TOWARDS A MORE RESPONSIVE PHILANTHROPY: GRANTMAKING FOR RACIAL EQUITY & LGBTQ JUSTICE

FUNDERS FOR LGBTQ ISSUES

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Greg Grinley, former Executive Director
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Matthew Antonio Bosch, leadership cohort participant
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DyShaun Muhammad, donor
Roderic Southall, former board member

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Cream City Foundation
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Laura Hughes, Executive Director, Ruth Ellis Center
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Interviews conducted by Bryan E. Glover and N. Ordover

Here we share the stories of five foundations that have made a commitment to working at the intersection of race and LGBTQ issues, revealing the impact such work can have on local communities.

In 2007, Funders for LGBTQ Issues (Funders) launched its LGBTQ Racial Equity Campaign, a multi-year initiative to increase grantmaking to and strengthen lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people of color (POC) organizations and communities. This effort was a natural next step for us after updating our mission the previous year to include advancing racial, economic, and gender justice as integral to achieving LGBTQ equality and rights. Our intent was to forge a conversation among funders about the critical intersection of racial equity and LGBTQ justice and how institutional structures and grantmaking practices impact the resources available to diverse communities.

We carried out our campaign in three ways: by producing various tools and media on LGBTQ grantmaking and racial equity, by hosting a national retreat on racial equity for grantmakers working on LGBTQ issues, and by raising and granting $1.4 million to eight public and community foundations around the country through our Racial Equity Regranting Initiative (RERI). These foundations then matched those funds and regranted them to autonomous LGBTQ POC organizations to build their capacity.* We are greatly appreciative to the Arcus Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Open Society Foundations for their generous contributions and critical support of this campaign and initiative.

This report marks another step in our continuing effort to advance work at the intersection of racial equity and LGBTQ justice by offering the stories of five foundations that have made an intentional commitment to do this work with

*The eight grantees of the initiative were: Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, Delaware Valley Legacy Fund, Horizons Foundation, Liberty Hill Foundation, PFund Foundation, Pride Foundation, and Stonewall Foundation.

their grantees. We present their innovative efforts hoping that they'll encourage others who are engaging in or considering similar efforts. This work is not always easy. It requires time, diligence, dialogue, and resources. Yet, as these stories reveal, it can yield tremendous impact—on organizations, individuals, and the various communities of which they are a part.

In the spring of 2011, we visited two LGBTQ public foundations; two private foundations (one specifically focused on LGBTQ issues and one not); and a community foundation with an LGBTQ fund. On our visits, we talked with staff, board members, volunteers, and grantees, who shared their insights and analyses. Through these visits, we got a glimpse of the incredible work that is being done to improve the capacity and outcomes for LGBTQ POC organizing efforts—and to ultimately improve the lives of LGBTQ people of color.

Our talks were open-ended and wide-ranging—the goal was to allow the foundations to tell their own stories. Three questions framed the conversations: What is your foundation doing around race or racial equity and/or LGBTQ issues? How did your foundation come to do this work? How are you incorporating LGBTQ and racial equity lenses into your grantmaking practices? When possible, we asked grantees to add their perspective on how the funders' efforts have made an impact in their work. Each of our foundation profiles provides a snapshot of the stories we heard—the most salient points and anecdotes distilled from almost 20 hours of interviews conducted. Unfortunately, we were unable to include many equally worthy accounts and voices from our storytelling tour. We hope to share more of them in the future.

PHOTO: COURTESY GILL FOUNDATION

An Elastic Conversation

PFUND FOUNDATION

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

SERVES:
REGIONAL (MINNESOTA AND THE UPPER MIDWEST)

ASSETS:
MORE THAN $1 MILLION

Philanthrofund Foundation (PFund) has served the Upper Midwest since 1987, but it wasn't until 2004 that it formalized its commitment to racial equity. That's when, after a watershed strategic planning process, the foundation launched its Communities of Color Endowment.

Although the foundation had provided grants to people of color groups before then—to primarily two-spirit organizations and a group called Minnesota Men of Color that did work around AIDS—the PFund board decided to make a "conscious effort" in 2004 to focus on the needs of racially diverse communities and address internal disparities and barriers, said Greg Grinley, executive director from 2006 through 2010.

"We were thinking about who was on our board and who our donors were—the basic demographics of who PFund was and who was attracted to it—and we realized we had very few people of color involved in the organization," said Grinley, who served on the board during this period before eventually joining the staff. "We had a difficult time hanging on to folks. We'd get people to come into the organization who we knew or who were affiliated with grantee organizations or scholarship recipients, but they didn't stick around. Maybe it wasn't the best experience for them. We asked ourselves why. What structures or barriers do we have in place that are prohibiting inclusion?"

That question led to a fact-finding mission carried out by board members who had particularly strong connections to communities of color. Their primary method was to hold listening sessions with various constituencies whose testimony confirmed what the board had already come to realize.

"We heard that PFund does great work in the LGBT community, but it wasn't really relevant to people of color," Grinley recalled. "We weren't particularly unwelcome, but we were just kind of irrelevant. It didn't matter that we had funded several communities of color organizations or programs. They just didn't feel they were a part of [our foundation]."

In addition to this critical feedback, the listening sessions allowed the board to identify a cohort of people of color who wanted to engage further with PFund on racial equity. Initially, that engagement took the form of conversations—an ongoing dialogue that lasted for more than a year. Afterward, many of the participants joined PFund in various capacities: a few joined the board, some became involved in committee work, and others participated in grant reviews or other volunteer capacities.

