Grantmakers in the Arts

GIA equity in arts funding

Online Forum on Equity in Arts Funding

Grantmakers in the Arts designed the Forum to expand the dialogue around funding equity in the arts and to encourage a response to the systemic issues of equity identified during sessions at the recent GIA national conference and in *Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change*, a 2011 report published by the National Committee on Responsive Philanthropy. Bloggers represent an exciting cross section of the country's arts funding, service, and equity thought leaders.

December 2011

Grantmakers in the Arts
Supporting a Creative America

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The Deep Listening of Funding

December 6, 2011 at 6:55 pm

by Mario Garcia Durham, president and CEO, Association of Performing Arts Presenters

Holly Sidford begins her report Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change: High Impact Strategies for Philanthropy by quoting Dudley Cocke of Roadside Theater: "Art holds a mirror up to society." Funders hold a similar mirror and must be in arts society in the same way artists must be in civil society. Funders also bear the responsibility of connecting to, participating in and experiencing the arts of underserved communities. Otherwise, the opportunities for balance and equity remain a challenge, and funders compromise the kind of dynamic democracy a full range of voices and arts experiences creates.

What fundamental skill is necessary to assure grantmaking is balanced and supports more equity? The composer Pauline Oliveros developed "deep listening" as an approach to music — as well as other art forms. Her philosophy makes a distinction between involuntary hearing and voluntary listening. The practice "cultivates appreciation of sounds on a heightened level, expanding the potential for connection and interaction with one's environment." In Sidford's report, Roberto Bedoya of Tucson Pima Arts Council calls for "humility" and "curiosity" (both important to good listening skills) and Lori Pourier of First Peoples Fund calls grantmaking "long-term work" (also vital to effective listening).

If funders embrace deep listening — the way the best doctors take cues from patients — then everyone becomes a stakeholder, both the funder and the funded. When art, social justice or community takes place, it is because someone has listened.

How might funders encourage this skill? One approach might be to re-figure the grantmaking process — move it out of the realm of paperwork and into human-to-human contact. What if we think of grantmakers as fieldworkers, whose job is to take to the street (rather than to the application) and engage underserved communities in their own settings? The most determined presenters do this: They scout down back roads and out-of-the-way places to find new art or old traditions that have lost placement in the mainstream.

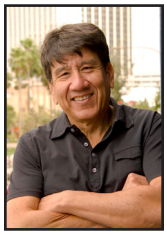
This approach can be challenging to funders, especially on a national level. During my time at the National Endowment for the Arts, budget dollars were tight. Travel was encouraged but always tied to limited budgets. The practice of site visits was all but eliminated. As a former funder and now as the president of a national service organization, I face the challenge of carefully budgeting so I, too, can have the direct interaction with and experience of the arts, artists and communities that contribute to the diversity and dynamics of our field. But I am committed to "deep listening" and believe that if funders embrace a face-to-face approach, their dollars can help build richer opportunities for a full range of artists and communities to animate our democracy.

Nothing Concedes without a Demand

December 6, 2011 at 7:50 pm

by Roberto Bedoya, executive director, Tucson Pima Arts Council

"Nothing concedes without a demand."
—Frederick Douglas



In the area of equitable grant-making what are the demands being made? Who is making the demands? Who is responding to the demands? What is the nature of the demands? Is it the demand for a policy changes brought on by U.S. demographics, the changing properties of the social good or the economy? What the deep recession has revealed are the fault line in our society—what are the fault lines in philanthropy… what demands have they triggered?

The NCRP report offers us a look at a significant cultural fault line—the politics of resource and position that operates in the culture sector and its relationship to equity and democratic aspirations. It is a report to applaud. (To implicate myself, I acted as an advisory committee member to the research report and there are a few fingerprints of mine in the document.)

As a public funder the relationship to equity issues in never far from the mission of the Tucson Pima Arts Council (TPAC). It is built into our purposes and processes. Both the City and County governments ask for demographic information associated with our grant-making as part of our yearly evaluation. Being accountable to the wide breath of our community and demonstrating equity is part of our charge.

I joke with colleagues that the public I serve ranges from the anarchists to the white gloves and… they let me know it. The beauty of the public sector is that Tucsonans feels that they have the right to assert: "I don't like that piece of public art, you've wasted my money", " Why did A get funded and not B?", "You privilege the majors", "You privilege community arts" in the newspapers, on talk radio, at City Council meetings, at TPAC Town Hall gatherings. These assertions can move beyond the "sour-grapes" lament of a few, to a broader one – how a group articulates its demands. Most recently, in the context of Arizona's toxic social/political landscape the call for cultural equity is paramount and embedded in our cultural communities resistance to the far right attacks on civil society. It is a call and demand for Democracy, not the "me and my friends" self-interests of privatization.

In the report, public funding is presented as more accessible to serving marginalized groups than private foundations, which is true. Yet, the dynamic and catalytic presence that the public funders have in our cultural ecosystem is fragile and under great stress as cities struggle to balance their budget, and arts councils find themselves on the chopping block. At the same time public funders are leaders in the field of community cultural development and arts-based civic engagement activities. They are poised to have a greater impact upon our society as our multi-racial nation continues to grow, shape art making practices and cultural participation.

TPAC's work in community cultural development is primarily through our P.L.A.C.E. (People, Land, Arts, Culture and Engagement) Initiative, which support art-based civic engagement projects that address contested and complex social issue, which is featured in the report. P.L.A.C.E., supports place-making arts activities that shape the physical and social character of the region through projects that creates a sense of "belonging", that address the politics of marginalization that says you or your community don't belong.

The success of P.L.A.C.E., is a result of a partnership with the Kresge Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundations and Open Society Institute who believe that social justice demands that we value diversity, challenge social inequities and fuse " art, culture and social change". They understand the important role intermediaries play in achieving this goal. This partnership illuminates a key element of success what in the report is referred to the sovereignty of context, a term that TPAC uses to acknowledge local knowledge and it authority. That moving the equity dial towards a more inclusive democracy is not drive-by work, it takes time and must be rooted in place, in context.

The success of NCRP is that is looks at the politics of marginalization in the cultural philanthropy sector, presents the evidence and prompts reflection on how we serve the public. The demand tied to this analysis is for a more just world, one that is beholding to the evolving richness of our multi-racial sector, that serves our humanity. Change is not all that easy but it must occur, which is a leadership demand that the cultural sector must face if we are to be relevant and of use to our society.

