https://www.kqed.org/news/11307279/how-many-are-being-displaced-by-gentrification-in-oakland>.
6. <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/raisin-potato-salad>.

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