Back row: Victor Cole, Danny Khotsombath, Jesus Estrada-Perez, Kevin Xiong, *Front row:* Lind Her, Matthew Antonio Bosch, Pat Nelson
PHOTO: ALFONSO WENKER

The foundation also made a conscious effort to be present at events like Twin Cities Black Pride "not just to be observers but to participate in authentic ways," said Grinley. And PFund reviewed its overall outreach to make sure people of color were included. "You have to look at everything. If you do a gala, will it appeal to people of color? In your newsletter and e-mail communications, are you reflecting people of color? Are your donor stories about people of color?"

Setting up the Communities of Color Endowment was key. "The choice was made to not just launch some sort of special short term project but to actually develop an endowment," recalled Alfonso Wenker, former PFund director of development and communications. "That really laid the groundwork" and illustrated the foundation's long term institutional support of people of color communities. The endowment, in turn, inspired support from those communities. "We brought in new donors; and people of color who were leaders—but had kept PFund at an arm's length—came to us and created relationships," said Susan Raffo, one of PFund's current executive directors since 2011.

Over time, that methodical relationship building resulted in structural change at PFund itself: the board decided to hold spots for people of color, and eventually the foundation's bylaws were changed to require that 25% of the board be people of color. "That top-level shift," Grinley said, "sends a signal that the organization is firmly committed."

But as PFund began to successfully incorporate people of color both organizationally and in its grantmaking, anxiety arose among some board members about what that inclusion would mean. Perhaps the most persistent fear Grinley and his colleagues confronted was the notion that increasing grants to people of color groups entailed decreasing grants to predominantly white groups. "The board had to understand that funding one organization didn't equate to taking something away from another organization," he said.

As board conversations continued, though, Grinley noticed a change in sentiment. One longtime board member's comments, in particular, have stayed with him. "She said we all benefit when we direct resources to the organizations or populations that are least able to access resources—and the power and privilege that go along with them. Conversely, we all suffer when we exclude the most marginalized."

Through a three-year matching grant from Funders for LGBTQ Issues' Racial Equity Regranting Initiative (RERI), PFund was able to support three people of color groups in the area: Two-Spirit Press Room, Color CoordiNATION, and

Roderic Southall

A former pfund board member shared his thoughts on increasing racial equity at community foundations.

If you say you're a community foundation open to funding emerging things, you would hope that your brand feels welcoming enough that groups who are thinking about new things come and say, "We're thinking about this—is this something you'd look at?"

There were a couple of people of color who had joined the board and then left. We would invite people, but the conversation around the table didn't change. If your conversation doesn't change, that means that your listening skills haven't changed. It's one thing to sit in the room with someone. It's another thing to sit in a room and be engaged—to listen to what's being said. When people come to the table who have felt excluded, sometimes the things they suggest are either above where you've been talking as a board or below. If you haven't learned to listen or engage, you kind of think, "That was an offhand comment," and then go about your business. You need to have an elastic conversation that allows comments, sentiments, and voices to be collected and processed.

For example, we had a conversation at a board meeting where someone said, "I just want us to fund gay things." I'm thinking, golden moment: What do you mean by gay things? "Well, like a gay theatre production." Do you understand that your sense of what a gay production is and mine can be different?

You need to encourage those conversations. Who around the table is not feeling comfortable with the direction of the foundation? Let's talk about it honestly. If you can't talk honestly and move past the blaming that shuts everything down, then what you've done is said, "This entity is for these people. It's not for me, it's for you."

Ideally your board is representative of enough voices that someone says, "The other day I saw a bunch of green people—I think we need to start thinking about green people." And on the other end, someone will call about a project for green people.

The work you do around this helps construct a more cohesive organizational character. That, in turn, will create a more vibrant community foundation that has social and racial equity as a core principle.

"IF WE'RE REALLY TRYING TO SHIFT THE LANDSCAPE, WE HAVE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT THE LGBTQ MOVEMENT LOOKS LIKE LONG TERM."

—ALFONSO WENKER, PFUND FOUNDATION

Shades of Yellow (SOY). RERI funding was also used to establish a leadership program in collaboration with local organizations; the ongoing training focuses on both board development and community organizing. "Bringing folks together to talk about what it's like to be a leader within a small organization of color may not sound terribly quantifiable in terms of outcomes," Grinley said, "but what we've heard over and over again is how powerful it is."

The foundation's work with organizations like Shades of Yellow has also been powerful. "PFund has been instrumental in helping us get off the ground and become a formal organization," said Oskar Ly, a member of the leadership team of the St. Paul-based group, which serves Minnesota's LGBTQ Hmong community. This capacity growth, in turn, raised the group's profile in both LGBTQ and Hmong advocacy circles. "We've been able to be at the table for really important policy and community decisions."

Such tangible results are precisely what PFund intends to effect. Currently, the foundation may only have "the capacity to make grants in one, two, or three year horizons," said Wenker. Nevertheless, the foundation still has to "think in 10, 20, and 30 year horizons. If we're really trying to shift the landscape, we have to think about what the LGBTQ movement looks like long term."

To reach those long term horizons, the movement has to invest in the least funded groups. "Such a small portion of grantmaking goes to LGBT organizations of color, and those organizations also have the least access to other resources," Grinley pointed out. "A predominantly white, male-centric group has access to a lot more funding than an organization that's serving poor queer women of color. If our community doesn't fund them, who will?"

Lupe Castillo and Freida Martin
PHOTO: ANNA MIN

Shades of Yellow

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

PROVIDES SUPPORT, EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

One of only a few organizations in the country serving LGBTQ Hmong people, Minnesota's Shades of Yellow (SOY) was mainly a social group run by volunteers for the first six years of its existence. Then, in 2009, PFund provided a $7,500 racial equity grant, a substantial increase over its previous grants to the group. That funding, in combination with grants from Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy and others, allowed SOY to hire paid staff and reorganize as a nonprofit.