...in reply

January 9, 2012 at 3:06 pm

From William Cleveland

"The arc of the moral universe is long and it keeps on bending toward justice.

But it does not bend on its own."

—Martin Luther King

We live in a society where access to basic needs (quality education, healthcare, employment, and yes, cultural resources), is generally determined by income status. And, historically, in this country, income status also correlates with race and ethnicity, with people of color generally getting the short end of the stick. These are stark and troubling facts. To my mind, they are also signs of social, economic, political, and cultural ecosystems out of balance and in decline. As such, the question of equity is not just a matter for ethical discourse and debate—it's also a matter of survival for all of us.

While discussions about equity among funders are surely difficult, manifesting real change is even harder—much harder. This is because taking concrete steps to advance equity usually means questioning and ultimately altering some deeply held assumptions about the way things work. In my experience, confronting the difference between good intentions and meaningful change is usually at the top of the list. Once real change becomes the definition of success, the difficult bottom line for funders is often saying "no" or "not this year" to folks who are not used to hearing that kind of talk.

I'm not a strong believer in using guilt as an impetus for change. In my experience it just breeds resentment and increases resistance. I also don't think appeals to "do the right thing" work that well either. I do believe there is something to be said for the kind of old fashioned accountability that comes with running a public agency like the Tucson/Pima Arts Council. Like the Council's director Roberto Bedoya says in his blog post, " Being accountable to the wide breath of our community and demonstrating equity is part of our charge."

Having run a public agency myself, I know that it is often messy and frustrating, but there is also, a constant, and I believe, healthy emphasis on the obligations intrinsic to both philanthropy and citizenship. For public funders, this translates as a mandate to invest its resources for the common good, and be open and responsive to public concerns. For citizens, there is the proviso that accountability runs both ways, and requires informed and assertive public participation. I'm sure Roberto would agree that in real life government systems operate far from this civics primer ideal, but I do think the give and take that does occur can be a stimulant (or irritant) for accountability and equity.

Given this, the question that arises for me is: How might private funders function in ways that increase their accountability to the diverse cultural and social ecosystems they operate in? Given that Foundation governance tends to tilt in the direction of prevailing patterns of privilege, what other practices are there that can help balance the often self-reinforcing patterns of influence that have produced the cultural landscape described in the NCRF report?

It occurred to me that Lynn Stern's description of the values-based planning process undertaken the Surdna Foundation's could be instructive. I gather that the Foundation forced a number of difficult ethical issues on to the table by making them mission critical. As such, they couldn't escape confronting the hard questions, which they did internally, at the staff and board level, and externally, by inviting and listening to a diverse range of outside opinions. I think this kind of shared exposure, and purposeful reflection is a key step for building accountability.

To a certain degree the dialogue shared in this blog has is serving a similar function. And as I have reviewed the discussion, I have found a number thoughtful suggestions and strategies relevant to my question about increasing the accountability quotient among private funders.

The Boston Foundation's Javier Torres talks about the necessity for "building trust" with constituents by integrating listening, collaboration and reciprocity into his everyday philanthropic practice. Judy Jennings from the Kentucky Foundation for Women provides specific strategies for increasing organizational understanding and awareness of equity issues. While none of these are new, I think they should be considered essential steps for developing accountable funding practices. These include: the regular study and discussion of social, educational, economic and political inequalities; listening to and working with people from under-represented communities; and integrating knowledgeable people from those communities into panels, staff and boards. Justin Lange, from the Heinz Foundation reinforces the interdependent nature of accountability and equity by suggesting that funders who employ the NCRF report's Funding Typology consider one more critical question:

"What broad changes do 'marginalized communities' want to see for themselves?"

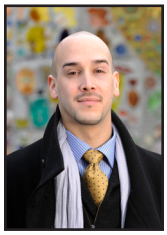
I think there is a growing awareness in our society that the essential difference between an authentic story and a false narrative is in the making. I also believe that there is an increasingly assertive segment of our citizenry that knows that, like stories, authentic community investments are truly hand built, with and for the people that will bear the consequences of their impact.

I'm thinking that we all have a lot to learn.

Equity Strategies

December 6, 2011 at 8:10 pm

by F. Javier Torres, senior program officer for arts and culture, The Boston Foundation



I arrived in the world of philanthropy in 2011 after almost six years overseeing a multidisciplinary art program that is part of an affordable housing community, Villa Victoria. Those years working side-by-side with residents afforded me an amazing education and have been some of the most rewarding of my career. I attended my first Grantmakers in the Arts (GIA) conference this year, where a publication commissioned by the National Center for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) highlighting funding inequities in the arts: *Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change* (Holly Sidford, Helicon Collaborative) was shared. Although I am grateful to see data and research that publicly reinforces the need for equitable funding in the arts, I agree with others who have said that data will not solve this issue. So how do we as arts grantmakers take action?

To answer that question, I reflected on a speech given by Dr. Manuel Pastor. Dr. Pastor shared his theory of change through a comparison of chess and jigsaw puzzles. He shared that our communities (and as a result our nation) continue to play too much chess. Chess is a black and white conversation; in chess each piece has its predetermined level of power, and in chess, we play at taking over other people's territory. Dr. Pastor challenges us to play more jigsaw puzzles. In jigsaw puzzles there are a myriad of colors and every piece is as important as the next. True success is only found in jigsaw puzzles when each piece is in the right position and they are placed together so seamlessly that we can't tell where one ends and the other begins. Each piece has equal importance.

I am simultaneously reminded of the significance of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the reality is that "race [still] matters." Colorblindness does not exist in our culture. Complex structures and systems have been deployed (and continue to be built) to keep certain people in power and others "power-less." Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change takes two steps that advance CRT objectives: 1.) It continues to unmask and expose racism in one of its many permutations and 2.) It provides practical departure questions that may lead to actionable steps.

Returning to a series of readings on CRT reminded me that "supporting civil rights" h as rarely stimulated an increase in equity or access. Historically, "interest-convergence" (D. Bell, Shades of Brown: New Perspectives on School Desegregation, 1980) has proven to be a more effective tool to catalyze movements that reverse traditional racist structures. In other words, where do your needs and my needs intersect? We must make philanthropic investments in marginalized communities the "easier" choice and make clear that they will yield the greater "return on investment." That is the basis of my recommendations to the field.

