



# LAFF

THE LAFF SOCIETY Promoting Social and Professional Contacts Among Former Staff Members of the Ford Foundation

Summer 2015, No. 80

## THE FORD FOUNDATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: 2

The newsletter published three articles in its Summer 2014 issue that provided detailed background on the early work of the Ford Foundation in South Africa, and how its commitment to that country's quest for "dignity, justice and equality" evolved. In this issue, two writers explore the development of that commitment through the crucial decade of the 1980s, when the Foundation played a pivotal role in creating the conditions that led to South Africa's independence.

**David Bonbright**, in an article written for the newsletter, examines the conditions that "propelled our grantees" forward and considers the lessons learned. Then, in an article reprinted from *Alliance Magazine* and published originally in its Summer 2003 edition, he reviews the influential impact of the strategies pursued by a former president of the Foundation, **Franklin Thomas**, and of **William Carmichael**, a veteran of the Foundation's international development programs, whom he describes as the "drivers" behind the Foundation's "effectiveness in promoting social justice in South Africa".

The third article, by the late **John Gerhart**, also is a reprint of an article from *Alliance Magazine*, published in its March 2004 issue. In it he discusses the role of non-governmental organizations in meeting the needs of South Africans and draws lessons from that country's experience to provide a blueprint for the development of a "healthy philanthropic sector".



Nelson Mandela and Franklin Thomas, president of the Ford Foundation. Ford Foundation photo.

# A LOOK BACK AT FUNDING LIBERATION STRUGGLES

by David Bonbright

**David Bonbright**, who worked in the Foundation's Africa and Middle East program from 1983 to 1987, a crucial period in South Africa's modern history and its involvement with the Foundation, continues the story begun in the previous issue and examines the possibilities for "new areas for inquiry and discussion."

"What worked?" he asks. "What didn't? Why? What are the lessons for social justice grantmaking today?" His "ruminations" on these and other questions "offer a couple of working hypotheses that currently preoccupy me."

**T**he Foundation's programming in South Africa grew five-fold in what turned out to be apartheid's last decade, and had three inter-related and overlapping themes.

The first was human rights and fairness. We supported efforts to use the limited legal and regulatory space available within the apartheid system to express and defend human rights and fairness principles.

I cannot quote him exactly, but I remember clearly the argument that Archbishop Desmond Tutu made to us. He fully expected to lose every case we brought to the courts. But he felt that it was important to make the case that justice and law are not the same thing, and that an unjust legal system can and must be challenged. Otherwise people may come to

see law itself as illegitimate.

We funded direct legal services—ranging from community-based rights advice offices to public-interest law litigation—and research. Both the direct service and research work attracted the ire of the apartheid state, with our grantees often attracting official persecution. The only progressive legal work that we did not fund was the defence of the politically accused as this had adequate funding from the international anti-apartheid movement and, in any case, would have been challenged as being so directly political as to be against United States law.

I have long suspected it was our support for human rights research—and in particular support for the first scholarly book published on torture in South Africa—that resulted in my being declared *persona non grata* in 1987.

The second theme was civil society. The democratic resistance struggle in the 1970s and 1980s spawned an astounding array of associational activities inside South Africa. Many of these were informally associated with the exiled political movements for liberation. Within the limits of U.S. law (we could not fund the most important black-led organizations in the country, the trade unions), we invested in the building blocks of organized civil society within a repressive nation-state.

Our lawyer grantees played an important role here as well, defending the right of citizen groups to associate despite state persecution. South Africans, black and white, are churchgoers, and we supported the high-profile organizations that associated themselves with the liberation struggle, like the South African Council of Churches, headed by then Bishop Tutu, and the Southern African Catholic Bishops Congress.

An important sub-theme was expression and voice. We tended not to fund the international anti-apartheid campaigns because we believed our scarce resources were best invested in local voices. We supported the first black-led publishing house, Skotaville Press, and a range of documentaries, plays and books that fed a steady stream of home-

grown stories to the global anti-apartheid canon.

But the main thrust of these grants was to fund intermediary organizations of trained professionals who were directly supporting the broader liberation movement. Many provided legal representation for the black trade unions and the pre-eminent national political organization, the United Democratic Front, including the activist lawyers at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS).

Many of these professional NGOs, including CALS, were predominantly white, with roots in the more progressive universities and churches. They spanned every field of endeavor, from the environment and pre-schools to primary health care, rural development and distance education. They shared a clear purpose: to end apartheid and establish democratic equality in social, economic and political spheres.

The third theme was black leadership. Sometimes we spoke of this work in instrumental terms: the future will require black South Africans to run government and business. Sometimes in normative terms: democracy in South Africa is intrinsically about black leadership. We took our cues from the few areas where black leadership was already evident: the churches, the trade unions and NGOs aligned with the black consciousness movement. The goal was to transform organizations and communicate a clear message: white leaders had to move over and encourage black leadership to emerge.

To the historically white universities, we offered seed funding for programs to advance black graduate students and black faculty. At least one prominent university chose not to take up these grants on the grounds of a common white liberal view against "positive discrimination". One of the beacon institutions of liberal ideology, the South African Institute of Race Relations, lost its longstanding support from the Foundation when it missed the opportunity in the early 1980s to hire a black person for even one of two leadership recruitments.

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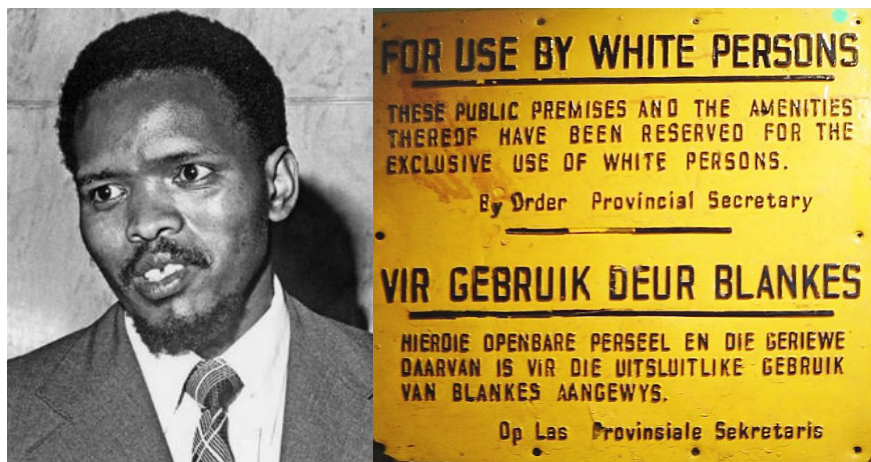
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**The black consciousness movement of the 1970s led by Steve Biko unsettled and disrupted the world of old and young activists, white and black, with its critiques of white liberal politics and the “non-racial” tradition of the Congress movement. Fair use photo Steve Biko Foundation (l). Sign from the apartheid era. Public domain, El C (r).**

One of the important sub-themes was the extent to which our grantees were consciously modeling a post-apartheid society. The black consciousness (BC) movement of the 1970s led by Steve Biko unsettled and disrupted the world of old and young activists, white and black, with its critiques of white liberal politics and the “non-racial” tradition of the Congress movement. It contributed importantly to the 1980s mass democratic movement that, despite adopting the symbols of the Congress tradition, was in reality a very new phenomenon.

### BEACHCOMBING FOR LESSONS

So what can we glean from this work 30 years later? This is a big question that merits more attention than I can give it here. But here are a few propositions that stand out much in the way a beachcomber comes upon collectibles on a long morning's walk.

With respect to our human rights and legal services work, lawyers and judges funded by the Ford Foundation were prominent, if not dominant, in writing and defending the new democratic Constitution. They also played an important role in much of the redistributive and restorative justice work in the 20 years since South Africa became a democracy, ranging from land to housing to education to health services.

We cannot know whether the efforts of these individuals, or others like them, would have led to similar results in the absence of Ford Foundation support. But there are few who would argue against the proposition that the judiciary has been and is today the most effective public institution of the new South Africa. The courts, and particularly the Constitutional Court, have repeatedly led the ANC government back to Constitutional

principles and away from the corrupting effects of power. It is fair to say that the judiciary remains the bedrock and bulwark of South African democracy today, just as we hoped it would be when, controversially, we started sending sitting apartheid judges (who were all white) to attend the Aspen Institute's international human rights seminars.

The interregnum between the unbanning of the ANC in 1990 and the April 1994 election of Nelson Mandela was a fertile time in which a number of enduring building blocks of a democratic civil society were laid, including: nine provincial NGO associations uniting in a national federation (SANGOCO), the first national association of grantmakers (SAGA), a nonprofit internet service provider that introduced email and online data sharing (SANGONeT) and a national participatory consultative process that led to one of the early laws passed after the first democratic election, commonly known as the NGO Bill.

All of this grew directly from Ford's work in the 1980s, something I can attest to firsthand since I instigated much of it from my post-Ford persona as the founder of the country's first NGO dedicated to promoting civil society *per se*, the Development Resources Centre.

Over the two decades since the 1994 elections, South African civil society has had its ups and downs, but it remains vibrant, diverse, creative and open. It is largely funded with local resources, including steady government funding in politically safe areas like social welfare. The Mandela government drew heavily on civil society for its leadership, and it remains a training ground for government service.