PFund's commitment to SOY continues today, both financially—this year and last, SOY received PFund's maximum grant of $10,000—and operationally. "The financial support has been a really big piece to our success," said Oskar Ly, a member of SOY's leadership team. "But PFund has also been very supportive in providing technical assistance to us."

That technical assistance has come in many forms, but perhaps the most important has been simply the opportunity for dialogue. "They've been really available to have honest conversations [with us] about our challenges," Ly said of PFund. "What is it that we need? We may not know exactly what it is, but just to be able to have the space to talk about what that might look like is essential." This ongoing conversation was particularly crucial when SOY went through a leadership transition in 2009. "They understood that we were really vulnerable," as SOY is one of the rare organizations serving its constituency.

SOY New Year 2012 Styles of Pride Marriage Fashion Show. PHOTO: COURTESY SHADES OF YELLOW

SOY's relationship with PFund has also given the group access to other LGBTQ funders, including national foundations such as the Arcus Foundation and the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice. "We've had opportunities to directly network with these other folks," Ly said. These meetings, facilitated by PFund, have resulted in additional grants from these two funders and others.

SOY has also benefitted from new relationships established as part of PFund's Racial Equity Regranting Initiative cohort. Through the cohort, SOY connected with RARE Productions, a local event agency for LGBTQ artists of color. That relationship has been exemplary, as the two groups have collaborated on performance showcases, such as at Twin Cities Pride, allowing SOY to showcase Hmong LGBTQ artists. The impact of these events is twofold: Hmong artists gain visibility, and SOY does too. PFund's role here goes beyond merely fostering connections. "It's hard for a lot of our organizations to set aside time to have these conversations [with] one another," Ly said. "PFund's really instrumental in creating that space for us to engage [each other]."

Working collaboratively with other people of color groups also reflects and underscores the intersectional nature of their respective missions. As Ly said, "When we talk to the Hmong community, we're talking about LGBTQ issues. When we talk to the LGBTQ community, we're talking about racial issues. Our identity really embodies both, and both are equally important. On top of that, we have different economic constituencies. A ot of folks that we serve are low-income or unemployed, as a matter of fact. And so the issues are really multi-dimensional. Consequently, it would be instrumental for funders to understand these different pieces. Addressing them together would move the work forward more progressively."

After all, Ly continued, "the hardest piece about our work" is switching between different constituencies. But thanks to support from PFund and other grantmakers, SOY is now commanding attention in the myriad communities it serves.

And yet there's always room to grow. "It would be even better," Ly noted, "if there were more funders at the table."

An Intersectional Approach

The U.S. Equality & Opportunity Fund, part of the U.S. Programs division of the Open Society Foundations, was established in 2008 to "eradicate the barriers that prevent the most marginalized within our society from participating fully in political, economic, and social life." The fund concentrates on four core constituencies: people of color, LGBTQ people, women, and immigrants. As such, director Raquiba LaBrie and her team apply a deliberately intersectional approach to grantmaking. "We really try to think about how to integrate and bridge the concerns of multiple constituencies and we apply an intersectional approach to our grantmaking." LaBrie and program officer Luna Yasui shared their thoughts on that strategy.

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS—U.S. EQUALITY & OPPORTUNITY FUND

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

SERVES:
INTERNATIONAL

ASSETS:
MORE THAN $450 MILLION

Raquiba LaBrie, Director: People who belong to multiple marginalized groups likely encounter the most severe barriers in our society. Our intersectional work challenges those barriers and also looks at the way in which fields could more productively win by building alliances. We sought to identify a couple of issues that we think have significant potential to bridge the concerns of different groups: economic security, with a focus on low-wage worker rights, and anti-violence advocacy.

Luna Yasui, Program Officer: It's not enough to say we're in a room that's relatively racially diverse and gender diverse. If we look purely on an identity level, we're done—or almost done. But we've done nothing to have a discussion about power, about resource allocation, about who in the room is able to speak and make decisions. If we continue to solely focus on what the room looks like—which identity groups are represented—we're not having a conversation about economic opportunity, or about safety or violence.

LaBrie: When we go to grantees and say, for example, "Why aren't you dealing with the particular needs of LGBTQ Asian Americans?" people will say, "Well, give me the money to hire a person who can work on gay issues and I'll do it." Mainstream groups say they don't have the capacity or the resources to fully implement an intersectional vision, whereas a lot of grassroots groups are starting with an intersectional approach, because people who are hardest hit are not single-issue, single-identity folks. It's kind of a luxury to have a single constituency or single-issue focus at times.

Yasui: We can't end poverty or xenophobia, but with the kind of resources we have, how can we create climates or spaces for conversations where it is much more explicit, where people feel safe? How can we be more welcoming and accepting of a full kind of movement?

LaBrie: There have been some very thoughtful strategies employed by LGBTQ-identified funders to begin to build bridges with other funders. The Four Freedoms

Fund is a donor collaborative focused on immigration reform. Both the Arcus Foundation and the Gill Foundation have joined that collaborative with an eye towards elevating the concerns of LGBTQ people in the immigration reform debate. It's been pretty effective. They've helped the fund to identify and correct blind spots.

Yasui: Increasingly we're seeing donor collaborative efforts focus resources on alliance building. In part, that's a necessity. For example, no state level anti-bullying policies have passed absent a multi-issue broad coalition. There's an understanding that in order to be effective, we have to approach this tactically as something that addresses every student's right to be in a safe learning environment.