As private foundations take steps towards investing in marginalized communities, here are several points for consideration: we must listen more than we speak, remember that institutional and community relationships built on trust take time. We must understand that we do not always have the best answers, that we can ask for help, and should be held accountable for upholding equity. Finally, we must identify experts within those communities we wish to engage, and be prepared to be uncomfortable.

As a grantmaker I aspire to integrate this philosophy into my work and include everyone from the receptionist, the donor, the grantee, and the board member in what I do. Each of us has a role to play in the realization of a community vision. We must listen to others' needs, find value in their strengths, and provide opportunities for success in order to make incremental change.

As funders we need to analyze our relationship and relevance to the communities we serve as part of our mission. Our ability to do so will play a vital role in advancing the transformation necessary for arts and culture to thrive. There is no "silver bullet" that will solve the challenges articulated in this report. This process will require each of us to examine our own biases and privilege. Staying dedicated to the process through that pain that is "… the breaking of the shell of our understanding" (K. Gibran). It is essential to achieving real equity across all segments of our field.

We're All in the Struggle

December 6, 2011 at 8:45 pm

by MK Wegmann, president and CEO, National Performance Network

In response to the question "Can intermediaries be more successful than institutionalized funders in supporting the organic process of art making within the communities described as marginalized by the NCRP report, as well as those engaged in art and social justice?" I'd offer an emphatic yes, since this is a role that the National Performance Network plays. Our support contributes to a network of organizations whose missions intersect with ours with a deliberate intention to be inclusive on a level playing field; we are also providing an infrastructure in New Orleans for artists and emerging organizations. We are field-generated and field-led. When intermediaries are an example of community organizing they do function well (Alternate ROOTS is another example); when they are established by funders, I'm less convinced. Bottom up versus top down.

I come from an organization that self-defines as artist-focused, and that is committed to working for cultural equity and social justice, explicit in NPN's vision and values statement. We have long been clear about the inequities that exist in arts funding, so the report is a welcome document for the formal analysis it provides and the data to back it up. After all, the arts and culture sector mirrors the world in which we live: we are the 99%.

Few remember the critique that was brought about the inequity in the NEA's funding patterns in the years before the culture wars (during which that critique was overshadowed by attacks from the outside). I could even posit that it was in fact the threat posed to the status quo by increasingly diverse NEA panels—particularly in Inter-Arts, Solo Theater and Visual Arts—that fueled the fires that led to the dismantling of two very important aspects of NEA funding that directly relate to the issues of inequity: individual artists fellowships and re-granting programs, both of which can only be restored by an act of Congress. This was not just a loss of funds but a cascading collapse of systems. We cannot go soft on the need for government support if we are to achieve change.

There are some troubling responses I've already heard to the NCRP report, including in the discussion at GIA following its presentation when the conversation soon trended toward the age-old excuse that funders would like to support "these kinds" of organizations, but they've found that "they" lack adequate organizational structures to receive substantial funding. There was a time in arts funding when there was a strong push from some foundations for the 2% institutions to diversify their audiences—which led to inequitable partnerships between the major institutions and culturally specific organizations, sapping their boards and audiences and giving more resources to those that already had the most resources. This is a troubling aspect of the capitalization discussion that is also taking place: it encourages giving more to fewer—investing more deeply in those organizations already being funded—at the expense of new organizations or artists coming to the table.

Now, as occurred during the Alternative Space movement in the 1970s and 80s, artists are forming new organizations because the existing ones are not serving them; while some parts of the country may be "overbuilt," many places lack any kind of support system for any artists, much less those who are marginalized and working for a more just and equitable world. Now, we don't want any more arts 501(c)(3)s. Given that this corporatized structure is the only way most foundations and government funders can give resources, is this not closing the door on the very ones who deserve the support? The ongoing inability of artists to have organizations that they control providing an infrastructure for their work is not a good trend. It does make the case for intermediaries as a vehicle to that infrastructure, and consolidation of administrative efforts is a desirable strategy, but having to work project to project without a stable environment is not a sustainable system. It begs the question of operating support.

To supplement the facts that the NCRP report provides, I think we also need a cogent and explicit defense of the absolute need for subsidy to sustain artists and cultural workers making and supporting new work in a contemporary context, whether they are working in traditional or experimental forms. This defense must include validation of organizations that artists found and run, and their ability to control assets, to be self determined in their organizational structures, and to have adequate compensation and benefits so they can dedicate their lives to their work and be contributing members of their communities.

Change must come from within the arts community, as well as from those who fund it. Mandates to the field tend to backfire, creating greater opposition to these goals. It's not about cutting the same pie in smaller, more even slices; the power dynamic that exists between grant makers and grant seekers has to be different also. Can we be colleagues seeking the same just ends? Intermediaries can certainly be one good path to that outcome.

Not a Zero Sum Problem

December **6, 2011 at 9:01 pm**

by Jesse Rosen, president & CEO, League of American Orchestras

I heartily support the NCRP report's recommendation that philanthropic investment in the arts should benefit underserved communities and promote greater equity, opportunity, and justice. But I take issue with the suggestion that foundation support to large-budget organizations and those that perform the Western canon is, by definition, at odds with these goals. The NCRP presents this as a zero sum problem; i.e., take from one to support the other. At a time when resources to support arts and culture are strained, everyone wins when we work together to realize the capacities of cultural organizations large and small, traditional and culturally unique.

It should be noted that 90% of the League's adult member orchestras have budgets under $5 million, therefore qualifying as "small" according to the definition used in the NCRP report. The report mentions that it does not fully take into account foundation support that broadens and diversifies access to mainstream cultural offerings, and I would suggest that this is not an insignificant omission and worth additional data collection and analysis. What we know about the full range of our membership verifies that all have the capacity to serve diverse communities and increase access to the transformative power of orchestral music.

More than 60% of the 32,000 concerts given annually by League member orchestras are specifically dedicated to education or community engagement, for a wide range of young and adult audiences. Nearly half of those concerts are presented free of charge. The increase in partnerships between orchestras and other arts organizations and nonprofit agencies that serve communities in need is most recently and clearly evidenced in the thirteen major orchestras across the country that are combining instrumental instruction with social justice in disadvantaged neighborhoods, through programs based on the transformational El Sistema music program from Venezuela. Other examples include the South Dakota Symphony's recent tour of their state to perform on three Lakota reservations with a newly commissioned orchestral work by a Lakota composer. And orchestras in Pittsburgh, Knoxville, Madison, and St. Louis have collaborative partnerships to bring music to special-needs communities.

