

The Racialization of Philanthropic and Nonprofit Organizations: A Critical Analysis of White Supremacy & Economic Injustice in the Sector

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Note: This is a preprint of a chapter forthcoming in R. Mirabella, T. Coule & A. Eikenberry (Eds.). *Handbook of critical perspectives on nonprofit organizing and voluntary action: Concepts, applications, and future directions*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

<a> The Racialization of Philanthropic and Nonprofit Organizations: A Critical Analysis of White Supremacy & Economic Injustice in the Sector

Philanthropic organizations, and the nonprofits that rely on philanthropic giving, are built upon a vast and persistent racial wealth gap in the United States. In this chapter, we call for intentional and sustained attention to intersections of race and class in the dynamics between organized philanthropy and nonprofit organizations. Combining scholarship on elite philanthropy with critical theories of structural racism, we argue that systems of unearned white advantage have simultaneously fuelled organized philanthropy and muted the philanthropic contributions of communities of color. We examine how interactions between organized philanthropy and nonprofits facilitate the racialization of these organizations as spaces that center the interests of white donors and encourage the reproduction and reinforcement of racial inequality in core functions of nonprofits. Finally, we consider the implications of the perpetuation of white supremacy in the sector and offer avenues for transformation in policy, research, and practice.

Keywords: philanthropy, nonprofit organizations, wealth gap, white supremacy, racialized organizations

** Introduction**

Philanthropic organizations, and the nonprofit organizations that depend on philanthropic giving, are built upon a vast racial wealth gap that persists in the United States. Researchers, who measure wealth by calculating the difference between household assets to debts, have consistently found that U.S. households headed by people who are racialized as white hold significantly higher wealth than households led by people of color. As of 2019, the median wealth of white households was \$189,100 while Black households held \$24,100, Latino households held \$36,100 (Fry, Bennet, and Barroso, 2021) and Native American households held an estimated \$39,719 (Wilson & Mokhiber, 2017). Wealth inequality reflects disparities in income, with Black, Latino, Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Pacific

Islanders and many Asian Americans receiving significantly less median income than whites (Guzman, 2020). Wealth in the U.S. has also been shaped by asset accumulation, including homeownership which has been key to the wealth of the middle class, and the acquisition of bonds, stocks, mutual funds, and other investments which provide the bulk of assets for higher income households (Kunh, et al, 2020). Inheritance further perpetuates the racial wealth gap across generations: white households are more likely to inherit assets that provide a cascade of life-long advantages, while Black and Latino households much more likely to be burdened with debt (Oliver & Shapiro, 1997; Seamster, 2019).

As Robinson (2020[1983]) argued, structural racism is deeply embedded in the history of capitalism, and the ‘cage’ of Eurocentrism and racism has long shaped the accumulation of capital in the U.S. In recent years, the racialization of the wealth gap has only escalated. Between 1983 and 2016, the median Black family saw their wealth drop by more than half, while median white households rose by a third (Asante-Mohammad, 2020). During this same period, households with the highest wealth continued to amass vast fortunes. In 2020, just 70 U.S. billionaires held a total of \$1.9 trillion, the equivalent to the home equity wealth of all Black and Latino households combined. With the COVID-19 pandemic, shifts in the economy have further exacerbated the connection between the racial wealth divide and economic precarity. Wealth offers a source of economic power that helps cushion against personal and societal emergencies and expands choices and opportunities of the holder and the holder’s family (Williams, 2017). At the beginning of the pandemic, the typical White family had \$50,600 in equities they could tap into in an emergency, compared to just \$14,400 for the typical Black family and \$14,900 for the typical Latino family (Bhutta, et al., 2020). Many Black and Latino households entered the COVID-19 pandemic with zero or negative wealth (Asante Mohammad, et al, 2020).