LaBrie: Our focus on gender equity and the rights of gender non-conforming individuals and trans people as well as LGBTQ people has influenced [the Open Society Foundations' Campaign for] Black Male Achievement, which looks to challenge conventional constructions of masculinity within the black community. There's been thought partnership across our unit on that issue. Beyond the Equality & Opportunity Fund, we are constantly trying to nurture connections. So while our Criminal Justice Fund takes the lead on policing issues, we've been in conversations with them about, say, the particular challenges that trans people face navigating the criminal justice system. A colleague likes to say that philanthropy is the caboose of the movement. For advocates, the field functions intersectionally—we haven't caught up as funders. It's this real conversation with our grantees, with our partners in the field, [that will help us] continue to frame and reframe the work in ways that are relevant and speak to diverse stakeholders. Philanthropy, in many ways, is responsible for the siloed organization of various fields because of the way we organize our grantmaking. It perpetuates these divisions within various fields or between them.

"PHILANTHROPY IN MANY WAYS IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SILOED ORGANIZATION OF VARIOUS FIELDS BECAUSE OF THE WAY WE ORGANIZE OUR GRANTMAKING."

—RAQUIBA LABRIE,
OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

Yasui: Last year we were able to recommend and have a grant approved for the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, based in California. It's a model of student organizing by and for LGBT students. In addition to safe schools, it's very much about racial equity, educational equity, interrupting the school-to-prison pipeline. The grant supports their work generally but really spotlights their racial justice approach; it's also an acknowledgement that the membership of GSAs in California is predominantly young people of color.

LaBrie: There are multiple approaches to implementing that intersectional vision. You can identify issues that have the potential to bridge the concerns of multiple groups. You can adopt the problem solving approach. You can stipulate that your grants have to reflect alliances. It's worth it to spend some time at the outset really thinking through what approach is the most resonant for the funder and responsive to the needs of the fields in which you're funding.

A Catalyst for the Movement

Cream City Foundation is a community-based public foundation focused on funding lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender programs and organizations working towards social change in southeastern Wisconsin. Former executive director Maria Cadenas recalled how Cream City came to incorporate racial equity in its work.

CREAM CITY FOUNDATION

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

SERVES: SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

ASSETS: LESS THAN $1 MILLION

About six years ago, the board went into a strategic planning session. The board was half new; there was a lot of energy around creating value for the foundation and the community. How do you ensure that, as a community foundation, the return on investment, for lack of a better term, was high enough for the donors that were contributing to the foundation?

It was an introspective look into how we measure what we're doing. Are we a regranting mechanism for larger donors, or is the foundation's value beyond that? Looking at the size and scale of the foundation, it became very clear that in order for it to have value in the community, it had to re-own its need in the community: the need for funding a movement versus funding nonprofits. The board had to ask themselves what being a catalyst for the movement looks like.

So they said we have to look at this intersectionally, because that is the best way to make sure that everybody is included. And we have to focus on systems, because that's when we really leverage our dollars and make an impact.

That really shifted the foundation's thinking. Instead of focusing on building stronger nonprofits or stronger programs, the beginning point now was 'how do you build a movement that is about people—and that includes our donors?' It meant recognizing that Cream City is just a tool in the movement, a philanthropic tool, just like the nonprofits are tools in the movement. So the board freed themselves from the box that says that foundations are there [simply] to support entities. It freed itself to say we're here to support a movement.

Based on our grantmaking and other mapping that was done, it was very clear that, from the donor pool to the grantees, there was very little diversity. [The foundation] had been funding in communities of color, women, and around youth and aging issues, but that was minimal compared to the rest of the funding. The board needed to take diversity into account. It wasn't specific to race, but it was inclusive of race, gender, class, and age. Those were built into a new revised mission for the organization.

The challenge was a fear about specifically calling out those four categories. What categories are we leaving behind? Why are we only picking these four? That was a hard one, because when you start listing categories, people start thinking you're only going to be funding people of color or women. In an organization that's been historically led and fronted by white men, it's a challenge to move beyond the immediate knee-jerk reaction of guilt, or the knee-jerk reaction of, 'I'm being left behind because I'm not more oppressed than my neighbor.' The majority of the room was white and male. That was the hardest part, narrowing down to those four categories and being conscious of that as a step.

"DONORS SURPRISE YOU—THEY'RE WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO ASPIRE TO."

—MARIA CADENAS, CREAM CITY FOUNDATION

There was no model to say this is how you do it, at least not for us. We had to change everything we were doing. We were entering this unknown world. How do we implement this mission, knowing our capacity is so limited? How do we leverage our funding so that it's not just our money? How can we attract larger pools of money to join us in this intentional grantmaking?

If we're built by community and we're funding a community movement, it was very organic for us to say, 'Well, we need to focus on what people want.' Our donor pool—which is donors giving from $5 to $50,000—didn't feel that they were being reflected as a movement within the LGBT infrastructure. That came from our focus groups. We needed to connect to the donor, to connect to the people, and then use the people to inform us where we needed to go. And once you share this bigger vision and passion, everybody comes. Donors surprise you—they're waiting for something to aspire to.

The Right Thing to Do

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

SERVES: REGIONAL (SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN)

ASSETS: MORE THAN $500 MILLION

For a public foundation that serves a region with Detroit at its center, issues of race are understandably a central topic of conversation. But in 1994, when the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan (CFSEM) launched the HOPE Fund for LGBT issues, conversations about sexual orientation were uncharted territory for them.

Mariam Noland, president of CFSEM since its founding in 1984, remembered the uncertainty she felt presenting the idea of funding LGBT issues to her board. "It was a board of seasoned philanthropic and corporate leaders, not a community-based board," Noland said. "But people knew them, they could raise money, they were trusted, and that's what we needed." So although Noland and her staff thought the HOPE Fund "was the right thing to do, we had no idea what the board would say, particularly in a Midwest community that was not openly discussing these issues."

In the end, the board agreed to start the HOPE Fund and, over the course of 18 years, it's had "a very direct impact on our organization," Noland said, referring to awareness of LGBT issues. "We've been able to educate our board. There's much more understanding of the issues, embracing of the issues, now. Our own staff has a much better understanding and acceptance too."