A number of assumptions about the music orchestras play are outdated. The good news about the canon as it is presented in the U.S. is that it has broad appeal and is growing to include more works from immigrant populations. The fact is that orchestral music is a unique art form that speaks powerfully to people of all backgrounds and income levels. Interest in live performances, recordings, and playing classical instruments has deep roots in Latin America, so it is not surprising that the League's 2009 Audience Demographic Review analysis by McKinsey forecasts that Hispanics will increase their share of the total live classical audience from about 12% to 20% by 2018. Classical music is growing at an extraordinary rate in Asia and is now being explored in the Middle East, with composers from these regions adding influences from far beyond Western Europe. And, a new generation of composers in the U.S is creating vital and relevant orchestral music that draws upon America's popular and vernacular genres.

America's orchestras have all been transitioning from a single minded focus on the excellence of the performance, to paying greater attention to the value created for the community. Orchestras still have much more work to do to serve communities beyond our traditional concert audiences, which remain predominantly white; and more work to reduce barriers and spread the word that we contribute not only by delivering performances of high quality but also valuable educational and community-service programs. To succeed we must increasingly work hand in hand with those artists and diverse communities that help enrich our art form and generate new access points for audience engagement. Both large and small arts organizations should be supported, recognizing their unique capacities to serve the circumstances and needs of their communities.

...in reply

December 7, 2011 at 9:13 am

From Judi Jennings

Dear Mr. Rosen,

As a funder focusing on individual artists and mostly small arts organizations in Kentucky, I strongly agree with you that both large and small arts organizations should be supported. I also agree with your statement that producing performances of high quality and focusing on community engagement are not only compatible but highly valuable goals.

Could you please provide two or three examples of orchestras in the US now who are doing the best job of engaging new communities? Success stories are very important in moving toward greater equity, I think.

I live in Louisville, KY, where the orchestra management and musicians are locked in seemingly irreconcilable conflict (the ultimate zero sum game). I think more discussion about the community value of orchestras in general could add a new dimension to this impasse.

Thank you, Judi Jennings, Executive Director, KY Foundation for Women

December 7, 2011 at 1:44 pm

From Scott Walters

I have to admit that I find suspect the claim, made so often by those defending the status quo, that they are all for broadening funding to a more diverse set of organizations as long as none of the people currently benefiting from the system don't see any changes in their income. The fact is that we have a limited amount of money, and it is being distributed in a way that the rich organizations (and their rich patrons) get richer while the poor stay poor. And that's just not right.

Furthermore, touring is not the point. Geographical diversity means that arts organizations need to make HOMES in a variety of places, not just drop in every now and then for a visit. This is about arts organizations with roots in a place and whose work REFLECTS that place. My analogy is restaurants. When you visit a new place, you want to eat the local cuisine — when you go to New orleans, for instance, you want the gumbo; in NC you want the barbecue. The arts should be the same — they should reflect their communities.

The report we're discussing focuses on the lack of diversity that occurs as a result of this centralized, urbanized funding demographic. It isn't about whether large orgs are doing good work and outreach, it is about actually supporting diverse arts organizations in specific places.

A Special Opportunity for Arts and Culture Funders to Advance Democracy

December 6, 2011 at 10:10 pm

by Aaron Dorfman, executive director, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy

I've been pleasantly surprised by the amount of attention *Fusing Art, Culture and Social Change*, NCRP's most recent report, has generated. More than 200 media outlets have run stories referencing the report, which far exceeds the amount of coverage we've received for other reports in our High Impact Strategies for Philanthropy series.

Why is this work generating so much discussion? Is it because the report is so well written? Certainly Holly Sidford penned a compelling piece. Yet, many well-argued essays generate little attention. Is it because Grantmakers in the Arts (GIA) has done such tremendous work in its role as discussion-promoter-in-chief for arts funders? They surely have gone beyond the call of duty, but I don't think that's the answer. Is it because these issues are new? Hardly. During a session at this year's GIA conference, one funder lamented that we have been discussing equity in arts funding for 40 years and little has changed.

I think a noteworthy explanation for the sustained interest is that release of the report coincided with the rising Occupy Wall Street movement and a growing concern nationally with issues of equity and fairness. With economic justice and democracy front and center on the national zeitgeist, perhaps our report caught on to something that already is part of the national consciousness and public discourse.

There's an important connection here that can point us towards where I think the discussion needs to go next. Thus far, coverage of the report has centered primarily on the question of who benefits from arts philanthropy, which is an important question and certainly one that we hoped would gain traction. In addition to continued dialogue and action about who benefits, I hope we see more discussion about how arts philanthropy can contribute more robustly to our democracy and to the creation of a more fair and equitable world.

Now is a moment in time when real social change seems possible (in spite of the inability of Congress to take meaningful action). The Occupy movement has given many people an opportunity to express their anger and put forward a vision of a different and better world. What can arts funders do to build on the energy of this moment? What else can we do to better connect arts and social justice?

Our report found that only 4 percent of grants made with a primary purpose of supporting arts and culture were coded as promoting social justice. The arts, as our report notes, are an essential means by which communities and cultures find meaning and engage with the world. And the same is true for individuals – each of us uses the arts in ways that help us make sense of the world. The arts are a means for us to shape our identity, consider the future and determine what we want that future to be like.

The arts are also crucial to advancing democracy: they are a means to animating civil society, they provide us with creative methods of dealing with differences among us and, by doing so, they help us create common cause and shared purpose with society. So, starting at the individual level and moving through each layer of society, the arts are fundamentally tied to a strong and vibrant democracy. And when foundations fund arts and culture groups with an explicit purpose of advancing social justice, they are contributing to participatory parity and moving us closer to a more just and equitable world. Americans for the Arts, through its Animating Democracy Project, released recently a report with which most of you are likely familiar. NCRP and I appreciate the incredibly important work that Barbara Schaffer Bacon and Pam Korza did on ***Trend or Tipping Point: Arts & Social Change Grantmaking***. Their comprehensive analysis of social justice grantmaking in the arts and culture community is a great resource.

I hope we continue challenging ourselves to ensure arts philanthropy benefits everyone in our society. I also hope we grow more rigorous in our exploration of how our funding for arts and culture can make a substantive contribution to social change, helping bring greater equity to our nation and the world.