But, looking back, we can see that civil society, including the government-affiliated trade union movement, was not just eclipsed

but it was emasculated by the new democratic state. It certainly was not able to convince government to invest in the kinds of participatory and accountable governance that were the hallmarks of the liberation struggle.

The former head of the largest trade union confederation, COSATU, and the Minister for Reconstruction and Development in the Mandela Government, Jay Naidoo, has argued in recent years that the greatest mistake of government after coming to power was the demobilization of civil society in the attempt to create a “development state”. Only now, as grassroots protest against incompetent, corrupt and unaccountable public services swells to a level that suggests electoral vulnerability, is the ANC beginning to look at working with civil society to cultivate citizen voice.

Black leadership today is a given. Our work in the 1980s to promote black leadership seems anachronistic now. Leadership today is not about who, but about how. How to root out growing corruption? How to help create and support the citizen challenges that will force the ANC to rediscover and renew its internal democratic principles? How to build an effective political opposition to the ANC? How to transform the organizations of government and business—both brimming with talented, idealistic people—so that they remain responsive and accountable to citizens? How to match the material aspirations of the “born frees”, now entering the workforce, to the task of renewing South Africa's democratic ideals?

On the other hand, the need to examine the psychosocial conditions of racism remains painfully relevant. How might the challenges of corruption and weak governance generally relate to unexamined issues of identity?

### A CASE OF SOUTH AFRICAN EXCEPTIONALISM?

Looking back, I see three distinct conditions prevailing in South Africa in the 1980s that propelled our grantees forward.

First, however repressive the apartheid system was, the society was open enough for a democratic alternative to be expressed and to gradually win over the status quo ante.

Second, civil society and, in particular, the professional intermediary NGOs (our natural grantee community) were broadly and meaningfully accountable to authentic black leadership. Third, the century-long struggle of black South Africans for political rights had formed a genuinely democratic culture of inclusive consultation and attention to the psychological dimensions of liberation.

The domestic wing of the political liberation movement was essentially democratic in character. Inside the country, inclusive demo-

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## Pioneering Rights

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cratic practices were extolled and assiduously practiced, perhaps most famously within the trade unions. The two main exiled political movements, the ANC and PAC, were engaged, however, in armed struggles against a murderous opponent, causing them to develop a distinct sub-culture of military command-hierarchy that was only partially subordinate to civilian leadership.

Looking back, I see that I did not fully appreciate the distinctiveness of these three conditions at the time. But over time I have come to see them as pre-conditions for effective social justice work, and I have tried to establish them as part of everything that I do. Let me try to explain how.

As ruthless as it was, apartheid South Africa in its susceptibility to moral, political and economic pressure was more like the British Raj that Gandhi fought in India than Assad's Syria or even Putin's Russia. The international cultural and sport boycott was a hammer blow to white South Africa's conviction that it was part of western civilization. There was enough opportunity in cultural, legal, social and economic domains inside the country to champion justice and demonstrate democratic principles.

By the late 1980s, narrow ethnic and cultural identities were breaking down, and many white South Africans understood genuine democratic elections were inevitable. Something had actually happened in South Africa along the lines of what Edward Said had seen to be required in the Middle East: people in ethnic siloes had come to see each others' histories and aspirations and understood thereby that they were tied together. Some in the ruling National Party may have believed they could manipulate an outcome that would prevent the ANC from gaining an electoral majority, but many saw that black-led government was coming.

I tried to avoid getting into arguments with ordinary apartheid supporters, but sometimes they could not be avoided. One I will never forget was on a flight from Rio to Cape Town. The flight was almost empty, with only about 25 white South Africans heading home after a holiday. They somehow drew me into a debate in which it quickly became clear that I was better informed than they were about the political protests then in the headlines. Once



**Students of Smith College blocking the entrance to College Hall in 1986 as an act of protest urging the Board of Trustees to divest the college's endowment from South Africa. Smith College Archives.**

this became clear, their arguments retreated to the colonial cliché: "We know our natives."

The debate, which had become quite heated, ended abruptly when I asked if anyone had ever been to an African's home for a social event, whether they actually had any relationships with Africans that were not, in essence, those of master-servant. By 1985, this planeload of affluent white South Africans understood enough to be shamed into silence by the answers to those questions. They were ready to recognize that the rest of the world had left them behind, and that they had to change if they wanted to return to the community of civilized nations. But they were afraid and they did not see a way to do it.

By 1989 many white South Africans had come to understand something further, something almost miraculous. Namely, that they were in a lifeboat together with all South Africans and that their prospects were inextricably bound together. They finally understood what aboriginal Australian Lila Watson meant when she told the social worker, "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

A decade of black trade unionism and the diverse activities of the United Democratic Front had enabled diverse whites to mix with politically unyielding blacks and build relationships with them, even if often across the table.

During these years it was far from clear that South Africa was moving in the right direction. Nor have I come across this level of societal understanding again in the two decades since living through "the South African miracle". But I have seen its absence undermine development processes again and again.

My work today cultivates this sense of how relationships matter in social-change process-

es through a methodology of organizational performance management known as Constituent Voice, which enables organizations to listen and respond to the people they intend to help. I know that performance management systems can be bloodless, but they don't have to be.

In our work in the humanitarian response to the 2014-2015 Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leone, for example, we conducted weekly and bi-weekly short surveys of frontline health workers and citizens. The resulting first-of-its-kind data set clearly showed how and where the absence of

trust between the humanitarian response and citizens was fueling the epidemic. The data also showed that frontline health workers were well aware of the trust gap and that it should be more carefully heeded by those higher up the hierarchy. Our Ground Truth surveys led to a series of rapid course corrections by Ebola prevention responders, particularly with regard to quarantine protocols.

Slowly, we are winning the argument in the humanitarian community that since relationships drive results it is necessary for all humanitarian interventions to lead with light-touch ask-and-respond mechanisms that test assumptions, discover hidden issues and engender trust and cooperation.

Constituent Voice is just one tool to realize the required quality of relationships that we want in development and social change. Among other suggestions, I agree with Robert Chambers' prescription that funders have regular periods of immersion in the communities affected by their funding.

I came to a new appreciation of the second precondition present in South Africa of the 1980s—NGO accountability—when, in the late 1990s, as a new generation of philanthropists and governmental international aid donors started to push for their version of accountability. The new donors were preoccupied with seeing concrete measures of the results from their grants, so their push for accountability was really about more evaluation. This promoted a two decade-long search in development circles to find metrics that actually lead to improved outcomes or, in other words, metrics that actually do what they are supposed to do.

My main take-away from these decades of the quest for measurement in social change is that where you sit depends on where you  
*Continued on next page*

stand. Different constituents in the ecosystem see the same things in different ways. When it comes to complex emergent problems—the kinds of problems that normally fall under the headings of social justice and sustainable development—there are no one-size-fits-all metrics. What meaningful data we can gather needs to be filtered through a collective learning process in order to arrive at the shared understandings of reality that make the best reference points for organizational decision-making. This insight is at the heart of the theory of measurement that lies behind Constituent Voice methodology.

The lesson from South Africa in the 1980s for today's metrics mavens is that you don't need to impose measurement on a system in which the organizations are in fact accountable to those who are meant to be experiencing the benefits of those organizations. When their voices matter, those primary constituents will find the best way forward and they will do so on their terms. This is the source of one of our taglines for Constituent Voice: "customer satisfaction for social change". As Dennis Whittle says, "When the people are sovereign, the experts will be most effective."

The third precondition can be summarized as the impossible-to-overestimate importance of means in determining ends when it comes to social justice and sustainable development. If you want to empower people, you work with them in a way that honors their agency. This is the mantra of participatory development, and there is nothing terribly original in it some 70 years after its emergence in the action-research paradigm out of World War II.

But why is it so often neglected? Why is it that in 2015 only the smallest fraction of social change work is informed by rigorous practices of collective learning? I hypothesize that the answer lies in the failure to use systematic metrics to manage the quality of participatory practices. As evidence in support of this I have studied the rigorous constituent-centered measurement and learning practices of consumer-facing businesses. Businesses use customer satisfaction methods like Net Promoter Score to manage to a consistency of service delivery across large organizations. Imagine if citizens and implementers and funders could reliably and easily inform their actions regarding a particular development activity with rigorous feedback from those who had experienced it.

#### AND SOUTH AFRICA TODAY: STILL EXCEPTIONAL?

Looking back 30 years, how do we judge the fabled democratic principles of the South Africa liberation struggle? The idealism of solidarity and social justice that was central

to the struggle seems to have given way in the new South Africa quickly to self-enrichment and self-dealing.

What is the legacy of the democratic liberation struggle for the practice of South African democracy in 2015? Perhaps it is enough that South Africa remains open enough as a society to enable us to hurry through an inevitable and necessary societal learning process and come to grips with the fundamentally creative process of innovating the organizations, systems, practices and tools that will let the people be sovereign.

Amartya Sen identified two essential conditions of development. One is individual human agency, and the other is the institutional arrangements that enable human agents to

achieve just societal outcomes. South Africans have not finished drawing from the deep well of the legacy that is the democratic resistance struggle.