Formal philanthropic organizations and practices were first formed out of these racialized economic disparities. The wealth of the earliest elite philanthropists, including Andrew Carnegie's profits from investments in railroads, bridges, and steel (Harvey, et al., 2011) and John D. Rockefeller's lucrative investments in oil (Barrett, 2021), were amassed because they had the legal, social, and political advantages of being white and male. For many years, scholars have cautioned against the outsized influence wielded by the wealthy through their philanthropic giving. The logic of elite philanthropy derives not only from the ethics of virtue and duty, but also from "sustained inequalities of income and wealth that create opportunity for the rich to voluntarily support the poor" (MacLean, et al., 2021, p. 330). Elite philanthropists actively invested their resources -- money, know-how, time, social connections, reputation, and prestige -- in projects that promised "high social rates of return," including the power to shape systems of meaning, alter social arrangements (Harvey, et al., 2011), and set the terms for relations between donors and recipients (Bernholz, et al., 2016; Ostrander and Schervich, 1990). As the wealth gap has escalated, more scholars have cautioned about the dangers of an elite philanthropy that systemically concentrates power in the hands of mega foundations and the most prestigious endowed charitable organizations (Maclean, et al., 2021) and hands them control of cultural, social, and political priorities (Horvath & Powell, 2016) all under an aura of altruism (Giridharadas, 2019).

Scholars have noted that any analysis of philanthropy in the United States must center an attention to the intersections of race and class. An early and now growing body of scholarship points to the ways that organized philanthropy has diverted critique and perpetuated white domination through grantmaking, framing, and public policy advocacy (Allen, 1969; Ahn, 2007; Morey, 2022). Others have challenged the narrow definitions of philanthropy that ignore the long

histories of philanthropic giving and care among people of color, and Black American women in particular (Freeman, 2020; Logan, 2014). Some have offered trenchant critiques, analyzing the colonial roots of contemporary philanthropy (Villanueva, 2018); documenting racial disparities in the composition of foundation boards and staff (Buteau & Orensten, 2020) and the highlighting the impact of race and racism on the experiences of people of color who work and interact with philanthropic organizations (Chandler, et al., 2014).

In this chapter, we build on these conversations to argue for more intentional and sustained attention to the intersection of race and class in organized philanthropy. Drawing from the work of critical scholars that have theorized race and whiteness in the U.S., we apply the analytic lens of white supremacy to highlight how systems of unearned white advantage have and continue to fuel organized philanthropy while simultaneously discounting the philanthropic contributions of communities of color in the United States. We then turn to the literature on racialized organizations (Ray, 2019) to argue that the dynamic between philanthropy and nonprofit organizations plays a key role racializing nonprofits as spaces that reproduce and reinforce white dominance and racial inequality. Third, we consider the implications of attention to the legacy and perpetuation of white supremacy in the sector and offer avenues for future transformation in systems and practices.

** White Supremacy, Wealth, and Philanthropy**

As an analytic concept, white supremacy underscores both the material and ideological production of racialized structures and the brutal hegemony of whiteness in the United States (Bonds & Inwood, 2016). Rooted in early European expansion across the world, with its traditions of violent conquest, colonization, and racialization (Trouillot, 1991), white supremacy is deeply embedded in the foundations of U.S. economic, social, and political systems. The

earliest European settlers deployed social constructions of race and hierarchy to bolster their structural, material, and corporeal exploitation of land and people, dispossessing Native people, enslaving African people, and limiting rights to white, propertied men (Lipsitz, 2018). Never static, white supremacy was maintained over time by legal systems and economic policies that granted unearned structural advantages to those deemed white, and restricted the citizenship, seized the property, and exploited the labor of Asian, Black, Caribbean, Latino, Native American, Pacific Islander and other people of color (ibid). Today, possession and proximity to whiteness continues to shape the unequal distribution of wealth, prestige, power, and opportunity in the U.S., affording unfair gains and unearned rewards to those who are classified as white while imposing impediments to asset accumulation, employment, housing, and health care for members of other racialized groups (ibid).

A critical approach to the U.S. nonprofit and philanthropic sector requires a close attention to the development of family wealth through white supremacist policies and regulations. The accumulated resources that fuel philanthropic organizations, including estates, bequests, endowments, corporate profits, pensions, and other investments (Phillips, et al., 2016), reflect a long history of unearned structural advantages for white households. The federal tax system has provided pathways for the highest income earners to control and transfer wealth within their families. According to Duquette (2019), the U.S. charitable deduction was created in 1917 to protect voluntary giving by rich industrialists who had made their fortunes in business. After World War II, it provided an option for the richest American families to avoid paying federal taxes and spurred the growth of private foundations, which had the “additional benefit of leaving control of corporate shares to one’s heirs through a single untaxed legal entity” (p. 570).