In much the same way, the HOPE Fund's five-year-old Racial Equity Initiative is now having a direct impact on CFSEM and the region it serves. Established in 2007, the initiative began for the same reason the HOPE Fund did: CFSEM's mandate, as a public foundation, to serve everyone.

"We knew we were missing opportunities," said senior program officer Katie Brisson, who runs the HOPE Fund. "We hadn't been approached by many people of color agencies because they couldn't compete for HOPE Fund dollars—they just weren't formed enough, or didn't have 501(c)3s," a CFSEM requirement. As for the agencies that had applied, "they didn't receive money because the proposals just weren't competitive." Brisson and her team were aware of diversity issues at the HOPE Fund—they were trying to engage more women's groups, for instance—but they hadn't done as much work around people of color groups.

So when Funders for LGBTQ Issues announced its Racial Equity Regranting Initiative (RERI) in 2007, "the HOPE committee had a serious talk about whether to apply for it," Brisson remembered. At the time of the request for proposals, the Kresge Foundation, also headquartered in the Detroit metro area, was matching donations to CFSEM, "so we were going through a big campaign for that," Brisson said. "The HOPE Fund was busy, but we said, we need to do this."

"FROM A STRUCTURAL PERSPECTIVE, THE ENDOWMENT PIECE IS REALLY IMPORTANT."

—KATIE BRISSON, COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN

CFSEM received the RERI grant, which led to a matching grant from the Arcus Foundation. That grant provided the seed money to start the Racial Equity Endowment Fund, which operates out of the HOPE Fund. "That means that, forever, this organization has to grant money every year for people of color projects," Brisson said. "Even if it's a small amount of payout, it means the HOPE Fund committee is making sure they're addressing the needs of this community. From a structural perspective, the endowment piece is really important."

With the RERI and Arcus grants in place, the HOPE Fund committee did a scan of the people of color organizations in the region, finding 17—all volunteer-led, all very small. After reaching out to those organizations—with the help of CFSEM volunteers who knew the groups—eight of them decided to participate in the CFSEM program. "And for those eight," Brisson said, "we provided training, we sent them to Creating Change (the annual conference of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force)," and offered other opportunities.

Following this initial spate of capacity building, five of the groups applied for grants, and four were funded: KICK, which serves African Americans; Al Gamea, serving people of Middle Eastern descent; Detroit Latin@z; and SPICE, for LGBTQ women of color from diverse communities. "It's a good cohort that can naturally work together," Brisson said, since none compete to serve the same populations. And since the individual organizations weren't familiar with one another, "this initiative has helped them get to know each other" as CFSEM supported their participation in activities around which they were able to meet and discuss their experiences.

But the grants were "just the opener," as Brisson put it. The real impact was in organizational development and overall capacity building. These four groups were being strengthened in myriad ways. They were being introduced to longstanding mainstream organizations like New Detroit, which provided much of the groups' organizational development training, and steps were being taken to increase their chances of sustainability over the long haul.

"If they're going to grow over time, they're going to have to form themselves in a way that they can compete for dollars," Noland said. "They've got to have an active board, they've got to have an audit—and audits cost money. We may have made a grant to them when nobody else would, but they're not going to sustain themselves unless they learn what it takes."

The audit requirement was a challenge that CFSEM had to deal with from the start of the RERI process, since none of the groups that applied had ever been audited. Although KICK was finally audited in 2009, the other three organizations were still relying on fiduciaries that CFSEM had made grants to before. "The board has been great about saying, 'Okay, we get it,' but there's going to be a point when more of them need to make an audit happen," Brisson said. Using fiduciaries is "not a common thing" at CFSEM, Noland added. "That string is going to run out real fast," both because of board expectations and because "the fiduciaries are going to get tired."

But as difficult as the question of fiduciaries may be, it reminded Noland of why they inaugurated the racial-equity initiative, and the HOPE Fund before that: "It was that same thing—it was the right thing to do."

Financial oversight was one of several areas CFSEM focused on as the initiative moved forward. Brisson hired a consultant, a person of color herself, "to go out and interview all the grantees without us there" and to walk them through possible financial scenarios. "We're trying to figure out how can we be helpful on these issues and what that will look like," Brisson said. "It could look like general operating grants for the groups that are ready, or it could look like a shared financial person for the group of organizations," which, she noted, is common among some of the grassroots arts organizations' CFSEM funds. The feedback on these and other possibilities will ultimately result in more effective grantmaking.

Another area of focus was leadership development. When CFSEM received a second round of racial-equity funding from Funders, the match then came from the Ford Foundation. Brisson still went back to Arcus, though, to ask for money specifically to work with people of color leaders, including those at KICK, Al Gamea, Detroit Latin@z, and SPICE, and those at other regional groups, such as Affirmations—an LGBT community center—and the Ruth Ellis Center, which provides shelter and support services for runaway and homeless LGBTQ youth.

The Arcus money was also to fund a speaker series for the wider community of HOPE Fund donors and organizations "to get everybody in the same room together," said Brisson. "Until they know who one another are, they [the donors] are not going to be making donations to KICK."

Assessing the progress of CFSEM's racial equity initiative so far, Brisson and Noland cited two achievements in particular. One was greater attention to the intersection of race and LGBTQ issues within the foundation itself. "As a staff peer, some of my colleagues, particularly African Americans, have come and asked me questions [about the initiative]," Brisson said. "It's caused some really good conversations because it's now safe to ask those questions."

The other achievement? The integration of people of color organizations into the broader LGBTQ funding community. "We wouldn't have gotten there without the initiative or offering up the dollars," Noland said. "And for that, we're enormously excited."