The example of Mandela may yet prove to be determinative, just as we can hope the noble narratives of the 18th century revolutionary founders may inspire reform closer to home. ■

*David Bonbright now is executive director of Keystone Accountability, a London-based organization that works with foundations, international development agencies and local organizations to help them "develop better ways of planning, measuring and reporting change".*

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## THE FORD FOUNDATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: 2

# THE "DRIVERS" BEHIND FORD'S CRITICAL WORK IN THE 1980S

*In this article, published originally by Alliance Magazine in its Summer 2003 issue and reprinted here with permission, David Bonbright describes the work of two pivotal Foundation figures who pressed for social and political justice in South Africa against considerable odds, Ford's president, Franklin Thomas, and William D. Carmichael, a veteran Foundation official devoted to a "creative human-rights based approach".*

As part of a review of "social justice philanthropy", it may be useful to look back at the case of the Ford Foundation in apartheid South Africa. At a time when the progressive voice in America was advocating a total boycott and the Establishment landed on "constructive engagement", the Ford Foundation pursued an aggressive grantmaking program pointed explicitly at social and political justice questions. The road was sometimes bumpy, but in the end I think that even those critical at the time would say that Ford was uniquely effective. Why?

Before answering this question, I should disclose that from 1983 to 1987 I was one of the Ford Foundation program officers directly engaged in the South Africa program. This article is as much a personal reflection as anything else.

It seems to me that there were two drivers behind Ford Foundation's effectiveness in promoting social justice in South Africa in the 15 years preceding the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) in February 1990. One had to do with the leadership at the

Foundation and the other with the definition of the program itself.

#### STRONG LEADERSHIP

**Franklin A. Thomas**, president of the Ford Foundation during most of this period, was someone who was uniquely knowledgeable about and committed to transformation in South Africa. As he came into the Ford presidency in 1979, Frank Thomas was also chair of the Rockefeller Foundation-funded Study Commission on U.S. Policy Toward South Africa. The Commission made a detailed study of the "South African problem" and published the most exhaustive and powerful case for wider American action against apartheid in its 1981 report, *South Africa: Time running out*.

At the highest level, then, throughout the 1980s, Thomas was personally able to champion Ford's program in South Africa against all critics. The program was clearly in technical violation of the worldwide calls for political, cultural, scientific and economic boycotts against South Africa, and it is a useful indicator of Thomas's leadership on *Continued on next page*



the issue that Ford's program was seen by the most important actors—such as the then banned and exiled ANC—as an exception.

In addition to deep knowledge and commitment, Thomas had a clear risk management strategy. He knew that Ford's grants would raise questions among those in America who questioned American meddling with minority rule in South Africa, which, after all, was a reliable protector of America's "strategic interest" in containing communism. In addition to a direct, substantive answer to this view, Thomas underscored the link between racial justice in the U.S. and the struggle against apartheid. In this way, he strengthened the American constituency for Ford's grant-making program.

The other authorial personality informing Ford's South Africa programme was **William D. Carmichael**. Bill Carmichael came to work in South Africa for Ford in the late 1970s when he became Regional Director for Africa. For most of the preceding decade he had worked in a Latin America captured by military dictatorships. When he came to South Africa for the first time in 1978, he brought along the creative human rights-based approach to confronting military governments that he had developed in Latin America.

## THE PROGRAM ITSELF

Together, Thomas and Carmichael made a formidable team. By 1985, when the South African government declared the first of a series of states of emergency that would persist until the official renunciation of apartheid in early 1990, Ford Foundation had defined a grant program that supported:

**A diverse set of human rights activists** ranging from community "advice officers" and church-based "social justice workers" to trade union support groups, the country's first national public interest law firm and its first national mediation service. Upon independence, the founder of the Legal Resources Centre, Arthur Chaskalson, became the head of the new Constitutional Court, and the Independent Mediation Service of South Africa provided the basis for the new statutory labor



**Franklin A. Thomas, center in top photo, with McGeorge Bundy, a former Foundation president, on his right, and Alexander Heard, a former chancellor of Vanderbilt University and president of the Foundation's Board of Trustees. Above, William D. Carmichael, when he was Ford's Regional Director for Africa. Ford Foundation photos.**

mediation system.

**A uniquely South African set** of "support organizations" made up mainly of young professionals—often academics—that aligned themselves explicitly with the liberation struggle and provided technical assistance to black-led grassroots mobilization on issues like access to housing, land, health and welfare services, and schooling. The direct and indirect contributions of these organizations to post-apartheid South Africa have been well documented.

**The beginning of the transformation** of the elite, historically white universities through the creation of units that affirmatively prepared young black social scientists for careers in academia and public service. The alumni of these programs now populate the senior leadership of government and business.

**A series of off-the-record**, high-level dialogue meetings designed to inform key influencers in the U.S. of the reality of black resistance to apartheid and to begin to enable South Africans from the different camps to speak directly. It is not unfair to claim that

these meetings helped to legitimize liberation struggle leadership in the eyes of conservative Americans and apartheid-supporting South Africans. There is no doubt in my mind that these meetings contributed to the passage of the United States Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 and enabled the more progressive elements in the apartheid government to advance their case for a negotiated settlement with the ANC.

## CHALLENGES FACED

There were some memorable bumps and potholes on the Ford Foundation's road through the anti-apartheid era. I would like to mention three specific challenges, although space does not permit their elaboration here.

First, Ford had to find a way through the different camps within the broad liberation struggle. In this regard, Ford emulated the example of American academics like Tom Karis and **Gail Gerhart**, whose long record of critical solidarity was recognized and valued by all camps.

Second, there is a tendency toward political correctness in any political struggles, including South Africa's. Ford understood that its contribution lay partly in enabling creative-struggle leadership to move outside the shackles of political correctness to ask brave, uncomfortable questions, particularly by the mid-1980s when it was clear to many of us that the end of apartheid was near and it was urgently important to begin preparing for majority rule.

Third, there is a tension between supporting empowerment objectives and playing a convening role among and between those in a power struggle. The more one is associated with providing support of an empowerment nature, the more unlikely it is that those opposed to that empowerment will trust you to play a convening role. Frank Thomas got around this by concentrating on the empowerment and presenting the convening role more as an effort to educate American opinion-makers. Ford simply created venues where South Africans who were elsewhere literally killing each other could begin to meet and talk privately and confidentially.

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## THE DARK SIDE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE GRANTMAKING

In closing, it bears remembering the dark side of this kind of aggressive social justice grantmaking. I will cite two examples. In 1986, Ford made a small grant to complete an underground documentary shot during the first state of emergency in 1985. The film followed the lives of a group of township activists in cinema verité style as they adjusted to working under a state of emergency. The film was made with the full collaboration of the activists and filmmakers, all of whom were committed activists. After the film was shown on British television (it was of course banned in South Africa), the security forces responded violently, including killing one of the young men featured in the film.

The second example comes from the U.S. policy dialogue meetings. At one of these meetings, the then general secretary of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference, Father Smangalis Mkhathshwa, came and spoke out strongly, perhaps even more strongly than was usual even for him. He was arrested as he got off the plane upon his return to South Africa, held in solitary confinement without charge for three months, and tortured.

These are some of the risks that are part and parcel of engaging in social justice struggles. As grantmakers, we are nowhere close to being the ones to bear the brunt of these risks. What we can and must do is make sure that our support is made in clear and explicit discussion with those most at risk.

When Father Smangalis was in New York for those meetings, I asked him if there was anything he wanted to do in the one free day that he had there. He said that he wanted to see a Broadway show, something light. So off we went to see a show. When we next met after his release from detention, he brusquely disposed of my anxiety about having brought him to the Ford meeting and in that way contributed to his detention and torture. He made it clear to me that he had fully understood the risks he was taking. Rather, what amused him was that during detention, and even while being tortured, he found comfort in our evening on Broadway.

Now there's an image for social justice philanthropy: the black Marxist Catholic priest humming Broadway show tunes to his apartheid torturers! ■

## THE FORD FOUNDATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

# LESSONS FROM SOUTH AFRICA FOR ENHANCING PHILANTHROPY

by John Gerhart

*This article by the late John Gerhart first appeared in the March 2004 issue of Alliance Magazine and is reprinted here with minimal editing. The original can be found at [www.alliancemagazine.org/article/the-international-experience](http://www.alliancemagazine.org/article/the-international-experience)*

*It is, in essence, a speech he gave four years earlier at a Conference on Indigenous Philanthropy held in Islamabad, Pakistan. He was president of the American University in Cairo at the time and drew on his experiences with the Ford Foundation in several offices in Africa over the previous decades, especially in South Africa, to suggest a path to "a healthy private philanthropic sector in every country".*

*While many of the circumstances and statistics cited here have changed over time, the lessons learned remain valid.*

**T**he South African experience may have useful parallels with the situation in Pakistan. Both countries possess vibrant private sectors, a rich array of community-based organizations, and a strong tradition of religiously motivated giving to social causes. All three characteristics are important for the development of a healthy philanthropic sector.