Accumulated family wealth can “travel across the generations,” creating an “unequivocal link between the present and our racialized past of enslavement, extermination, and expropriation” (Williams, 2017, p. 321). Over time, changes in the tax code have lessened the value of income gained through work and given favored treatment to forms of income most accessible to white families such as inheritance, investment, and homeownership (Bhutta, 2020). Today, intergenerational transfers of wealth account for more of the racial wealth gap than any other demographic or socioeconomic indicator (Hamilton & Darity, 2010; See also Batchelder, 2020).

In addition to the distinct advantages granted to white families, we must also recognize the policies that systematically and intentionally disadvantaged people of color. Whether through the dispossession of land endured by Indigenous peoples, the enslavement of Black Americans, or the systematic exclusions of Asians and Latinos, there have been widespread attempts to impede economic activity and wealth accumulation among communities of color. Since emancipation, Black Americans have faced organized and often violent attempts to dismantle any economic gains. Similarly, policies including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the National Origins Act of 1924, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II created discriminatory practices and limiting the ability to amass wealth. Over time, racial inequality and discrimination have had profound and lasting economic effects, held in place by segregation, gentrification, and housing equity; disparities in educational access; racialized occupational segregation; lost wages retirement savings; and other forms of workplace compensation. Any economic gains have often been precarious. As McIntosh, et al. (2020) note, Black families who make it to the top of the income distribution in a particular year are more likely than white families to drop out of the top in subsequent years, and high- and middle-

income Black families are more likely than their white counterparts to be called upon to assist family and neighbors.

Combined, these factors have had a significant, cumulative impact on lifetime income and asset accumulation among communities of color. Organized philanthropy has been critiqued for weakening the public systems that could address the gap. As Anh (2007) argues, private foundations are built, at least in part, by diverting public tax dollars away from the pool of resources available to address economic inequities. Rather than strengthening democratic processes for distributing public resources, organized philanthropy has benefitted from the weakening of the public sector. To date, communities of color have received little redress for longstanding, systemic economic harms.

** White Supremacy and Racialized Organizations**

If racial exploitation has fueled the wealth, development, and growth of who has dominated organized philanthropy, philanthropic practices have put white supremacy into place in organizational settings. Scholars have argued that organizations are key sites for reproducing, and challenging, race and racism (Ray, 2019). Sociologists have explored the concept of white space, the processes by which organizations put white supremacy into specific locations, embedding racial privilege and domination into cities (Cashin, 2021), public space (Anderson, 2015), schools (Bonilla-Silva & Embrick, 2006), museums (Embrick, et al., 2019), and places of employment (Evans & Moore, 2015). The concept of white space emphasizes the role that organizations play in normalizing generations of white accumulation of economic, social, and political power by institutionalizing the hierarchies, practices and assumptions that uphold white supremacy (Moore, 2020). Just as organizations reproduce gender hierarchies (Acker, 1990), they reproduce racial hierarchies, enhancing or diminishing the agency of racial groups,

legitimizing the unequal distribution of resources, reinforcing whiteness as a credential (Ray, 2019 p. 27) and extending a fantasy of white domination over place, space, and other people (Embrick & Moore, 2020).

Whiteness plays a key role in the racialization of organizations. Theorists have approached whiteness as both a systemic structural advantage and as a standpoint, a place from which white people look at themselves, at others and society (Frankenberg, 1993). White dominance is reproduced not just through explicit acts of white supremacy (Mills, 2017) but also through a way of seeing and knowing the world that masquerades as universality (Watson, 2013) and shows up in the widespread everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society (Young, 1990). White-centered interpretations saturate all aspects of life in the U.S. including public space, community norms, scientific and medical categorizations, and the images and ideologies of the media, entertainment, and popular culture (Feagin and Elias, 2011). Whiteness is also “inextricably enmeshed” with other vectors of identity, such as class, gender, and sexual orientation (Watson, 2013, p. 5). Yet, even as whiteness is pervasive, it remains largely unnamed, unrecognized, and unevaluated. Thus, whiteness is often implicit in organizations, embedded in unspoken and unacknowledged assumptions that provide the rules and norms for the accumulation and distribution of material and social resources (Ray, 2019). Part of the role of critical scholarship on the nonprofit sector, therefore, involves disrupting the traditional theories, framings and conceptualizations that normalize, obscure, and protect whiteness in its many forms.