Curtis Lipscomb addresses crowd at "Gay Families Matter" rally.
PHOTO: COURTESY KICK

Back row: Lewis Smith, Esq.; Coco; Curtis Lipscomb.
Front row: Antonio Johnson; Tiffany Buchanan; LaKeshia Burchett; and Jeremiah Jones

PHOTO: JOHN HARDWICK

KICK

The Agency for Lesbian, Gay, Bi, and Transgender African-Americans

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

PROVIDES SUPPORT, EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

When Katie Brisson first learned of the Funders for LGBTQ Issues' Racial Equity Regranting Initiative, she and her team at the HOPE Fund surveyed Detroit area people of color groups for their organizational needs. "We were asked how we could use assistance," recalled Curtis Lipscomb, KICK's executive director. Five years and three grants later, that initial conversation has "paid off greatly."

Until that pivotal outreach, KICK, like many other people of color organizations in southeastern Michigan, had never worked with a foundation. Instead, KICK, established in 2003, mainly relied on a homegrown network of supporters. "Our key donor base was our friends," Lipscomb said. That revenue stream was sufficient when KICK was still determining its mission and forming a board, but by 2007, the group was "ready to move forward." That's when, rather serendipitously, the HOPE Fund came calling.

"KICK's advancement happened to perfectly align with the HOPE Fund steering committee's pondering of how to get more people of color organizations to apply for grants," said committee member Howard Israel, a longtime CFSEM volunteer who led the outreach to KICK and others. Receiving grants has greatly contributed to KICK's current success.

The story can be told through the names KICK gave to each of the grants it received: Connect, Evolution, and Stabilization. "Connect" meant obtaining the resources "to do the work, to actually connect to the community," Lipscomb said. "We had no tools: no phone, no computer, no financial software and no technology to do community building or civic engagement." Before the Connect grant, people had to call KICK board members on their personal phones; afterward, they were able to call a dedicated number, staffed by volunteers.

Following this initial capacity building, the next grant, "Evolution," allowed KICK to hire a development consultant who helped the board strategically plan throughout an entire year. "We met for at least three hours a month," said Lipscomb. "We learned how to sustain ourselves—how to raise money, how to reach out to donors, how to identify our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. We did so much." The Evolution grant allowed KICK to develop a number of foundational documents, including a policies and procedures manual.

The "Stabilization" grant, in turn, was designed to enable further development, including hiring a part-time development coordinator as well as a program coordinator and website manager. Lipscomb also planned to create a public-service campaign to "tell the story of our movement."

KICK's transformation was dramatic. The community began to see that "it's not just a fly-by-night organization anymore," said one volunteer. "We've seen greater participation of donors, of people attending our events and programs, of people just coming in the door," Lipscomb added. "I mean, it's crazy busy."

Despite this success, challenges remain. One of them is "getting POC LGBT people together, because homosexuality is still such a stigma," Lipscomb said. "So part of the process is identifying those who are willing to work."

Those who want to work with KICK, however, face the challenge of juggling their volunteer activities with their "day jobs" at "Chrysler, Ford, GM, or wherever," Lipscomb said. "They don't have the luxury of having a decent phone conversation with a funder or supporter." That's something he learned about firsthand. Lipscomb, who in 2009 left his day job of 11 years to work full time as head of KICK, remembered the difficulty he had chatting with Israel during working hours. "I had to whisper, and he'd speak in a normal tone."

And though KICK has come a long way from those days, other Detroit area people of color organizations are still struggling to grow. "It's hard for some of them to even have board members," Lipscomb said. He's sensitive to the situation of KICK's peer organizations because "if we all do well, we all benefit from it." Accordingly, the KICK team meets regularly with other groups supported by the HOPE Fund to share information and inspiration.

The HOPE Fund's support, as Lipscomb repeatedly noted, went well beyond grant giving. "Katie's been a real hand holder for us," he said of Brisson. "We definitely needed the direction and help." And Israel, whom Lipscomb first met through a discussion group focused on the intersection of race and LGBTQ issues, has been indispensable. "Because we already had a relationship with Howard, we were able to confide in him and share with him who we are."

KICK's own example is perhaps the best lesson possible for other foundations following CFSEM's lead. If foundations "see a successfully funded POC group," Lipscomb noted, "they can probably see the benefit of taking a risk."

Building Stronger Alliances

Established in 1994, the Gill Foundation is one of the nation's largest funders of LGBTQ issues and communities. The Gill Foundation's work in racial diversity has primarily been housed in two programs: the African American Initiative and the Latino Initiative. Following are some thoughts from Gill staff on their approach to this work.

GILL FOUNDATION

DENVER, COLORADO

SERVES:
NATIONAL

ASSETS:
MORE THAN $250 MILLION

Katherine Peck, Senior Vice President of Programs: We fund some of the African American LGBT organizations like International Federation of Black Prides and NBJC [National Black Justice Coalition], but we also fund allied organizations, and that has been the way we've approached both the Latino Initiative and the African American Initiative. It's important to reach out to allies in both communities and build bridges between [them] and some of the LGBT groups that aren't necessarily POC [people of color] to help foster partnerships. We worked with the Gay & Lesbian Leadership Institute [now the Gay & Lesbian Victory Institute] to form a relationship with NALEO, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials.

Patrick Flaherty, Director of Policy Advocacy Programs: There has been a shift in some of that work. Where Gill would have funded a Latino organization like NALEO's education fund directly, some have come to the conclusion that we—Gill—don't need that relationship but our movement organizations need that relationship. So, for example, we've shifted this year to funding GLLI [Gay & Lesbian Victory Institute] for it to work with NALEO, because they have more in common and the relationship ought to be built there, rather than between Gill and NALEO.

Dave Montez, Senior Program Officer: Our approach to our work with Latino communities is really ally building. How do we build stronger alliances between existing non-LGBT Latino organizations and LGBT organizations?