### THE CASE FOR INDIGENOUS PHILANTHROPY

The case for a healthy private philanthropic sector in every country is overwhelming. Governments are constantly hard-pressed to meet basic needs and to perform basic functions and will never have the resources to fully meet the needs of the disadvantaged in society. Moreover, local knowledge of problems and of resources is essential to the effective design, execution and evaluation of successful programs.... International donors usually have an uneven geographical distribution of effort and short, emergency-oriented approaches. Moreover, even where international donors are active, they seldom have the local knowledge, language, commitment or resources to make a lasting impact. Only a long-term sustained effort to address the causes as well as the consequences of poverty is likely to succeed.

### THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR EFFECTIVE INDIGENOUS PHILANTHROPY

....There has been a rapid growth in indigenous organized philanthropy in develop-

ing countries in the past decade and some generalizations can be made about what enhances effective development of indigenous philanthropy. Country studies...indicate that between 6 and 10 per cent of Gross Domestic Product may be attributed to the non-profit sector, which employs tens of thousands of people. National accounts in many countries are being modified to measure this "third sector". Tax policies have been recognized as an important stimulus to philanthropic giving, although personal motivation, especially religious motivation, lies at the root of all philanthropy. In some countries, including Mexico, Brazil, South Africa and the Philippines, organizations of private foundations and donor agencies have played an important role in promoting beneficial public policies and improved giving among private donors.

....Geographically based community foundations are one example of a rapidly growing specialized form of philanthropy, and community foundation networks exist in North America, the United Kingdom, South Africa and Africa more generally. South Africa offers one example of how quickly a philanthropic infrastructure can develop, and the types of institutions that have grown along with it.

### SOUTH AFRICA: A CASE STUDY

Prior to 1989, the independent or non-governmental sector in South Africa had experienced half a century of vigorous growth in spite of constant harassment from a govern-

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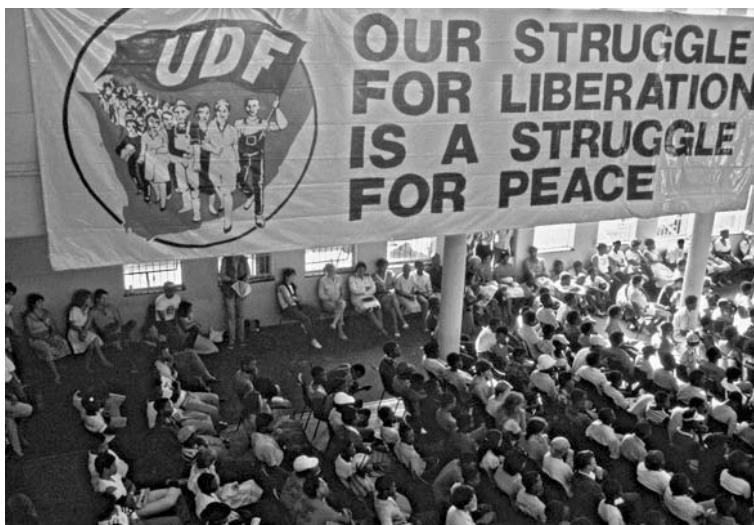


ment bent on racial separation and domination. Successive National Party governments neither recognized nor sought to provide for the basic social needs of the majority of the population, and South Africans of color, whether of African, Asian or mixed race origins, by and large sought to avoid government control. Foreign governments, voluntary organizations and donors also refused to deal directly with the South African government, but provided considerable support to South African NGOs, mosques and churches directly.

Precisely because of government attempts to control NGOs in general and foreign funding in particular, there was little transparency in the sector, rather limited sharing of experience, and few, if any, national organizations representing the non-governmental sector. The most important ones, the South African Council of Churches and the United Democratic Front, were accused by the government of being agents for the outlawed opposition political movements. Their leaders were frequently arrested and their offices were bombed. Moreover, because of the state of emergency that prevailed, external donors were reluctant to criticize NGO leaders or enforce strict reporting requirements on independent organizations.

All this changed abruptly after 1989, when it became clear that the National Party government was prepared to reach a negotiated transition to democracy in South Africa. Constraints on external funding and internal organizing were effectively dropped. While the move towards democratic government drew many NGO leaders into government ranks, the stage was opened for a flourishing of new organizations within the independent sector. Over the next few years a number of key local, regional and national organizations developed, modelled in many cases on similar long-standing institutions in the U.S.

International donor agencies were able to support these organizations freely, both with funding and ideas. (Four of the key organizations were assisted in their establishment by the Development Resources Centre, an independent NGO founded and headed at that time by **David Bonbright**....)



**Protest meeting of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in Johannesburg. March 1985. United Nations photo.**

### **INFRASTRUCTURE ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE INDEPENDENT SECTOR**

A number of national infrastructure organizations grew up in South Africa, serving the voluntary sector in general and the philanthropic sector in particular. These included:

**The "Independent Study"** Early on it became clear that the relationship between the state and the independent sector needed some formal definition. The South African state had established very narrow and controlling registration and taxation policies that were neither necessary nor sufficient for a healthy growth of the independent sector. An Independent Study into the Enabling Environment for NGOs was established by the Development Resources Centre, drawing on a very wide range of independent organizations and steered by a committee of eminent civic, religious and business leaders.

More than 2,000 NGOs participated in the meetings of this commission, spread over two years. While almost every aspect of the commission's report and mandate were challenged by some element of the independent sector, nevertheless the commission's report resulted eventually in a progressive reform of government registration policies. But perhaps its greatest contribution was to create a context in which NGOs, business and public officials (in waiting) could deepen their understanding of each other and come to see the pivotal role of the legal and fiscal framework.

**South African NGO Coalition** An early and intended outgrowth of the Independent Study process was a national organization of NGOs, known by its acronym SANGOCO. SANGOCO has about 4,000 member organizations, organized with nine provincial councils (some with several hundred member

organizations) and some 19 functional or thematic councils (women, land, small enterprise, conservation, children, health, adult education, etc). With this kind of open membership, SANGOCO has a breadth that makes it a legitimate voice for NGOs in speaking to the government, the public and the donor communities. SANGOCO also organizes and negotiates low-cost travel, insurance, training, car rental and other services for member organizations. SANGOCO commissioned a study of tax policies relating to the independent sector that advocated more liberal tax

treatment of donations along the lines made famous in the U.S.

### **Southern African Grantmakers' Association**

This organization of donors has some 86 member organizations, including corporate grantmakers, private foundations and a few international donors who are represented in South Africa. SAGA, as it is known, promotes "best practice" among donors, shares information, has national seminars and training programs, and represents the donor community in dealings with the government and the public. It advocates transparency among donors, including the publication of annual reports and easy-to-use procedures for grant applicants.... It has been sustained by membership contributions and grant funding from the US-based Ford, Kellogg and Mott Foundations and the Liberty Life Foundation of South Africa. It has lobbied for better tax treatment for non-profits of all kinds.

**South African NGO Network SANGONeT**, as it is known, is an electronic network that provides low-cost services, including training, to South African labor and non-governmental organizations. It has about 1,000 subscribers, about 20 per cent of whom are individuals. It began as a project of the Development Resources Centre and is now an independent organization. While it was originally grant funded, it is now largely self-sustaining.

**Prodder** Prodder is also an electronic news service that regularly publishes a list of meetings, conferences, seminars, training programs, publications and resources for the independent sector. It typically makes a free weekly electronic mailing to all subscribers. It reports on major events and occasionally has editorial pieces about important issues.

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### Non-Profit Partnership

This interesting organization was set up jointly by SAN-GOCO, SAGA and the UK-based Charities Aid Foundation to promote voluntary and corporate giving and the reform of tax structures to broaden the definition of organizations eligible to receive tax-deductible gifts. It also provides financial services and investment advice to NGOs.

### Impumelelo Innovations

**Award Program** Among the many interesting organizations that have developed in South Africa since the advent of democratic elections is this project to recognize innovative partnerships between government and the independent sector in the delivery of social services. Annual awards are made each year on the basis of a carefully conducted competition.

**Community Foundation Project** The Southern Africa Grantmakers' Association sponsors a service to assist the establishment of endowed community foundations in South Africa, again modelled on British and American experience, but driven by partnerships with local business leaders....

### Regional technical assistance organizations

In addition to the rich range of infrastructure organizations listed above, South Africa has a number of well-established regional technical assistance and training agencies that operate as NGOs serving smaller community-based organizations. Olive (in Durban), the Community Development Resources Agency (in Cape Town) and the Development Resources Centre and Sedibeng (in Johannesburg) are all examples of such organizations. In addition, a justly famous network of human rights organizations (the Legal Resources Centre, the Black Sash and others) provide legal advice to institutions in the independent sector.

**Research organizations** While there is as yet no established national research program dealing with the independent sector, several organizations undertake studies and monitoring of the sector. Most notable among these are the School of Public and Development Management of the University of the Witwatersrand, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa and the Centre for Policy Studies, an independent research center....

The above brief outline indicates the rich organizational structure that has developed to serve the independent sector in one country,



**In the years immediately before the transition to democracy in South Africa, several Ford Foundation grantees played crucial roles in envisioning, and then contributing to drafting, the country's new constitution and establishing the founding principles of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, center at table, at a commission hearing. Ford Foundation photo.**

South Africa, all in less than ten years. None of the above organizations were developed by government and none were the creation of foreign bilateral donors. This largely indigenous development was fortunate because it coincided with a substantial shift in international funding away from the independent sector towards the newly elected government, and in some cases away from South Africa itself. In particular, the European Community, which had been by far the largest donor (probably accounting for more than half of all funding to voluntary organizations), terminated its program abruptly after 1994. Many other European governments and churches also reduced their aid programs in order to address pressing problems in South Eastern Europe and other places. USAID, to its credit, sustained most of its independent sector funding. On balance, however, South Africa demonstrates clearly the dangers to the independent sector of an over-reliance on foreign funders.

### SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR FUNDING THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

How, can the independent sector establish a more robust and sustainable funding base?

#### Maximize the diversity of funding sources

Organizations should seek funding from the widest possible range of sources: government, bilateral donors, corporations, patrons, membership organizations, professional associations, etc. For sustainability, the number of supporters may be more important than the amounts. Many donors also provide more sources of contacts and information.

### Seek to build up self-generated funds

Developing fee-for-service schemes, property rental, consulting services, paid training programs and the like can build a substantial base for independent organizations.

### Build individual giving programs

Although the amounts of membership fees and annual fund donations may be initially small, they may lead to much more valuable contributions of ideas, voluntary time, connections to other donors and eventually bequests.

### Build corporate relations and giving

Organizations should be much more proactive in seeking corporate sponsorship. Some types of activities (sports, health programs, arts festivals, etc)

lend themselves nicely to corporate sponsorship and offer multiple opportunities for publicity for the donors. Voluntary, pro bono activities by corporate employees often lead to substantial funding as well.

**Improve taxation policies** Non-profit organizations need to lobby for tax exemption for certain activities and for greater eligibility for tax-deductible contributions. Corporations, individuals and estates should all be given established deductions (usually 7 to 10 per cent of pre-tax profits for corporations and up to 50 per cent for estates) for gifts to qualifying non-profit organizations and universities. Experience in the U.S. indicates that tax-deductible donations have a substantial multiplier effect: the amounts given are at least four times the losses in tax revenue resulting from the donations.

**Endowments** Even small organizations should seek to build administrative and program endowments or reserve funds, adding to them earned interest, unexpended funds or one-time gifts as the donors permit. International donors are much more likely to give to organizations that have demonstrated a long-term commitment by establishing endowments for administrative costs. Tax exemption for bequests to qualified non-profit organizations is extremely important to the formation of endowments.

**Community foundations** The fastest growing sector of philanthropy in the U.S. is area-based community foundations, which pool gifts from many sources and share high quality professional staff and volunteers.

*Continued on next page*

Community foundations have also proved valuable intermediaries in solving communal disputes and they act as key planning agencies in most American cities. A community foundation movement has also succeeded in the U.K. and is under development in other countries.

**Contracting with state agencies** Non-profits are far more effective than bureaucracies in delivering certain types of services to the community. Day-care, eldercare, school feeding, vocational training, counseling and many other services can be provided more cheaply and sensitively through contracts between independent sector organizations and central, regional and local governments. Though these relations take time to develop and to monitor, they are well worth the effort and can provide a significant income for many non-profits.

**Direct government funding** Ironically, direct government funding is one of the least successful forms of support for non-profit organizations (as opposed to competitive contracting for the provision of services) and works well only in fields such as the arts, where there are arms-length competitions. Government funding is subject to political pressures and often brings with it bureaucratic requirements that are hardly worth the effort.

**Information sharing** One of the most

cost-effective means for improving local philanthropy is sharing experience among private donors. Many donors have the means and the motivation to give but are reluctant to publicize their wealth or to take chances on having their funds misused. An environment of sharing of ideas among donors is often conducive to building confidence and increasing the reliability of grantmaking. A local center for philanthropy can provide the core institution for information sharing and can encourage the formation of both family and corporate foundations.

**Sharing training and services** Like anything else, grantmaking can be done well or badly. A grantmakers' association can help its members by promoting "best practice" and professionalism among donors, by pooling donor resources and by training donors, their board members and their employees. Moreover, the costs of feasibility studies, public education campaigns and the like can be shared among like-minded donors.

**Representing the disadvantaged** When donors act or speak collectively, they can exercise enormous power for good in a given society. An association of grantmakers, therefore, may be more effective in representing the needs of the poor than the poor are themselves. This is an important social responsibility for grantmakers that should not be ignored.

**Setting ethical standards** By acting together, grantmakers can encourage the establishment of best practices and ethical standards among themselves and among recipient organizations. This can be done both by practice and by giving awards and recognition to innovative projects. Providing regular information about grant requirements and procedures can enhance the effectiveness of grantseekers, thereby saving time and promoting better project formulation.

These few recommendations can lead to enhanced indigenous philanthropy and, for they go together, to the creation of a healthier, more self-confident and more self-reliant independent sector. ■

*John Gerhart was a graduate student at Princeton University in 1968 when he was recruited to be a summer intern in the Nairobi, Kenya, office of the Ford Foundation. He was hired as a program officer there the next year and worked for the Foundation for the next 29 years. He was a Ford-sponsored technical assistant in Botswana's Ministry of Agriculture, assistant representative in the Nairobi office, representative in Cairo from 1980 to 1985, a deputy vice president in New York from 1985 to 1992, and then representative in Johannesburg, opening the Foundation's first office in South Africa in 1993. He left Ford in 1998 to become president of The American University in Cairo.*

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## THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I had just sat down to write this Newsletter's message when I learned of the passing of our colleague and my very dear friend **Lynn Walker Huntley** after a brief struggle with cancer.

I had last written to Lynn a few months ago at the time of the Mount Zion First African Baptist Church shootings in Charleston, reminded of her prescient and passionate views of the centrality of the Black church in the community and for the civil rights movement. At this moment of profound community and national tragedy, I wanted to reach out to her, to savor her counsel, her wisdom, her frustration and her hope.

I did not hear back until recently when **Emmett Carson** asked me to call him on a personal matter. He was the bearer of a message from Lynn, warm and generous to a fault, telling me that her illness had prevented her from responding and conveying her love and appreciation for my having provided her with the opportunity to work at the Foundation.

When I became director of the Human Rights and Governance program at the Foundation in 1981, upon Frank Thomas's assumption as President, among my first obligations was to hire a program officer to carry forward the Foundation's emblematic work in support of the civil rights movement. I immediately reached out to the senior leadership in the field, Foundation grantees

prominently among them. Elaine Jones at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and Jack Greenberg at Columbia Law School both urged me to talk to Lynn, then a civil rights lawyer in the U.S. Department of Justice.

Lynn at first glance did not fit my or the Foundation's notion of the civil rights activist, appearing at our interviews in a tailored pinstripe suit, her auburn hair loose around her shoulders, her smile, her wit and effervescent charm on full display. Still, her knowledge of the civil rights movement, her sense of needs and direction, her conviction and her singular smarts convinced me that she was clearly the right person for the job. She proved me right time and again, arguing persuasively for core support to the key movement organizations, Black, Hispanic and Native American.

Lynn was driven by a sense of equity and social justice, not by race or ethnicity. At the time, the Foundation had kept a safe distance from religion and politics, but Lynn made a convincing argument for why and how the Foundation could (and should) develop a program in support of the churches' secular programs. She believed simply in justice and harnessed the Foundation's resources in support of it. As Director of the Rights and Social Justice program, she participated eagerly in the South Africa programs described in this issue and later directed an innovative study of comparative approaches

to race relations in Brazil, South Africa and the United States.

In honor of Lynn and her decades of work in support of civil rights, our editor **John LaHoud** is undertaking a special edition of the Newsletter on the critical role played by the Foundation in the quest for minority and civil rights. The website and the next Newsletter will contain an obituary detailing Lynn's remarkable career as clerk to Justice Constance Baker Motley, at the Justice Department, at the Foundation and as President of the Southern Education Foundation.

For me, what counts at this moment is a few reflections on the stunning authenticity of this wonderful woman. What I will remember, beyond her good works, is the basic goodness of the person who fashioned and executed them with humor and flair and a daring, mischievous nature that easily disarmed her doubters. There was a ready repertoire of poetry to be recited, a salacious joke to shock, a favorite song to mellow, the playacting on my couch of a patient in need of psychological counseling—a retinue of behaviors that cut through the patrician nature of the Foundation and reminded us of who we were.

Among the bevy of extraordinary people who worked at the Foundation, Lynn Walker Huntley was unique, and I will miss her greatly. **Shep Forman**

# INDIAN GOVERNMENT STOKES UP, ONCE AGAIN, ANXIETIES ABOUT FORD

*The government of India notified the Ford Foundation in April that it will be included in the category of institutions that need "prior permission" to accept foreign funds, and requiring all its grants to be pre-approved by the government. This article provides the background to the Foundation's hitherto special status in India, refers to some controversies in the past and provides a prognosis for the Foundation's future work in India.*

**By R. Sudarshan**

In India today it is not very well known that Prime Minister Nehru granted the Ford Foundation American diplomatic privileges and authorised land to be leased to it in the Lutyens's Bungalow Zone, where an American architect, Joseph Allen Stein, built the Foundation's offices, blending into the beautiful Lodi Garden.

The privileges of the Ford Foundation in India, which it retains till today, were listed in the very first grant document signed, in 1952, by the Ministry of Finance and **Douglas Enslinger**, the Foundation's founding representative in India until he retired in 1970, to support a Community Development Project managed by the Government of India.