...in reply

December 16, 2011 at 2:50 pm

From Marta Moreno Vega, Ph.D.

While I agree with the points made by Mr. Dorfman I am dismayed that the changing racial and cultural demographics of this nation continue to be marginal in the analysis of disparity of funding to culturally specific organizations nationally. While this is part of the social justice agenda it is important that the continued legacy of systemic racism and discriminatory practices that continue to underfund institutions and artists of color be clearly addressed. One of the results of the civil rights movement was the creation of institutions that spoke to a diverse aesthetic and criteria. This aesthetic diversity is reflected in the creation of multidisciplinary cultural arts institutions across the nation reflecting the wide range of racial and cultural groups that are the face of our changing America, the browning or tanning of America. Multidisciplinary institutions continue to reflect an inclusive practice of embracing the arts from a holistic perspective that is not elitist in its praxis and reflects excellence from the cultural perspective of the cultural group. The critical analysis of why funders continue to marginalize community base institutions by consistent underfunding them maintains our organizations at risk of survival and limits their ability to fully address issues of racial, cultural and social justice. This must be critically addressed. These are the organizations that are fully engaged in social justice issues on the community level. The underfunding of community multicultural institutions and artists engaged in cultural and social justice activism on the ground. Yes, the visibility of Occupy Wall Street is addressing the economic divide of the country. The movement has created an international wake-up call. Included in the plan of action for funders, OWS and us all must be an understanding of what the face and cultures of the 99% per cent is and how it breaks out within the 99%. This will help develop a plan of action that pin points the strategies that must implemented.

So What's New?

December 7, 2011 at 11:40 pm

by Marta Moreno Vega, president and founder, The Carribean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute; adjunct professor, arts and public policy, Tisch School for the Arts, New York University

Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change: High Impact Strategies for Philanthropy by Holly Sidford provides the data that most of us knew. Arts funding continues to disproportionately support West European institutions and continues to place the art expressions of the diversity of communities that comprise the nation at the margins. That 2 percent of the arts field receives 55 percent of the funding continues to support the discourse that communities of color and rural communities have set forth for more than 40 years. We didn't have the exact data, but knew from the annual reports that both public and private foundations favored those organizations that focused on West European arts forms and support their patronizing attempts to diversify their programming excluding the participation of cultural experts of their cultures.

Important for the field is that what we knew is now documented. What the report provides is the platform for change. How this will happen continues to be the challenge. At the center of this inequitable reality is that the organizations that reflect the creative excellence of their communities are at risk of surviving the legacy of underfunding and the present economic crisis. Community cultural organizations are closing or are near to closing their doors and there is little reaction. What to do?

...in reply

December 17, 2011 at 9:04 am

From F. Javier Torres

I greatly appreciate that you highlight the loss (or potential loss) of the varied cultural organizations that support the preservation and interpretation of cannons from across the globe as a result of existing funding practices. I have found it fascinating to watch as many members of our funding community have directed funds to struggling institutions that support only Western European cannons on the brink of closing instead. Interestingly enough, no one seems to ask them how it is that with the great access to resources they managed to arrive at a crossroads of bankruptcy and having amassed tremendous amounts of debt.

As our robust conversation continues to grow in momentum, I was happy to see the convergence of several conversations that GIA has pioneered in an article written by the principals of WolfBrown with Joanna Woronkowicz, Is Sustainability Sustainable? We have now moved beyond a shared definition of nonprofit capitalization and understanding of practical applications and approaches to becoming well capitalized. The conversation now goes deeper, towards an understanding of what core drivers support any organization's long-term viability. That means we must address "relevance" and "relationship" to our core and target audience(s) if we are to successfully "…accumulate the resources for the fulfillment of our mission over time…"

There is now far too much evidence that "…patronizing attempts to diversify [their] programming…" will in the long-term fail to build the necessary relationships and relevance to engage marginalized communities. A wonderful read on practical steps to develop new approaches was given to us by Partners for Livable Communities in their publication titled Culture Connects us All. More of these approaches are being explored by the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago and their development of a "Crescendo Cultural."

I look forward to continuing to unify these three seemingly separate conversations so that we understand that by marginalizing communities through our funding practices we encourage poor engagement practice and as a result may become a driving force in creating dependency and poor capitalization for the organizations/institutions that we are supporting. Audience engagement is also our responsibility as funders if we are to fulfill our own stated missions and accomplish what I heard in one of the excellent GIA sessions this past October: "Think collectively and act independently." This overarching funding frame can support the development of a robust art sector. One that is reflective, relevant and responsive to changing demographics in our country.

December 27, 2011 at 11:21 am

From Mario Garcia Durham

The points you make, Marta, have been so much in my thoughts – first as the director of presenting and artistic communities at the National Endowment for the Arts and now as president and CEO of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters. Having the data to support observations and experiences – something we haven't done perfectly in the arts world – is extremely helpful. We all know these numbers to be true because we have lived them or witnessed them, but the data helps make it true for funders and others in leadership positions – including those of us who head national organizations and therefore have the obligation to ponder and act upon your final question: "What to do?"

Who is Being Marginalized and Why?

December 7, 2011 at 11:41pm

by Judi Jennings, executive director, Kentucky Foundation for Women

Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change is a wake up call to our field. The report shows that only 10% of grants of $10,000 or more given by private foundations with a primary or secondary purpose of supporting arts and culture benefit underserved communities. The report identifies eleven such underserved communities, including ALANA (African Americans, Latino, Asian-Americans and Native Americans), low income, rural, women and girls.

Do private foundations need to be concerned about equity in grantmaking? As a director of a private foundation, I say yes. The private foundation where I work, like all others in the US, exists because of a federal tax status allowing us to retain the bulk of our funds as long as we pay out 5% of our earnings each year. To me, this privileged federal tax status means private foundations have a responsibility to serve the public equitably.

Many private foundations are already seeking greater equity in their arts and cultural funding. These funders are also asking hard questions. "Let's talk about who benefits" from current grantmaking practices, Maurine Knighton, Director of the Arts and Culture Program at Nathan Cummings Foundation, pointed out in a recent conversation. I agree. When private foundations ask themselves who benefits, the conversation shifts from identifying which groups are marginalized to thinking about who is doing the marginalizing and why.