<c> Racialized Philanthropic Organizations

The racial wealth gap has had a profound impact on the history, development and functioning of organized philanthropic organizations in the U.S. Numerous reports have documented how racial

occupational segregation persists on the staff and boards of organized philanthropy. With the caveat that demographic data on the internal workings of foundations is often concealed behind weak lines of accountability, the numbers provided by the D5 Coalition indicate that foundation executive leadership is highly segregated, with 91% of CEOs/Presidents and 82.9% of other executive staff identifying as white (Shea, 2016). The majority (55% of CEO/Presidents and 67% of other executive staff) also identified as female. Program officers were predominantly white (67.7%) and female (77%).

Critical scholars have asked important questions about the implications of this imbalance, pointing to the multiple ways that elite philanthropists use their power and influence to maintain the profit and shareholder value of corporations (Gautier and Pache, 2015), access and build beneficial social capital networks (Odendahl, 1990), shape policy (Brulle, 2014), divert structural critiques (Ahn, 2007), and obstruct meaningful social change (Arnove & Pinede, 2007). Critics have also pointed to the racial bias embedded in the allocation of funding (Dorsey, et al, 2020). A recent report found that a fraction of philanthropic dollars granted in 2018 focused on either racial equity (6%) or racial justice (1%) (Cyril, et al., 2021). We also know that nonprofit organizations led by or for people of color continue to receive significantly less support than white led organizations (Carboni and Eikenberry, 2021).

<c> Racialized Nonprofit Organizations

Within nonprofit studies, scholars have also examined how a dependence on philanthropic organizations encourages nonprofit organizations to reproduce white dominance. As many have articulated, the dynamic between philanthropy and nonprofits is saturated with an imbalance rooted in resource dependency (Ostrander & Schervish, 1990). Traditionally, nonprofit organizations appeal to donors' interests to secure resources, tailoring their requests to the

nonmaterial, affective needs and interests of potential donors. As a result, donors and grantmakers play a significant role in how nonprofit organizations operate (Phillips, et al., 2016). Donors are often afforded active choice about how to define their transactions with nonprofits, and organized philanthropy has developed identifiable patterns of interaction that define the terms and boundaries of action and choice between donors and the organizations they fund (Ostrander & Schervish, 1990).

Much of the literature on race and class in philanthropy has focused on the resulting suppression of social change and social justice movements. Analyses of the ‘nonprofit industrial complex’ (Rodriguez, 2007) have highlighted implications of the institutionalization of social justice and social change work in nonprofit organizations, which reinforce dependent relationships with external stakeholders, impose restrictions and barriers and lessen agency and autonomy in decision making (see Wilson, 2009; Francis, 2019). Drawing from critical race theory, Willner (2019) points to contemporary managerialism in social change organizations, and the pressure to reinforce the status of those with power. Nickels and Clark (2019) find that nonprofits working under a neoliberal efficiency platform, often led by white people embedded within the local power structure, minimized the issue of race and class or the impact of racism during the Flint water crisis.

The impact of these racialized power dynamics goes far beyond social change organizations and deserves intentional and sustained inquiry. One key area that requires more attention is the push to actively center donors in fundraising practice. For many years, consultants and associations have advised nonprofits to adopt a ‘donor centrism’ with the promise of increasing both donor loyalty and overall donations. Adopting a donor-centric approach has required nonprofits to put donors “center stage” in their fundraising and

communications (Joyaux, 2009), actively researching what donors want, adding insights from psychology and neuroscience, and attuning fundraising and communications practices to the emotional needs of donors (see also Burk, 2003). This focus on donors has been criticized for prioritizing accountability to donors over accountability to the community or public (Benjamin, 2010) and affording elite philanthropists too much influence over decision-making. As exemplified in the movement for community-centric fundraising, donor centrism has also been criticized for overvaluing donors while devaluing the work of staff, board, volunteers, and clients; redirecting fundraisers away from racial and class analyses of their work; and discouraging open, honest conversations with donors, even if those conversations cause conflict or discomfort (CCF, n.d.).