Among the privileges granted to the Foundation are exemption from income tax for its non-Indian staff and waiver of custom duties on goods imported for its official use and by projects it funded.

A period of complete trust and confidence in the judgment of the Ford Foundation's staff to identify and support state-led initiatives ended with the death of Prime Minister Nehru in 1964. In that year, Foundation-funded economists working on India at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for International Studies (CIS) developed a model of the Indian economy projecting the need to shift the emphasis of Indian planning, in the formulation of its fourth five-year plan, away from Soviet Union-inspired investment in heavy industries (machines to make machines) towards agriculture and wage goods.

Coincidentally, CIA affiliations of the former director of the MIT Center were published in the American press, leading to an outcry in India that its planning process had been infiltrated by the CIA. The Ford Foundation was forced to terminate its grant to CIS to support its studies on India. Indian experts in its Planning Commission terminated the work they were doing with MIT economists,

Stephen Marglin and Thomas Weisskopf, who later joined Harvard, abandoning MIT.

The Foundation in India weathered the allegation that its activities in India were CIA "Trojan horses". Its consultants continued to work with ministry officials and city planners in Calcutta and Delhi. Its grants were cleared by the procedure established in 1952 whereby the Department of Economic Affairs responded to grant proposals by sending to the Foundation's office letters communicating that the government had "no objection" to those proposals.

This procedure was understandable in the period when the Foundation's grants were made to directly support projects of the Union government and State governments or state-supported organisations, such as institutes of technology, management, agricultural universities, the Indian Institute of Public Administration and the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Public Administration.

In the early 1970s, the Foundation stopped employing foreign consultants on its projects. It decided, instead, to make grants to Indian institutions whose work accorded with the priorities set by its Trustees and granted, rent-free, its spacious premises in Lodi Estate to the United Nations and converted its guest house into a more modest office. Gradually, non-government organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs) and advocacy groups advancing human rights, social justice and governance concerns outnumbered government entities among the Foundation's grantees. Nevertheless, no changes were made in the procedure established by the Government to convey its "no objection" to grant proposals.

On June 26, 1975, a state of emergency was imposed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, beleaguered by opposition parties' demands for her resignation after she had been convicted by the Allahabad High Court for "corrupt practices" in her landslide 1971 election victory to parliament. Fears of the "foreign hand" intent on subverting an established constitutional government in India resurfaced.

During the emergency, when nearly all opposition members in parliament were in jail, the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act of 1976 (FCRA) came into force, banning foreign funding to political parties, newspapers and members of legislatures. It required all organisations seeking support from foreign

sources (except the United Nations and its affiliated bodies, including the World Bank and Asian Development Bank) to register themselves with the Home Ministry and obtain prior permission of the government before accepting foreign funding. It required these organisations to send annual reports to the Home Ministry even if they received no funds in any given year.

In 1984, the FCRA provisions were tightened further with more penalties for non-compliance. With respect to the Ford Foundation's grants, the only difference in the procedure established in 1952 for conveying the government's "no objection" was that the Department of Economic Affairs would obtain "clearance" for those grants from the FCRA department in the Home Ministry.

When Congress was the ruling party in Delhi, Gandhian institutions came under strict scrutiny and their sources of funding were closely monitored. From 1987 until 1991 a grant from the Ford Foundation to support a new institution, Public Interest Legal Support and Research Centre (PILSARC), could not get FCRA clearance. In 1991, though, the government overruled its earlier decision on foreign funding for legal aid and services, and communicated its "no objection" to PILSARC, which received the grant more than four years later.

Those long-standing arrangements changed earlier this year when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, directed the Reserve Bank of India to ensure that all Indian banks report to it any deposits received from the Ford Foundation by institutions having accounts with them. The government is obviously furious that Sabrang Communication was given a grant of \$200,000 in 2006 by the Ford Foundation to, as described in its annual report, "address communalism and caste-based discrimination in India through active research, Web-based information dissemination, development of civil society networks and media strategies". It reacted, apparently, to statements by Teesta Setalvad and her husband, Javed Anand, managers of Sabrang Communication, that accused Prime Minister Modi of responsibility for instigating riots in 2002 against Muslims in Gujarat, resulting in a massacre.

Moreover, Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia, leaders of the Aam Aadmi party,

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which resoundingly defeated the BJP in the 2015 elections to the Delhi State Assembly, have also been beneficiaries of the Ford Foundation. Kabir, an NGO managed by them, received Ford Foundation support amounting to \$400,000 over a three-year period beginning in 2008 to “produce training materials on India’s Right-to-Information law, document & disseminate information about its effective use to promote transparent & accountable governance & for staff development”.

The government’s recent action does not change the procedure it has followed since 1952 for conveying to the Ford Foundation its “no objection” to its grant proposals. In fact, the grants to Sabrang Communication and Kabir must have been made by the Foundation only after receiving “no objection” letters from the Department of Economic Affairs.

What is different now is that the government regards the Ford Foundation’s New Delhi office as an entity that should register itself under FCRA because it receives “foreign contributions” from the Foundation in New York. This also entails an additional obligation of submitting annual reports to the Home Ministry on how funds credited to its bank account in India were used.

The government is also concerned whether the Foundation’s grantees have used its money exclusively for the purposes for which they were granted. There may also be an apprehension that the Foundation could have made some grants directly from New York without the India office obtaining the “no objection” letter from the Department of Economic Affairs.

The Ford Foundation remains highly regarded in government circles for the contribution it made towards the success of India’s Green Revolution, in partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation. They supported the work of scientists who developed high-yielding varieties of wheat and an intensive effort to persuade farmers, who are generally risk-averse, to switch over to planting the high-yielding wheat.

The former Prime Minister of India, Narashimha Rao, when he was Minister for Human Resources Development in the government headed by Prime Minister Rajeev Gandhi, gave the Foundation some memorable advice during a meeting where I requested his intervention to get more speedy delivery of “no objection” letters to the grants it had proposed. He said the Foundation should focus its energies in demonstrating solutions to a few big problems instead of making a number of scatter-shot grants with relatively low overall impact.

After complimenting the Foundation for

what it did for the Green Revolution, he said, “Let me give you another revolution in which the Foundation should have a role. The Green Revolution was relatively easy because the wheat plant is predictable in its responses to inputs of water, fertilizer and pesticides. The revolution I want to see happen is girls’ education. People, unlike plants, are not predictable and so it is hard to tell what inputs or incentives will persuade parents to send their daughters to school and keep them there until they finish high school.

“I suggest that the Ford Foundation should select a few districts to experiment on what needs to be done to ensure that every girl goes to school and completes high school. If the Foundation can figure how to change the attitudes of parents toward girl children, much as it did to change attitudes of farmers who feared adopting a new variety of seeds,

then the government will again appreciate its works and replicate its success and scale it up all over the country.”

The Ford Foundation has played a significant role in the development of an array of reputable Indian institutions for 63 years. It can be expected to weather the latest storm over some activities of some of its more recent grantees.

But it also is necessary for the Foundation to reconsider its current strategy of making relatively small grants to a large number of non-governmental entities. ■

*R. Sudarshan is Dean and a professor at the Jindal School of Government and Public Policy, O.P., Jindal Global University, in Sonipat, India. He is a former staff member of the Ford Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme.*

## FIVE GREAT MOMENTS FROM ASPEN IDEAS FESTIVAL 2015



**Reza Aslan's talk “The Jesus of History versus the Christ of Faith”.**  
Aspen Institute photo.

*(Editor's note: The videos mentioned in this article, along with many others from the festival Samuelson writes about, can be found on the website of the Aspen Ideas Festival.)*

### By Judith Samuelson

One of the great privileges working for the Aspen Institute is to attend the Ideas Festival, which ended with a satisfying chorus on July 4. I left infused with fresh ideas and connections to build on the next year. My advice for newcomers: Skip the pun-dits and lean in to innovative change agents, the “makers” who work across the spectrum of business, arts, education and politics. You know an event is a success when your hope is renewed.

What ideas stick from the 2015 Festival? Here are five to get you started.

**Disrupting elections:** The Pluribus Project is a new venture of the Aspen Institute that builds on the work of Stephen Heinz and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. The goal is a lofty one: to rebalance power in the United States by infusing elections and connections with the power of the many, rather than the few. The MO is to support the innovators, including technological innovations in social media that will allow for “Disrupting Political Campaigns: Shifting Influence From the Money to the Many”. Watch Lucas Welch’s powerful presentation of how the change will take place. (It’s good to remember that technology can be my friend.)

**When an idea goes viral:** While the crowds surged into the big tent to see Katie Couric interview David Brooks on his recent

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book on character, I chose the lesser path and joined a small but grateful audience to hear Reza Aslan, author of *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*, talk about “The Jesus of History versus the Christ of Faith”.

His talk reminds me of the great power of ideas to shift the conversation to a different place. It helps if the actors involved are gifted storytellers, but when the conditions are ripe for change, extraordinary things can happen.

**Hope to address climate change:** One of those moments took shape before my eyes watching Ronald Brownstein’s masterful interview of Tom Steyer on “Why California is Leading the United States in Energy Innovation”. Steyer’s key point: Get cracking and utilize a pricing mechanism to enlist markets and address climate change before it is too late. Watch to the end to see Tom mix it up with his nemesis David Koch, who had listened from the front row. A true Aspen moment.