Before I go further, I need to say that, in my opinion, lumping together all the underserved people and calling them marginalized is not the best way to approach equity. This is not about being politically correct. It's about being effective.

Take, for example, the seemingly simple category rural. See Erik Takeshita's recent blog about a rural roundtable in New Mexico. As he shows, place is a powerful concept for many rural people, but rural people live and create culture in many different ways in different places.

Or consider *The Art of the Rural*. This site "works to gather a variety of perspectives on the state of rural arts and culture in American life, humbly seeking to bring a variety of arts organizations, artists and media outlets into conversation." Even a quick review of the posts reveals the wide range of issues and diversity of rural life today.

Fortunately for funders seeking greater equity, *Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change* presents solid tips for "Making Change Happen." A helpful appendix summarizes important points in the recent bestseller, *Switch: How To Change Things When Change Is Hard*, by brothers, Chip and Dan Heath. Based on the work of these young social entrepreneurs, the report lays out concrete and effective ways for arts and cultural grantmakers to move toward greater equity, including:

- Gather information and discuss the social, educational, economic and political inequalities in the communities of your grantmaking focus;
- Meet people from these communities, make site visits, invite presentations at board meetings;
- Add advisors, panelists, staff and board members who represent or are knowledgeable about these communities;
- Take cultural literacy/cultural competency training.

These tips also stress the importance of understanding who benefits from current grantmaking. One point advises grantmakers to "candidly examine the demographic profile and relative need of the people who are benefiting from your current grants." Understanding and naming those who are benefiting is essential to understanding who is being marginalizing in current grantmaking practices.

Then, funders can better align grantmaking practices in specific and knowledge-based ways to create greater equity. There will be no "one size fits all" set of practices that will ensure access to all eleven groups or all underserved people. Recognizing the differences and unique aspects among communities and developing appropriate grantmaking practices for each is really what equity is all about. Funders who thinking carefully about the underserved communities they can best serve based on their missions and geographical scope can best develop respectful and successful strategies.

An article in the Winter 2012 issue of the GIA *Reader* will look at specific strategies and success stories in advancing equity. I hope many of you will want to join in developing action steps at the local, regional and national levels to address the serious imbalances in our field.

...in reply

December 8, 2011 at 11:06 am

From Jon North

Hi Judi – good blog! I find it hard to imagine the American scene, cushioned as we are in this Europe (I include the UK) where public funds bolster charitable causes to such a large extent. But the search for equity must be right, the attempt to slant decisions and preferences

towards the marginalised groups. And if that were not so often ignored in favour of the safe bets and the "friends of friends" then this conversation would be redundant. But brave funders, who risk disappointement for the sake of the less-well supported, are likely to be even fewer and farther between in these days where the triple A ratings of the in-crowd are so important to the survival of whole countries let alone small community groups. Don't give up – I know you, and I know you won't!!

December 8, 2011 at 7:23 pm

From Glenn Barton

I think the third suggestion of Chip and Dan Heath is probably the most important in achieving this goal, more specifically, we need to find people from underserved communities with an interest in developing the arts and teach them the art of raising funds, managing non-profit organizations, etc.

Developing rural arts programs I think would be the biggest challenge, given that many arts funding organizations tend to be urban and/or university based, and staffed by people who have primarily lived and worked in these areas. Making arts funding available over a wide, sparsely populated geographic area would also be tough, but there's definitely a need for it.

When Is It Actually Arts and Culture?

December 7, 2011 at 11:42 pm

by Justin Laing, program officer, Arts & Culture Program, The Heinz Endowments

For me, one of the most useful elements of NCRP's *Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change* was the section titled "A Funding Typology and Pathways to Change" (p. 30). The typology is organized as a series of questions to provoke grantmakers to reflect on their grantmaking across five areas: Sustaining the Canon, Nurturing the New, Arts Education, Art-Based Community Development and Art-Based Economic Development. What I like is that it provided a structure to think about questions of diversity and inclusion across our entire portfolio, and this was a step we had not yet taken. However, with the tool in hand, it was easier respond to a request from my boss, Janet Sarbaugh, to think about a more general diversity framework for our grantmaking. I applied the typology as though it were a grading rubric, which in itself was a useful thought exercise, and this provided several insights. I noted that because of our work as a lead funder of the August Wilson Center for African American Culture, the Advancing Black Arts Initiative and Culturally Responsive Arts Education (CRAE) we received a solid B for our work in the first three categories: Sustaining the Canon, Nurturing the New and Arts Education. Conversely, in the areas of Art-Based Community Development and Art-Based Economic Development we had grades that, while not exactly failing, would surely get us an ear beating in most households. In reflecting on the lopsided nature of our report card, I thought I saw implications for our grants programs, but it also sparked for me a possible distinction in grantmaking with an arts focus vs. grantmaking with a cultural focus.

My read of our report card says we have been intentional about disbursing money to a diverse set of organizations and communities (primarily diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, but also in sexual orientation, size and income), and that we are doing some thinking about equitable education at the system level. However, what is it about community and economic development that has caused us to come up short on the typology? An obvious takeaway is that as a foundation program area we will need to decide whether we want to respond to or encourage Pittsburgh's arts community to respond to larger community/economic issues such as displacement, jobs or violence. But I also believe it points out that the typology may have embedded within it two levels of grantmaking when the focus is social change. Level 1– equitable support for artists to enable them to perform and produce; and Level 2– support for equitable

community outcomes. In other words, grantmaking in the areas of Sustaining the Canon & Nurturing the New supports the activities of performance, production, grantmaking that is more typical for arts and culture philanthropy. On the other hand, community and economic development are much more about providing support for a specific change being sought in the community. In this sense the first two areas of the typology are focused on artistic equity and the final two are more about cultural equity in a larger sense i.e. history, spirituality/ethics, social organization, politics, economics, ethos and *art or aesthetics*[i]. Arts education grantmaking then is a bridge between arts equity and cultural equity.

All of this then suggested to me that an addition should be made to the typology to help focus on impact, so I added a column for indicators of change. The current typology does an excellent job of asking funders to consider how we are allocating our budgets. This is a critical step and could point us to the next question: "What broad changes do 'marginalized communities' want to see for themselves?" To help our foundations consider the questions raised by the NCRP's recommendations as to what constitutes a fair share, we could move into related discussions of how we move along a continuum of artistic equity to defining and instigating broader efforts of cultural equity; the kind of approach I heard at GIA's social justice pre-conference during the discussion of the CultureStrike work being done in Tucson, AZ.

i Karenga, Maulana. 1987. Introduction to Black Studies, 4th edition. Los Angeles: Kawaida Publications.

