

SOCIAL JUSTICE PHILANTHROPY PRINCIPLES

written by Resource Generation

Social justice philanthropy focuses on the *root causes* of social, racial, economic and environmental injustices.

It strives to include the people who are impacted by those injustices as decision-makers. It also aims to make the field of philanthropy more accessible and diverse. In social justice philanthropy, foundations are accountable, transparent and responsive in their grantmaking. Donors and foundations act as allies to social justice movements by contributing not only monetary resources but their time, knowledge, skills and access. Social justice philanthropy is also sometimes called social change philanthropy, social movement philanthropy, and community-based philanthropy.

So, what does that definition really mean? It includes five key principles:

- 1) Social justice giving focuses on systemic change that addresses the root causes of racial, economic and environmental injustice, not just the symptoms. For example: Multi-year funding organizations creating public safety initiatives and working to defund the police, rather than only responding after a murder has happened.
- 2) Social justice giving centers the people who are most impacted as key decision-makers, and respects their self-determination by giving with no strings attached. For example: Giving general operating support to Black-led, Native-led, Immigrant-led etc organizations that are powerfully positioned to have the best insight into what organizing and solutions work best for their communities.
- 3) In social justice philanthropy, foundations strive to be accountable, transparent and responsive in their grant-making. For example: Clear, simple, compensated application processes, explicit funding criteria, and invitations for feedback that help build strong relationships.
- 4) Donors and foundations act in solidarity with social justice movements by contributing not only money but time, knowledge, skills and access. For example: Helping an organization fundraise, strengthening community campaigns by sharing any relevant connections, advocate for increased foundation payouts and increasing taxes on the wealthy, door-knocking in your neighborhood, etc.
- 5) Foundations use their assets and investments, alongside grants, to support progressive social change. For example: Give out more than the mandated 5% of assets and invest the rest in non-extractive or regenerative investments. Enable grassroots groups to acquire land and make capital purchases.

How Much Money Goes to Progressive Social Justice Anyway?

In 2006, \$2.3 billion of foundation funding went to progressive social justice out of a total of \$19.1 billion in giving, or less than 12%. This amount includes family foundation, private independent foundation and public foundation giving (The Foundation Center: "Social Justice Grantmaking II," 2009).

A recent report showed foundations gave \$1.76 billion for social justice causes in 2002. In the period between 1998 and 2002, social justice giving grew by 53.4 percent. However, this impressive number is overshadowed by the fact that total giving rose by 64 percent during the same period, causing the percentage of foundation giving that was earmarked for social justice grants to drop to 11.8 percent. (NCRP– Creating A Philanthropic Sector That is More Responsive to the Needs of Diverse Communities; p. 6).