**What is an employee worth?** And then another disrupter: Dan Price, who has earned more than 10 minutes of fame by cutting his own pay as CEO and raising wages in his Seattle tech company, Gravity Payments: “The \$70,000 Minimum Wage”. Dan’s thoughtful analysis of the business drivers behind the real value of his employees has created waves in the market and across the airwaves.

**Jazz: a metaphor for America:** Finally, don’t miss the grand finale with three New Orleans natives: Walter Isaacson’s interview with masters of the art of jazz, Wynton Marsalis and young Jon Batiste, who will soon join *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* as bandleader. Jazz, in all its complexity, is a metaphor for what makes this country great: ingenuity, innovation, collaboration, call and response, and syncopation—bound by rhythm and melody.

Watching Marsalis on stage on the 4th of July, while he listens to young Batiste play his rendition of “The Star Spangled Banner”, is a wonderful moment—and a reminder of the great stew of the United States, where infinite possibilities for change and innovation still reside. What is possible now? ■

*Judith Samuelson is the founder and executive director of the Aspen Institute Business and Society Program (BSP), which was established in 1998 when she was head of the Program Related Investments program at Ford from 1989 to 1998. Aspen BSP respects the power of business to shape the long-term health of society and works to align business decisions with the public good. Judy is a regular contributor to the Huffington Post and received a Bellagio Fellowship in 2013 from the Rockefeller Foundation to write on her experience influencing business. Follow her on Twitter, @JudySamuelson.*

## JON HAGLER: A UNIQUE POST-FF CAREER

By Willard Hertz

**F**rontline is U.S. television’s longest running investigative documentary series. Now in its 33rd year on PBS, *Frontline* produces and broadcasts prize-winning in-depth documentaries about various subjects of public interest, notably last year’s controversial 90-minute special about where the U.S. intervention in Iraq went wrong and the more recent report on the National Rifle Association and its successful opposition to gun control.

Each program of *Frontline* begins with an expression of appreciation for the funding of its annual operating expenses by a series of foundations, including Ford. The list then concludes with “major credit” to “Jon and Jo Ann Hagler on behalf of the Jon L. Hagler Foundation” for a one-time grant of \$5 million to the Frontline Journalism Fund. Complementing programs made for *Frontline* by external film makers, the Fund is an endowment vehicle for investigative journalism by *Frontline*’s own staff.

Older LAFF members will remember **Jon Hagler** as the financial vice president and treasurer of the Ford Foundation from 1977 through 1981. Since his departure, he has had a unique career as a philanthropist in his own right, building on his Ford experience. In contrast to other LAFF members who have gone on to staff organizations and other foundations, Hagler has created and funded his own grant-making foundation.

Hagler began his career in financial management as a student at Texas A&M University and then at the Harvard Business School. Advising fellow students on their investments, he found that he possessed a gift for managing money. After receiving his MBA degree, he took a job as a research analyst for United Funds, a mutual fund. Four years later he was managing an investment portfolio of \$1.3 billion and had founded two investment management firms, in New York and Boston.

Then, at the age of 40, Hagler became the chief investment officer at the Ford Foundation. His five years at the Foundation coincided with a doldrum in the nation’s capital markets. During that period the Dow Jones dropped 12.9 percent, but Ford’s assets, under Hagler’s oversight, grew from \$2.1 to \$2.7 billion, and its dividend and interest earnings rose from \$98 million to \$197 million.

In joining Ford, Hagler recalled in an interview, he was attracted as much by its philanthropic activities as by its gigantic financial resources. “My family believed in citizen

responsibility,” he stated. “My father did tours of Latin America and Africa with the Agency for International Development (AID) and the University of Illinois. For years I served as a member of the finance committee of the Africa-America Institute and later as a Trustee.

“While my role at the Ford Foundation was largely financial management, I received and read, and sometimes participated in, grant proposals. So it is an article of faith with me that each of us needs to lead a purposeful existence that hopefully leaves behind more than we have taken from society.”

After leaving the Foundation, Hagler helped found the investment management firm of Hagler, Mastrovita & Hewitt in Boston, and before long it was managing about \$2 billion. His partners wanted to monetize their interest in the firm, so they sold it to United Asset Management. Hagler continued his management role as chairman for an additional eight years.

In 1996, at the age of 60, he was approached by Grantham, Mayo & van Otterloo (GMO), another Boston investment management firm, to take a senior management position. After declining the role as managing partner, he was named chair of a Governance Committee and a board member. He retired from that firm in 2010.

Hagler’s success as a financial manager was accompanied by his growing involvement in personal philanthropy. Inspired by his experience at the Ford Foundation, in 1984 he founded, with his wife Jo Ann, the Jon L. Hagler Foundation, a “family-oriented” donor organization. The foundation has had no outside trustees, and Jon, working without salary, has been its only professional staff member. Its assets at the end of calendar 2014 were \$5.3 million, and its grant-making program, which varies from year to year, averaged \$1.365 million per year during the five years ending last December.

In his interview, Hagler said the Ford Foundation has been a major influence on how he and his wife think about grant-making. “Although our assets are vastly smaller, we still look for ways our commitments can have a beneficial or leveraged effect to enhance social progress or social justice,” he said. “As we have become more enlightened about the numerous imperfections of our society, we are glad that our good fortune in life can be used to try to help address some of the problems.”

The program interests of the Hagler  
*Continued on next page*

Foundation have evolved over time, but are heaviest in education, medical research and a category that he calls “investigative journalism” and includes the foundation’s grant of \$5 million last year to Frontline. Other major grants supported the establishment of two chairs and a research fund at the Harvard Medical School/Massachusetts General Hospital, the Lymphoma Center at the hospital, and a series of grants to Texas A&M for its College of Education, minority scholarships and its own fund-raising foundation. In his honor, the university gave Hagler an Honorary Doctorate of Letters, its highest award for a former student, and named the home of its foundation the Jon L. Hagler Center.

Other grantees have included the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, Doctors Without Borders, the Foundation for National Progress (Mother Jones), Planned Parenthood, the Center for Public Integrity, and the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The Haglers were longtime fans of public radio and television, and Hagler’s experience at the Ford Foundation magnified that interest. “We both loved and admired **Fred Friendly**,” Hagler recalled, “and I was at the table in many meetings listening to the debate about public television’s funding and effectiveness. As our assets increased, we began to look at ways that we, too, might have a positive impact in public broadcasting.”

Eventually they selected *Frontline* for their focus in the belief that it was one of PBS’s most useful programs. As Hagler explained:

“As we became more distressed over the workings and inequities of our economy, our enthusiasm for investigative journalism increased and *Frontline* seemed a wonderful platform to get the word out. Many traditional news sources have become so commercial or excessively sensitive to commercial interests that their ability to find and publish factually based investigative journalism is limited.

“As we believe that a well-informed citizenry is a fundamental requirement of democracy, we thought an increased capacity for *Frontline* would be an excellent investment.”

The Haglers’ \$5 million grant to *Frontline*, in June 2014, was the largest single grant from one family in the program’s history. The funds came from both personal resources and their foundation, and it is not unusual for them to fulfill a major grant from both sources. Most of the grant went towards building a new endowment for Frontline’s in-house investigative journalism to complement programs made by independent filmmakers.

In announcing the Haglers’ grant, *Frontline* also announced an \$800,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to hire two investigative

reporters and a digital specialist to deepen the program’s in-house investigative research. According to Hagler, the two grants, while having a common overall purpose, were made independently. “I don’t think I really knew until after we had made our grant that the Ford Foundation was also considering a grant,” he said.

*Frontline*’s news release announcing the grants included the following statement from Executive Producer David Fanning:

“These two gifts are a vote of confidence in *Frontline*’s ambitions for the future. We know that to keep doing significant investigative

reporting we have to undertake a major effort to raise additional funds for the time-intensive and costly work of enterprise journalism. The generosity of the Haglers and the support from the Ford Foundation is an expression of optimism about the future of the series and the kind of journalism we practice, and need to keep expanding.”

**Willard Hertz**, now retired and living in Maine, was a staff writer in the Foundation’s Office of Reports, assistant representative in Pakistan and assistant secretary of the Foundation in its New York City headquarters office.

## Review

# CHICAGO TO FERGUSON—AND THE TORTURED ROAD BEYOND



From *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*

By David Finkelstein

As someone who in the early 1960s was perhaps too narcissistically absorbed in his studies abroad to take much notice of the increasingly divisive and deadly domestic issues coming to a head in his distant homeland of America—in those years I was an East-West Center fellowship student in Taiwan, there to learn Chinese—I’ve always felt removed, and remorsefully so, whenever my contemporaries spoke about that era and the political and social movements, particularly the Black Panther Party, it spawned. Though vaguely familiar with its key players, genuinely informed about who they really were and how they viewed the world, I most certainly was not.

Well, director Stanley Nelson’s new documentary, *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*, which I recently was privileged to see as part of a film-screening series jointly sponsored by Philanthropy New York and the Ford Foundation’s JustFilm’s program, has put an end to my ignorance—and hopefully that

of others as well—through his extraordinarily well-balanced but no less shocking account of how that group of committed social activists came into being and how our presumably free and open democracy dealt with them, by fair means and foul. Mostly by the latter, through entrapment, legally-sanctioned sabotage, agent provocateur-incited mayhem and outright murder.