...in reply

December 30, 2011 at 10:50 am

From Judi Jennings

Thanks so much for these comments which invite us all to consider new aspects of the current conversation about equity in arts and cultural grantmaking. Using the typologies and questions in Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change as a report card for grantmaking is an excellent way to assess and think in fresh ways about diversity and inclusion across programmatic lines and cycles of funding. I agree that it is crucial to think about impact and indicators of change, and the idea of a continuum of artistic equity to broader cultural equity is a useful way of framing future discussion, especially when artists are directly engaging in social change as in CultureStrike in Tucson.

From my point of view as a place-based funder, the question of what changes "marginalized communities" want to see for themselves is a key to developing authentic indicators of social change. As I argued in my blog post, I am convinced that it is important to identify the specific underserved communities whose equity we want to advance through our grantmakers rather than lumping all groups together as "marginalized," which does not take into account the who and why of the specific situations that are creating inequities. Leaving that argument to my own blog post for now, however, I strongly agree that involving underserved communities in naming the change they want to see is an essential step in creating and assessing authentic indicators of social change.

I have long considered that "involving the people who will be most affected" in any decision making process is a bedrock of social justice thinking. Now I am starting to see, however, that this principle is not limited to social justice philosophy at all. It is also accepted in faith-based community as a prerequisite of human agency and even in some areas of human resources management because it just plain makes sense and results in better workplaces.

How can arts and cultural funders with varied philosophies, missions and political outlooks learn from the groups they want to serve and share this information with each other? Acknowledging that it is important to learn about desired social change outcomes from the people who are experiencing inequity is an important first step. I hope all of us committed to advancing arts and cultural equity can find new ways to learn from each other and from our grantees. That is an important first step.

Rewarding Sustained Attention

December 7, 2011 at 11:43 pm

by Barbara Schaffer Bacon, co-director, Animating Democracy, Americans for the Arts

"Great art rewards sustained attention." This simple theory comes from philosopher Marcia Muelder Eaton, professor emeritus at the University of Minnesota. In my personal experience, it is true. Eaton has been considering art and writing about aesthetics for a few decades. Her early publications get to the heart of this definition but a later book, *Merit, Aesthetic and Ethical* (Oxford Press 2001) offers an inclusive concept of art, aesthetics, and value that is very relevant to the themes of *Fusing Arts Culture and Social Change*. In that book, Eaton suggests that "formalists in the world of aesthetics ignore the roles that artworks play in the life of community and conversely, ignore the ways in which communities determine the very nature of what counts as artistic or aesthetic experiences that exist within them." I recommend her writings in general and this book specifically.

I share Eaton's work here because my enthusiasm for the conversation raised by *Fusing Arts Culture and Social Change* is not to call out the major institutions and question whether they deserve support but rather to encourage sustained attention for small, mid-sized and community based arts groups that are rooted in communities, neighborhoods, ethnic and tribal traditions. Americans for the Arts has championed these groups through support for local and community arts development, advocacy for public sector arts support, and through Animating Democracy, by informing, promoting and inspiring civic engagement though the arts.

It has been our privilege to look deeply at practice and observe the development and impact over time of organizations that offer artistic excellence and innovation, astute leadership connected to community needs, and important institutional and engagement models for the field. The crucial contributions of this segment of organizations in the cultural ecosystem and toward achieving healthy communities and a healthy democracy are evident despite chronic undercapitalization.

Ron Chew's *Community-based Arts Organizations: A new Center of Gravity,* commissioned by Animating Democracy in 2009 and cited in *Fusing Arts Culture and Social Change,* takes a close look at some exemplary groups that "have emerged at the center of this more expansive vision of the arts." Published in 2009, the paper sparked discussion in the funding community but it is even more relevant in light of the aspirations expressed by this new report. Groups like East Bay Center for the Performing Arts (Richmond, CA), National Museum of Mexican Art (Chicago), Sojourn Theatre (Portland, OR), The Wing Luke Asian Museum (Seattle), Diaspora Vibe Gallery (Miami) Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance (Old Town, ME) are recognized for artistic achievement. They garner community support and recognition, complete impressive capital projects, and have established themselves as valued community institutions in a matter of only 30-35 years. Their portraits and Ron's insights illustrate what an "inclusive and dynamic cultural sector" can look like and how it can achieve both excellence in art and "through the arts, a more equitable, fair and democratic world."

There are many other such groups in communities across the country that should be noticed and nourished with sustained attention and resources. They are not without flaws and challenges but there is art, not only in their unique forms and the aesthetics of their artistic products, but in their operations and community engagement as well. The closer you look, the more you discover, the more you appreciate. Your sustained attention will be rewarded.

Cultural Kitchens: Nurturing organic creative expression

December 7, 2011 at 11:44 pm

by Maria Rosario Jackson, senior research associate, Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center, Urban Institute

In recent conferences that have dealt with the topic of equity like this year's Grantmakers in the Arts Conference and the PolicyLink Equity Summit in Detroit, I confirmed that in my many years of research on arts and culture in communities I have become convinced of at least two things. First, that all people have the capacity to be creative and the need for aesthetic expression. And second, that strategies to improve quality of life and opportunity in low-income and marginalized communities are inherently incomplete without provisions for people's cultural and artistic realization. When I think about why as an urban planner concerned primarily with low and moderate income communities of color, I have chosen to focus on arts and culture, I often reflect on the fact that, historically, in strategies to subjugate or colonize communities, one of the first things that is taken away is freedom of creative expression and the practice of organic art forms. If removal of organic creative expression and art is crucial to keep people down, then isn't provision of opportunities for organic creative expression and art crucial to lifting people up? The answer is yes.

But what does cultural and artistic realization in low-income and marginalized communities require? What are the artistic and cultural qualities and amenities that a community must have if it is to be a viable place to live and thrive? These are crucial questions that must be answered in any efforts to incorporate arts and culture into equitable development strategies. They are questions that community residents, leaders, policymakers, urban planners and funders alike must address seriously.

