



"...BLACK COMMUNITIES HAVE
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GEORGE BELL AND LAUREN CRUMP

THE MISEDUCATION OF PHILANTHROPY

George Bell
Lauren Crump

Philanthropy has two parts—education and participation. There are, of course, many sub-activities. But essentially, these are the two. And the order is important.

Think back to grade school. Before you began sounding letters, you were introduced to people, places, things by name. Someone who cared about your learning, pointed you to something that held shared value and said its name—likely many times. This repetition reinforced definition. Those definitions coordinated to form ideas. Those coordinated ideas would become the lens through which you understood “appropriate” interaction and participated in your world.

Words are important. And when we feel confident in their use, they become a regular part of both our speech and identity. Not convinced? Try, “Worcestershire”. While you may know its purpose, the mental twists to articulate its name might’ve been a bridge too far. At first sight, maybe you decided this word isn’t for me. Perhaps, you even visualized someone who could use it with ease. How did they look? How were they educated? Where might they live?

Philanthropy poses a similar challenge to people in urban communities who use it every day yet feel disconnected from the term.

EDUCATION

There’s a widely held belief that philanthropy is

the practice of infusing large sums of money into charitable organizations. While that definition is true, it is also incomplete.

Philanthropy is the love of humanity, expressed through financial support. Note: A gift with that true intention can be any size. The objective is for giving to align with the giver and recipient’s mutual goals. And philanthropy matures from the emotional response of charity when it’s tethered to a plan.

Black and brown communities know this practice well.

In 2020, the Washington Post reported that “nearly two-thirds of Black households donate to community-based organizations and causes, to the tune of \$11 billion each year.” The publication cited a joint study from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors. What’s more, Black “households on average give away 25% more of their income per year than Whites.”

The study also recognized that Blacks largely give to three strategic causes—“Cornerstone (giving to higher education and the arts), Kinship (donating to organizations serving the Black community) and Sanctified (supporting Black churches)”, where the expected return on investment is the increase of mutual aid.

Moreover, because of historic exclusion, Black communities have become very creative about

how knowledge is collected and resources are distributed. That sort of gathering and testing isn't always labeled as philanthropy. But the types of solutions that arise from that testing become institutionalized within organizations. When those organizations are nonprofits and are funded by charitable dollars, that becomes philanthropy as we know it. But the motivation, in many cases, was how marginalized communities first attempted to "make it work."

Giving, in this way, helps to somewhat relieve some of the socio-economic pressures of structural racism. Dating back to emancipation,

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this activist philanthropy would pave the way for how government would define nonprofit organizations.

APPLICATION

One organization that helped shape and now weathers philanthropy's definition is the United Way. Over the last 10 years, United Ways, including Baton Rouge's Capital Area United Way, have seen a shift in their donor demographics. As baby boomers who have given generously to United Ways via workplace campaigns retire, younger workers have not closed the gap. This shift to younger workers has placed pressure on United Ways to be more creative in how they engage, attract and retain younger donors from diverse demographics.

In addition to demographic changes, technology-driven access to information has helped inform donor opinions and preferences, requiring organizations to make cases that pierce the digital noise.

These challenges are exacerbated for small, grassroots organizations that may be well positioned to fulfill their mission but lack the resources and platforms to tell their story in a compelling way.

Therefore, many urban or community-based nonprofits struggle to deliver effective messaging.

RECOMMENDATION

So, what advice do we offer under-resourced—typically Black—organizations and those looking to fund them?

For urban and historically disinvested communities, philanthropy raises more questions than answers. Primarily, what's in it for the donor? How urban communities see themselves in strategic giving points hard to how they participate in philanthropy.

A person's contribution to a nonprofit is essentially a fee for service, a gift that returns value for the common good. In this way, both nonprofits and donors receive something.

As a recipient, you're too often relying on someone to anticipate your needs. And what you receive is subject to their understanding of your condition.

Take the time to understand your value.

When you establish or join a group of givers, you've decided that you're capable of articulating for yourself. In that way, giving becomes a language for social action that you tell yourself and community you're equipped to address.

About the Authors

George Bell

George Bell is the current President & CEO of Capital Area United Way.



George has been active in the Baton Rouge community, having been presented the Camelot College Community Award of Excellence in 2015, and the 2016 Medical Professional of the Year Award by Mu Zeta Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority. He currently serves or has served on a variety of boards, including: Salvation Army Board of Advisors; Mid City Redevelopment Alliance; Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX); Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge; BR Transit Coalition; Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra; Urban Congress; Mid City Merchants; and Kid's Orchestra. In addition to his professional calling, George maintains his lifelong passion for music, playing the trumpet regularly as a member of the music ministry at his church and occasionally performs and volunteers in local schools to promote and support music education. He has also produced and performed over 12 concerts at the Manship Theatre with his George Bell and Friends ensemble.

Lauren C. Crump

Lauren Crump is a strategic consultant for Baton Rouge Area Foundation a philanthropic agency created to enhance the quality of life in south Louisiana. Crump pursues this mission by advising nonprofit organizations on board development, strategic planning, and fundraising program design. She also assists with grantmaking for emergency assistance funds, which are established through the Foundation's supporting organization –Employees 1st.



As a development professional, Lauren has worked in director and volunteer roles, advancing early childhood education options in disinvested communities. She has also facilitated dialogues on institutional racism and evaluated generational wealth-building opportunities for African American males.

Before joining the Foundation, she managed booking, public relations and charitable activities for professional musicians, and created the framework for a micro music festival.

She earned her Bachelor of Science in Human Resource Development from Louisiana State University.

She resides in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and completed a Master of Arts in International Business and Policy through Georgetown University's Executive Education program.