Resource dependency and donor-centrism also facilitate the racialization of nonprofit organizations beyond the scope of specific fundraising practice. Nonprofit organizations have a long history of race-based occupational segregation, with decades of hiring and promoting white people while largely excluding people of color from the board of directors and executive-level positions (see Abad, 2019; Feit, 2018). Racial occupational segregation is particularly acute between staff who focus on engagement with donors, including those in executive, fundraising, finance and communication positions, and staff who work with or deliver services to community members. Studies have documented that most professional fundraisers are white, with the Association of Fundraising Professionals reporting in 2018 that less than 10 percent of their members are people of color (Burton, 2020). At the same time, fundraising and finance professionals are also the highest paid employees in many organizations. According to a 2017 regional study of Southeastern New England, entry-level salaries for staff working in fundraising started higher than salaries for program staff, and the disparities grow up the scale. Chief

Development Officers, for example, made on average \$143,484 compared to \$112,925 for Chief Program Officers, and more than even the Chief Executive Officer at \$134,484 (Byrd & Freundlich, 2017).

Research also points to the impact of this occupational segregation on people of color who work in nonprofit organizations. Those who take on fundraising roles may face significant disparities in wages, promotions and working conditions. In a recent survey, fundraisers who identified as people of color reported earning on average 10% less than their white counterparts (AFP, 2021). They experience significantly higher levels of harassment, bias, or discrimination with Black (60%), Asian/Pacific Islander (48%), Latino (37%) and multiracial/multiracial (37%) respondents also reporting that they must work harder than white (25%) respondents for equal treatment (AFP IDEA, 2021, p. 14) Others have documented devastating discrimination and anti-Black racism experienced by fundraisers of color (Allen, et al. 2020; Daniel, et al., 2019). And occupational segregation impacts staff of color who do not hold fundraising positions. Researchers have found that program staff are often undervalued and undercompensated for the complex social, cultural, and emotional labor required of them (Abad, 2019; Feit, et al., 2021).

** Directions for future research and pedagogy**

Much more research is needed to understand the full range of mechanisms that shape nonprofit and philanthropic organizations into white spaces, including the mundane routines that reproduce racial stratification. Scholars have noted how organizations layer assertions of abstracted concepts like racial equality onto behaviors and practices that support and reproduce white power, privilege, and wealth (See Moore, 2020). Nonprofit organizations, with their common moral claims, require further study of the ways that gender and colorblindness (Heckler, 2019) and claims to benevolence (Feit & Sandberg, 2022) obscure and protect the manifestation of

whiteness in their everyday operations. Workplaces are also common spaces for microaggressions, tacit discrimination that communicates a belief in white dominance and control over people of color (Sue, et al., 2008). Organizational routines connect racial schemas to social and material resources, helping codify associations between racial identity and status (Ray, 2019). Thus, we need closer attention to the ways that everyday behaviors and normative white frames organize the logic of nonprofit spaces, including the construction of norms of behavior (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008); racial dynamics of advantage, disadvantage, control, and exploitation (Moore, 2020, p. 1957); and constraints on people of color's range of emotional expressions (Wingfield & Alston 2014).

We must also look at the ways that nonprofit and philanthropic organizations are reinforcing and sustaining white supremacy in specific core functions. As they craft normative and moral appeals of support (Ostrander & Schervish, 1990) to what extent are organizations using positive cultural prototypes of the populations they serve (Adams & Johnson, 2020) versus reiterating harmful stereotypes that align with the perceived expectations of white donors (Bhati, 2021)? Even as their missions use the language of change and advocacy, which economic inequalities, laws, and policies are nonprofits normalizing and facilitating?

We must also ask how the current relationship with organized philanthropy deters the work of non-white organizations. The current racial wealth gap between predominantly white nonprofits and those led by and for people of color is stark, mirroring Ray's (2019) observations that white organizations are typically seen as normative and neutral, while non-white organizations are seen as deviations from the norm and often stigmatized (p. 38) and under-resourced relative to white organizations (Wooten 2015). Critics have argued that organized philanthropy has measured non-white organizations against standards that reflect white dominant

culture and patterns of systemic racism and have pushed models of capacity building that reinforce power dynamics and reflect historic patterns of paternalism in philanthropy (Shah, 2021; Nishimura, et al., 2020). Furthermore, we must consider how the dependency on white institutional benefactors constrains collective action for political and social equality (Ray, 2019, p. 39).