Peck: It has had that lens plus a slightly different lens on the African American Initiative side, because there we have also invested substantially in the two largest African American [LGBT] organizations, NBJC and the International Federation of Black Prides. So that has been less about ally building, although obviously those organizations are critically involved—it's a critical component of their work. But it has been about strengthening that voice within the LGBT community and in the allied community.

Francisco Lopez, Executive Director, CAUSA Oregon *(middle)*

PHOTO: ROSEMARY RAGUSA

Leslie Herod, Program Officer: With the African American portfolio, I'm working with NBJC and the International Federation of Black Prides. There is some capacity building there, to get their feet on the ground and get them implanted firmly as organizations so that they can then do the work that they need to do. A lot of folks in the African American community, especially a lot of gay folks, are pulled in different

Causa's LGBT Alliance Building organizer Christian Baeff and his family.
PHOTO: COURTESY CAUSA

directions—they don't have the luxury of sitting at just a gay table. So they are representing the movement within the movement: African Americans within the LGBT movement and also the LGBT movement at African American specific tables. So it's really important to build that capacity on the ground, in the communities, and then at the national level.

Peck: The pool isn't as deep outside of places like New York and California. There are some wonderful leaders and some wonderful people, and they just need to be invested in so that they can stay in place. We can grow the leadership, including significant percentages of people of color in those groups. So that is one of the forms of capacity building that we do that is specifically targeted at people of color.

Flaherty: I have this book sitting on my desk [*Basic Rights Oregon's Standing Together: Coming Out for Racial Justice*]. It took them about three or four years to go through this process. They reshaped the organization, from staff to board, and rethought themselves and went back to square one on their relationships with their allies and with POC communities in Oregon.

Montez: A lot of organizations viewed allied work as very transactional, like, 'I help you, you help me.' Basic Rights [Oregon] has really changed the way that they view things in that it is very integrated now. So to be an LGBT organization and to purport to serve the LGBT community, you need to serve African American LGBT people, you need to serve immigrant LGBT people. They have really reshaped the way that they view their work.

Flaherty: Basic Rights and their partners, specifically Causa, which is an immigrant-rights organization in Oregon, have done a lot of work through grants. We gave [Basic Rights] a grant to change their leadership structure so that there were LGBT immigrant leaders on the board who were in positions of power, so that they could bring the LGBT immigrant view to the conversations Basic Rights was having. The takeaway from Oregon and the work they've done is [that] it has got to be reciprocal. The fact that it has been reciprocal over the years has created an environment where their views on the way they do the work have completely shifted.

Peck: We have definitely institutionalized this and made it an integral part of our work by saying we are focused broadly on developing allies, because we think that the importance of those allies to our work—and our ability to get LGBT people thinking more broadly about who is in the same boat as us—is what is going to make all of us successful. Equality is beyond legal equality. There is a whole other part of equality that is beyond the law and that requires both attitudinal change and behavioral change, so when we think about our work, we think about it as encompassing all three of those elements: attitudinal change, behavioral change, and policy change. Some pieces of work go into more than one of those buckets—they are not siloed at all. The work we've done in communities of color has taught us that we have to have strong relationships with all the communities that have the same shared values if we are going to get to attitudinal and behavioral change.

Flaherty: From the very start, you begin with a lens of race as you look at the issues: what you're going to pursue and how you're going to pursue it. But even before that, you start in the communities, which tell you what you need to be working on and how you need to be working on it. So it starts from scratch. And that takes years to implement, and frankly, to be credible at it.

"IT DOESN'T ALL HAVE TO BE FIGURED OUT ON THE FRONT END. YOU LEARN MORE FROM YOUR MISTAKES THAN YOU DO FROM YOUR SUCCESSES."

—KATHERINE PECK, GILL FOUNDATION

Peck: Translating that support into programmatic work requires more creativity, more resources sometimes—that has been a challenge. A related challenge has been the relative lack of resources that some of these organizations have to bring to the table outside of the Gill Foundation money. Some of these organizations are very small. They don't have the staff time. They are already stretched doing the programming they were doing anyway, so we haven't run into challenges around receptivity. We have run into challenges around the ability to then translate those relationships into a programmatic outcome.

Flaherty: I see three phases to the work. The first is having [grantees] see the reason and the value in doing the racial justice work. It doesn't take much to convince them—in fact, it doesn't take anything to convince them. But there can be issues when they go to their membership. The membership isn't necessarily there, but the leaders are. The second phase is, what are the tools? And the third phase is, help me with the resources. So the challenge rises in the tools and then the resources to support turning those tools into actual programs.

THE GILL TEAM'S ADVICE ON INCORPORATING A RACIAL EQUITY LENS INTO FUNDING.

"It doesn't all have to be figured out on the front end. You learn more from your mistakes than you do from your successes. [Be] willing to make mistakes and to examine what you're doing. Just try things. You have to be willing to take some risk."
— KATHERINE PECK

"Just start. We've talked about the time it takes, the trust building, the know-me-before-you-need-me—all of that means you have to start. You have to do it sometimes on a leap of faith."
— PATRICK FLAHERTY

"I would encourage the philanthropic sector to look beyond their silos. Funders should take a step back to look at what they really need in order to achieve their mission."
—DAVE MONTEZ

A More Responsive Philanthropy

Our project to highlight stories of foundations engaging communities living at the intersection of race and sexuality took place against the backdrop of economic uncertainty that continues four years after the U.S. financial crisis of 2008. LGBTQ people of color are among the first to be adversely affected in economically challenging times and the last to receive resources, if they receive them at all. Even in periods of economic prosperity, LGBTQ people of color are left behind. Yet our conversations with the foundations and their grantees gave us a sense of excitement. Their work is urgent and underscores the need for more stakeholders to get involved.