Though differing in style and surroundings, America’s law enforcement authorities rivaled the likes of Kim Philby, the infamous Cambridge-educated double agent who spent his career selling Great Britain’s entire intelligence operation to Stalin’s KGB (and sacrificing the lives of thousands of operatives in the process), in betraying the values of the nation to which they owed allegiance.

Among the many thoughts the film inevitably provokes, one stands out as being crucially related to the issue so hotly debated today: the recent spate of highly-publicized police killings of black men in cities throughout this

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country, most of them going unpunished. Will America ever live up to its societal ideal of “equal justice under the law”?

Just weeks ago, Oskar Gröning, the 94-year-old man sometimes referred to as “the accountant of Auschwitz,” was convicted by a German court of being an accessory to murder and sentenced to four years in prison for his role in the murder of Jews during World War II. The trial, which lasted 12 weeks, has been described as “a hugely symbolic last-ditch act on the part of the German authorities to put the handful of remaining Nazi death camp guards in the dock before they die,” the symbolism perhaps designed to counter the recent resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe.

The Germans evidently believe that, however distant the crime or elderly the perpetrator, holding a person accountable for complicity in such horrific acts is important for the country’s redemption, for its future health and well-being, if you will, a sentiment with which, hopefully, most decent people in America (and elsewhere) would wholeheartedly agree. Yet the terrible irony is that Americans seems far less interested than Germans in bringing their own state-sponsored assassins to justice.

If we had any interest in doing so, given what is now known about the cold-blooded 1969 killing of 21-year-old Black Panther Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton, who while asleep in his bed with his pregnant girlfriend was pumped so full of bullets by a Chicago police department hit squad that his body trailed a river of blood into the street, wouldn’t there have been, or shouldn’t there now be, a concerted effort on the part of the U.S. Department of Justice to bring to trial every surviving member of that group of assassins?

And given that the killings—in the same raid 22-year-old Mark Clark, a party leader from Peoria, was also murdered, shot multiple times at point-blank range—were instigated and authorized by the FBI, shouldn’t the responsible surviving members of that agency, who perhaps might best be described as “the accountants of Jim Crow,” also be brought to trial? As they’d be the first to tell you, there’s no statute of limitations on murder.

While it might be “merely symbolic” to hold these killers accountable at this late date, as in the case of Gröning in Germany, it would be hugely so. Who knows, had such indictments been issued years ago, the sickeningly violent events that have more recently taken place in Ferguson, New York, Baltimore and elsewhere might never have occurred.

Stanley Nelson’s fine film provoked yet another disturbing thought, though that came about by virtue of the fact that a few

months prior to seeing his documentary, and again thanks to Philanthropy New York and the Ford Foundation’s JustFilms program, I had seen Laura Poitras’s equally important *Citizen Four*. It struck me that whereas Mr. Nelson’s film portrays the white President Richard M. Nixon setting his ugly regime, in the person of the white FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, against young, well-meaning black activists dedicated to democratizing America, Poitras’s film narrates the sad story of the black President Barack Obama setting his regime, in the person of the black U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, against young, equally well-meaning and dedicated white activists, the “whistleblowers” of our digital age: Thomas Drake, Jesselyn Radack, Edward Snowden, Bradley Manning, Jeffrey Sterling—the list goes on and on. Indeed, as is now well-known, President Obama has the dubious distinction of prosecuting more of these whistleblowers than all his presidential predecessors throughout history combined, while curiously failing to hold accountable any of those responsible for the heinous crim-

inal acts the whistleblowers were reporting.

Though this realization does not in any way lessen my belief that racism is one of America’s greatest curses and crimes, I think it important for all of us to unite in focusing on an even more dangerous phenomenon from which, sadly, no race is immune, the seeming ineluctability of those who attain positions of power to move towards authoritarianism, if not outright Orwellian tyranny.

How to keep democracy alive in the face of such destructive instincts would appear to be America’s most pressing problem.

*Prior to embarking on a career as a freelance journalist, the author served as a Chinese interpreter for the U.S. State Department, a member of the faculty of Harvard Law School and a Ford Foundation program officer. His writing credits include The New Yorker, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, Newsday, The (London) Observer, The Times of India and numerous other prominent national and international publications.*

## LAFfing Parade

**Andrea Taylor**, who was director of the Foundation’s Media Program from 1988 to 1997 and most recently was an executive with Microsoft, has been named president and CEO of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, Ala.

“The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute is among the world’s most iconic and important civil and human rights organizations,” she said. “Inclusive outreach worldwide is vital in 2015 and beyond. I’m eager to harness and leverage technology to engage broader audiences.

“Every generation in society grapples with civil and human rights as a critical community priority.”

Taylor had been Director of Citizenship and Public Affairs, North America for Microsoft from 2006 to 2014. She has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Council on Foundations and an adjunct professor at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education.

She has a bachelor’s degree in journalism from Boston University and was elected to the school’s Board of Trustees in 2009, where she chairs its Academic Affairs Committee. The university honored her in 2008 with its Distinguished Alumni Award.

**Radhika Balakrishnan** and **Mallika Dutt** have been named to a new Commission on Gender Equity in New York City, established earlier this year by Mayor Bill de Blasio “to

achieve economic mobility and social inclusion of all New Yorkers, particularly women and girls, and ensure their public safety.” It replaces the city’s Commission on Women’s Issues, which had been created in 2002.

The commission, among other work, will advise the mayor on “initiatives and methods to achieve the goals of the mayor’s platform to reduce inequality, with a focus on gender-based inequality”; advocate for women, girls, transgender and inter-sex residents; support programs that remove barriers to full participation by women in their personal and work lives; study the nature and effects of intentional and unintentional discrimination against women, and recommend legislative and executive action to improve the lives of women.

Said the mayor, “New York City is a city spiritually defined by inclusion and diversity, and it’s imperative that all New Yorkers, regardless of sex, gender or sexual orientation, are treated equally.”

Balakrishnan is the executive director of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership, which is part of Rutgers University in New Jersey. She worked for the Foundation from 1992 to 1995 in its Asia and Pacific program.

“Gender equality and equity have been the focus of my academic and activist life for over thirty years,” she said. “I am honored to serve on a commission that that will champion gender equity in public policy in the city that I love and call my home.”

Dutt is the founder, president and CEO of  
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## LAFfing Parade

Breakthrough, a global human rights organization whose mission is “to build a world in which violence against women and girls is unacceptable and all people enjoy their human rights.” She worked in the Foundation’s New Delhi office from 1996 to 2000.

“I am honored and humbled to join this historic group of esteemed leaders who can help New York City become a place where all people enjoy their human rights and live with equality, dignity and justice”, she said. “Locally and globally, we stand at a tipping point where deep culture change is within our grasp, and I believe New York can lead the way.”

**Wayne Winborne** is the new executive director of the Institute of Jazz Studies (IJS), described as the “largest and most comprehensive library and archive of jazz and jazz-related materials in the world.”

The institute, founded in 1952 and now located in Newark, N.J., as part of Rutgers University, has a collection that includes “extensive and rare recordings, publications, instruments and artifacts of jazz history”. It is the “designated repository” for the archives of many jazz figures, including Benny Carter and Mary Lou Williams.

“I can’t wait to get started,” said Winborne, a former Ford program officer. “There is so much to build upon: the IJS’s phenomenal holdings, experienced and committed staff, rich history, the intellectual resources of the university and the good will among so many collaborators across Newark, the New York metro area and the jazz world.”

For the last five years Winborne has headed his own firm, the Winborne Group, a consulting company that specializes in business development, strategic planning, fundraising, diversity, multicultural marketing and program design and facilitation.

He had previously been vice president for business diversity outreach at Prudential Financial in Newark, director of program and policy research at the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ), senior research coordinator at the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College and an adjunct lecturer in psychology and research methods at New York University and the City University of New York’s Baruch College.

He has an extensive background in jazz, having worked as an adviser and consultant to artists and musicians as well as filmmakers, playwrights and theater producers. He has produced recordings for the MaxJazz, High-

Note and Savant labels, and taught jazz history and appreciation at Stanford University.

**Michael Seltzer** now is the director of The New York Community Trust Leadership Fellows program, which trains and mentors individuals “to fill a leadership void left by retiring executives of nonprofits...to ensure tomorrow’s nonprofits have the leadership to flourish as they help New Yorkers”.

The program, created with Baruch College’s School of Public Affairs, its Center for Non-profit Strategy and Management, and its Office of Executive Programs, offers an 18-week professional certificate program that includes learning seminars with college faculty and practitioners, a curriculum “taught through the lens of real-world issues and trends”, projects related to the fellow’s organization and its challenges, and opportunities to meet with and be mentored by professionals in the non-profit world and government.

Seltzer, a member of the executive committee of The LAFF Society, is a Distinguished Lecturer at the Baruch School of Public Affairs. He has also been president of Philanthropy New York and a program officer at Ford responsible for its work in strengthening the nonprofit sector and promoting organized philanthropy worldwide. ■