There is an acute need to expand research on the engagement and philanthropy of minoritized communities. In the broadest sense, philanthropy is recognized as an “ancient, complex and globally ubiquitous social practice” (von Schnurbein, et al., 2021) that centers on voluntary gifts or actions aimed at producing a benefit to others or to society (Bernholz, et al., 2016). This definition broadens our focus beyond the scope of organized philanthropy to include the contributions of time, talent, and treasure by members of the Black, Indigenous, Hispanic/Latinx/Chicana, and Asian/Pacific Islander communities that have not been fully documented in literature. From the deep traditions sharing and collective action, remittances, and volunteering at organizations dedicated to the advancement of their communities, giving by people of color often occurs outside the scope of formal organized entities and is not tracked at levels of white donors. We do know that donors of color are often motivated to give based on their desire to help other members of the same racialized groups to fight against racial oppression, or a form of “self-help” (Banks & Boddie, 2021, p. 11). Having a history going back to the days of abolitionist movements, these forms of self-help have been used to gain freedom (ibid). Similar to being motivated by this form of collective “self-help,” many communities are also motivated by reciprocity. Due to historic discrimination, racialized groups have bonded with each other over their shared experiences, which has led to many racialized groups sharing a sense of economic reciprocity with each other (ibid). This study grounds the need for an increased

number of scholars and practitioners from these communities to begin to tell their own stories. By bringing their own background and professional and personal experiences to unpacking not only who gives but why and how, a clearer picture begins to emerge of the impact of how giving and altruism has been uniquely rooted in and practiced across communities of color, no longer merely relating philanthropy to the domain of the elite. We must invest in significant numbers of scholars whose research focuses on critical perspectives and its impact on nonprofit and philanthropic scholarship (Mason, et al., 2019; Nguyen, 2021).

Finally, we argue for shifts in nonprofit management education both inside and outside of the academy. As Feit and Sandberg (2022) argue, the traditional nonprofit management curriculum is saturated in myths of the sector that elide the centrality of communities of color and perpetuate whiteness as central to nonprofit norms and practice. Growth in the number of nonprofit scholars trained to integrate critical perspectives on philanthropic and nonprofit organizations would be an additional step away from performative practices of engagement towards a justice-centered perspective. In addition, we need attention to common standards and accreditation. Credentials are allegedly objective, organizationally-generated statuses used to show suitability for employment and legitimize modern systems of stratifications (Ray, 2019). By shifting nonprofit education away from professional standards that center “The Global North” (i.e., the United States, Canada, and Europe) and focusing more on the work of “The Global South,” particularly the work of minoritized people from the Southern United States, Mexico, Central and South America, Asia, and Africa, new approaches to curricular standards for nonprofit profit education begin to emerge. Not only do new standards emerge, though, but these new standards, researched and taught by scholars with an understanding of and commitment to the work of “The Global South,” can begin to influence the students and participants in

certification programs and professional development offerings to leaders in the nonprofit sector. And, as nonprofit leaders and practitioners learn and incorporate critical, intersectional approaches to their work, the actual form and function of how nonprofits operate may fundamentally shift.

** Transforming Organizations in Practice**

“A justice imagination is resistance at work. In a time period when folks laugh at us for believing that justice is possible, those with a justice imagination find it within their heart to imagine how.” (Cudjoe-Wilkes & Wilkes, 2022, 14)

What is possible when we embrace what Cudjoe-Wilkes and Wilkes call a “justice imagination”? What can philanthropic and nonprofit practice look like when we recognize the intersections of the racial wealth gap, white supremacy, and the broader foundations of philanthropic organizations? As the Black Radical Tradition teaches us, hegemony can be turned on its head, that poison can be transformed into medicine, that fighting back can maneuver even the most ill-intentioned enemies into becoming unwitting accomplices in our liberation (Lipsitz, 2018). By asking ourselves who gives, to what, for what purpose, we can push conversations about justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion from the shallow white spaces they currently inhabit, to the deeper end, where, as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. often emphasized, ‘justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.’¹

We argue that structural changes are both needed and possible. Institutions of organized philanthropy, including large and prominent private foundations and corporations, have publicly

¹ Rev. King often paraphrased the Bible verse of Amos 5:18-24 in his speeches, including in his historic “I Have A Dream” speech during the 1963 March on Washington (Ackerman, 2003).

pledged to address racial inequality in the United States. Yet, decades of empirical evidence illustrate that philanthropy has repeatedly failed to substantially address racial equity by responding to racialized differences in social outcomes or racial justice (Cyril, et al., 2021). Substantial economic reforms, and specific tax measures, could reduce the wealth gap, curb the power of philanthropy to shape public life (Callahan, 2017), compensate those most impacted by historical injustices (Brown, 2021), and fuel the repair of public social safety nets. And as many have argued, reparations could redress past injustices and restore wealth (Winbush, 2003). In many ways, nonprofits are well-positioned to advocate for these changes, utilizing their organizational social capital to foster trust and provide networks and bridges to policy makers (See Clear, et al., 2018).