"Intersectionality" has become a buzzword in many movement and organizing circles, and also in philanthropy. Looking at social issues and communities through multiple lenses is imperative, however, if philanthropy is to remain "relevant and speak to diverse stakeholders," as Luna Yasui of the Open Society Foundations' (OSF) Equality & Opportunity Fund observed. How one issue—sexuality, for example—may be affected by other issues like race, gender, and economic concerns is not just a theoretical question, but the place where many people live. This point must be underscored if philanthropy is to adequately serve the common good in a society that recognizes the diversity and challenges confronting its stakeholders. As Raquiba LaBrie (also of OSF) noted, "People who belong to multiple marginalized groups likely encounter the most severe barriers in our society."

So how do funders embark on, or continue down this path? As these varied stories have shown, there are different approaches to the work based on the particularities of each foundation. Perhaps one of the most salient comments came from Patrick Flaherty of the Gill Foundation: "Just start." Engaging constituencies with new lenses or reaching new communities incurs new challenges, and as with many relationships, first moves are sometimes tentative. There may be missteps. However, new challenges can also provide a platform for the emergence of new solutions, and in turn, lead to valuable outcomes.

What we consistently observed in each visit was the importance of building trust through ongoing relationships, which is critical to laying the foundation for capacity building and organizational development. People of color organizations—often under-resourced and under-staffed—frequently face practical challenges which can serve as barriers to qualifying for foundation funds, such as being able to show a financial audit or having 501(c)3 status. Strong relationships can play a key role in motivating grantmakers to work with grantees to find solutions to such obstacles (such as fiscal sponsorship) and eventually strengthen their viability for further funding. As Miriam Noland of the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan stated, "We may have made a grant to [these organizations] when no one else would, but they're not going to sustain themselves unless they learn what it takes [to compete for dollars to grow over time]."

What also emerged during our visits was the fact that engaging new constituencies often wound up diversifying and growing donor pools. Once individuals saw foundations demonstrating investment in their communities, they began to see the value of supporting those foundations. For example, as Susan Raffo of PFund explained, setting up a Communities of Color Endowment was one of those moments where "we brought in new donors and people of color who were leaders" in the community.

OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH THE FOUNDATIONS AND THEIR GRANTEES GAVE US A SENSE OF EXCITEMENT. THEIR WORK IS URGENT AND UNDERSCORES THE NEED FOR MORE STAKEHOLDERS TO GET INVOLVED.

We also learned that, for Racial Equity Regranting Initiative grantees, the foundations' support for convening the cohorts was invaluable, as it provided the added benefit of allowing them to get to know each other across communities, ethnicities, and issues. Oskar Ly of SOY (PFund grantee) noted, "Through the Racial Equity Regranting Initiative, we've been able to connect with other people of color organizations. I see that it's really valuable for us to have organizations or funders facilitate a space and facilitate conversations. Not just one conversation, but a series of conversations with organizations to be able to understand each other's work a lot more."

Sometimes, viewing constituencies through new lenses, or reaching new communities, can be challenging for foundations. Yet a responsive philanthropy is one ensuring that the most marginalized are not left behind. "We knew we were missing opportunities," stated Katie Brisson (CFSEM). Indeed, funding LGBTQ communities of color, who are among the most distressed in our society, offers some of the best opportunities to make a huge impact. As KICK's Curtis Libscomb noted regarding the value of their support from CFSEM, "We've seen greater participation of donors, of people attending our events and programs, of people just coming in the door."

This work, however, can be met with resistance. Initially, not all foundation leadership may see the value of including a racial or LGBTQ lens in grantmaking practices. Instead, they may argue for a strict focus on a narrow view of "gay" or "race" funding, without considering what might fall under those rubrics. The most successful efforts to meet this difficulty have followed honest conversations at all levels of the foundation about understanding the entire community. Ensuring that the board is engaged and committed to efforts around race and racial equity and/or LGBTQ issues is a key component of shifting organizational culture and practices, as well understanding that it is a long-term process involving a series of conversations amongst board members, staff, and volunteers.

A RESPONSIVE PHILANTHROPY IS ONE ENSURING THAT THE MOST MARGINALIZED ARE NOT LEFT BEHIND.

As Maria Cadenas of Cream City Foundation stated, "It's a challenge to move beyond the immediate knee-jerk reaction of guilt" or an argument about who's more oppressed. Yet these conversations are critical to building an institutional commitment to working with LGBTQ communities of color. Says PFund's Roderic Southall, discussions such as 'who around the table is not feeling comfortable with the direction of the foundation?' must be encouraged. "If you can't talk honestly and move past the blaming that shuts everything down," people will continue to feel excluded." Moreover, simply inviting new voices to the table is not enough. Such overtures must be accompanied by an engagement of what's being said. Southall also noted "We would invite people, but the conversation around the table didn't change. If your conversation doesn't change, that means that your listening skills haven't changed."

In the midst of what is now widely understood as great economic crisis, it is critical to remember those communities at the margins who are perpetually in crisis, facing multiple barriers to sustainability and self-determination. Indeed, when we began our Racial Equity Campaign in 2007, funding for LGBTQ communities of color was at a mere 9% of all LGBTQ philanthropic dollars. As of this writing, our latest annual tracking report of U.S. foundations for the year 2010 revealed that the amount had risen to 14.1%, a significant increase, though short of the campaign's modest goal of 15%. In a society that is 36% people of color and becoming more racially diverse each year, such disparities require the engagement of a responsive philanthropy. And the stories we heard leave us with no doubt that substantial investments of time and resources in these communities will yield exponential positive outcomes—for LGBTQ people of color organizations, the communities they serve, and the foundations that support them.

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