Righteousness in this context also looks like shifts in practice. To move from performative to deeper, more meaningful forms of practice, philanthropic and nonprofit organizations will need to embrace critical analyses of their work and act on those findings. Emerging and dynamic conversations among practitioners and activists provide insights about paths to change in fundraising (CCF, n.d.), marketing & storytelling (Bhati, 2021), grantmaking (Le, 2019), capacity building (Nishimura, et al., 2020), evaluation (Dean-Coffey, 2018) and wage equity. Numerous reports provide insights about the deep work required to shift human resources practices and board development so that staff and boards more accurately reflect the clients and communities served, and organizations become the living embodiment of their diversity statements (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2019). Moving from the shallow, performative, window-dressing activities towards deeper, more transformative work may push organizations to think even more intentionally about the impact of their giving and programming. Moreover, should they reflect upon not only whose voices are elevated within their

organizations, but more importantly, whose voices are missing, organizations may be compelled to think strategically about the practical steps necessary to elevate and center those voices.

A third step towards the deeper work of justice would be to provide resources, including intellectual, human, and financial, to organizations representing racialized communities without requiring them to avoid or abandon work from causes and conversations that would potentially make funders uncomfortable. Racialized organizations often find themselves decoupling formal commitments to equity, access, and inclusion from policies and practices that reinforce, or at least do not challenge, existing racial hierarchies (Ray, 2019). If instead of being hindered by the real or a perceived potential loss of support, these organizations were provided with the time, talent, and treasure necessary to effectively make transformative changes, even if those changes brush up with the status quo, this would be a significant first step towards making a shift towards the deeper work of justice.

Recipients of philanthropy do have agency and can make choices that shape the way the relationship is organized (Ostrander & Schervish, 1990). As such, when nonprofits make the shift towards a more inclusive, intersectional, community-centered approach, they can begin to be truly accountable in their relationships with constituents and the communities they serve. Similarly, this shift will require changes in the approach around total compensation for staff at all levels within nonprofit organizations. When the board and staff of nonprofit organizations no longer operate from a white supremacist, scarcity mindset, but instead ground their work in collectivist action, there will be a fundamental shift in whose work is valued, and how this work is compensated.

** Conclusion**

We began this chapter with recognition that the racial wealth gap lies at the foundations of organized philanthropy in the United States, tracing the ways that philanthropic and nonprofit organizations both reflect and sustain the systematic unearned advantages and white dominance endemic to white supremacy. By taking a critical perspective on the racialized dynamics between organized philanthropy and nonprofit organizations, it becomes painfully apparent that this sector could not exist without the wealth gap and is often fueled by systemic injustices endured by racialized communities. We have highlighted the dynamic between organized philanthropy and nonprofits as one that fosters the racialization of these organizations and perpetuates white supremacy in practice. We have called for new pathways for research that unpacks the role of whiteness for organized philanthropy and nonprofit organizations, and intentionally broadens our understanding of multiple forms of philanthropic action. We argue that to dismantle the influence and impact of white supremacy on the perpetuation of white spaces in nonprofit organizations, we are challenged to reimagine and reorganize the fundamental principles of organized philanthropy, and we point to the emerging and dynamic conversations about transformative approaches to practice that may push the sector from shallow, performative efforts to more transformative change.

We offer these arguments with full awareness of the contemporary moment, including backlash to research that explicitly names white supremacy and escalating countermeasures against actions that seek to remedy racial inequalities (Lippard, et al., 2020, p. 8). As Freire (2000 [1970]) reminds us, social transformation requires the development of a critical consciousness that searches beneath and beyond existing assumptions as well as individual and collective action. Changes to the deep and persistence structural injustices that lie at the

foundation of organized philanthropy may begin with shifts in research, advocacy and practice but will require ongoing courage, commitment, and concrete action. The question remains, will those of us engaged with organized philanthropy and nonprofit organizations continue to reinforce the racial wealth gap and replicate the dynamics of white supremacy, or will we work to disrupt and dismantle practices and policies that sustain inequality?

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