In my opinion, a key quality of a community that offers its residents opportunity for socio-economic advancement is the awareness among community residents and leaders that creativity and the capacity for the creation of art are assets that people in communities already possess. Recognition that these assets are building blocks for activity that can lead to individual and collective uplift is important too. The active presence of artists and tradition bearers—musicians, dancers and other performing artists, visual and media artists, writers, poets, storytellers, culinary artists, dedicated crafts people and others—who can inspire imagination, passion and excellence is also a key element. These leaders help people take responsibility for their own creativity and critical reflection and they also help cultivate the community's creative pulse. Implicit in that is also the presence of supports for artists and tradition bearers who play this important role. The integration of arts and culture, especially the arts and culture of the community in question, into other policy areas and dimensions of community life is another critical feature. We must ask and address, are there art programs in schools? Do schools employ teaching artists? Do health programs consider arts and cultural participation as essential to wellness? Are aesthetic factors a significant aspect of physical development and efforts to change the built environment?

Another extremely crucial element is the presence of what I like to call "cultural kitchens"—spaces and organizations that allow for cultural self-determination. These are places where members of geographic communities or communities of interest gather to be generative—to use their imagination, to make and experience art that nourishes, provokes and inspires. They are places where creative expressions of community history, concerns, accomplishments and aspirations are possible and encouraged. These are places that foster both tradition and innovation and they are places where people hash out who they are, what they care about and how they want to be understood in the broader context of society. They take many forms. They can be art centers, community based organizations, ethnic specific cultural organizations, mutual aid societies and, sometimes, churches and even commercial entities. What they have in common is that they are beacons for collective creative activity. They are places where artists and tradition bearers share their talents and encourage others to do so as well. They are the mechanisms that help communities both mend severed roots and sew new seeds. And they are places that have impact far beyond what happens inside of them. They help make authentic diversity and democracy possible and they are crucial to a more equitable and just society.

...in reply

December 16, 2011 at 10:38 am

From Holly Sidford

Thanks for capturing these ideas in such a compelling way, Maria. There's a lot to discuss, but I want to comment on just one concept today.

I think "cultural kitchens" is a terrific metaphor that we can all profit from exploring. The concept evokes a range of positive associations we want to encourage in communities – good health; easy social interaction; ever-changing but harmonious blends of traditional "recipes" and new "dishes;" opportunities to experiment, test and learn; collective enterprise; stimulating multi-sensory experience; and attention to the tastes of all the people who will sit down to eat together – to name just a few.

Maria outlines the many different kinds of organizations that are cultural kitchens, and surely such wonderful creative community hubs deserve more recognition and support. But without diminishing or displacing the primacy of these kinds of places, the concept itself could be embraced by other kinds of cultural organizations, and by funders too. More cultural institutions could provide space for community members to mix it up creatively, offer more opportunities for both professional and lay people to literally and figuratively make cultural "meals" together, and extend more invitations to community members to explore – together – different tastes and cultural "cuisines."

Funders could do more in this vein also, by co-creating programs with the people doing the work they want to support. What if a funder used the cultural kitchen metaphor to design and implement a funding program? The funder might be responsible for providing the basic ingredients — such as a space to gather and some key staples (money being one substitute for butter, flour and eggs). The people invited to design the program ("cook the meal") would bring the recipes (their experiences and grounded knowledge), their special ingredients (other assets in their communities, including people, history and organizations) and their knowledge of the tastes and appetites of the people for whom the "meal" was being made. Together, funder and practitioners would decide on the menu, the order of preparation, and who would do what (including who would assess the results — do the "taste test").

The first try at this approach might produce some dishes that weren't too delectable, but with practice, these "democracy chefs" would find new and productive ways to cook together and genuine feasts could be produced – full of both traditional dishes and new concoctions. And some genuinely new kinds of community equity might also be stirred up in these kitchens.

What If?

December 7, 2011 at 11:45 pm

by Holly Sidford, president, Helicon Collaborative

NCRP commissioned Fusing Art, Culture and Social Change to illuminate distribution patterns in foundation funding for arts and culture, and to encourage culture funders to allocate more of their resources toward directly benefitting disadvantaged people. As the author, I am gratified that the piece has attracted some attention. I hope the attention is leading to some reflection and some fresh conversations – within foundations, among foundations and between foundations and diverse cultural practitioners. I also hope it's spurring some useful conversations within cultural organizations about our work in the larger context of issues and needs facing people in our communities.

Genuinely fresh conversations are difficult to organize; they are even more difficult to actually pull off. We are all caught in our respective worldviews, and in our organizational dynamics. And the days are short. While I was writing the essay, I was reminded repeatedly of how patterns of history and culture shape current realities. As William Faulkner wrote, "The past is never dead, it's not even past." And management guru Peter Drucker got it right too: "Culture eats strategy for breakfast."

Most change occurs incrementally. Authentic paradigm shifts are extremely rare. As the saying goes, "It's easier to behave your way into a new way of thinking than it is to think your way into a new way of behaving." But sometimes the path to real change in behavior starts with a big re-thinking of the fundamentals. I would love to see a community, or a state, or a region, or the whole country take up this question:

> *What if we could start fresh and design a new system of support for arts and culture in this country, with equity as one of its fundamental tenets?*

What would that system look like? How would we define equity and what would be its principles? How would we define art and culture, support and system? How would we balance aid to the system's beneficiaries – people, communities, institutions, artists, artistic and cultural forms themselves, and the interests of future generations? Knowing what we know now — about the astonishing spectrum of cultural practices alive in our country; about the important contributions the arts and artists make to cognitive development in people of all ages; about the central role that art and culture play in community cohesion and the health of immigrant communities, especially; about the glories of art without social message and art with a distinct political

purpose; about the dynamic interplay of the commercial, nonprofit and unincorporated cultural forms – what philanthropic goals would we set for the new system and how would we array its resources? If fairness and equity were fundamentals, how would we shape the functions of public sector contributors as well as the various private sector ones – individual and institutional? And by what philosophy would we establish measures to know whether our new design was working?

We may need to start again – at least in our heads – to see the possibilities in a fresh way. Anyone up for a design charette?

...in reply

December 11, 2011 at 10:00 am

From Judi Jennings

ok, Holly I am in.

I mean I am up for talking about and trying to create new paradigms of thinking, fresh conversations, new ways of doing art and culture funding.

But first I am asking why? To what end? What do we want to change and how?

Are we trying to change the numbers on the charts so that arts and culture funders can feel good that we are reaching a wider range of people? Or are we trying to enact a new vision of a powerful role that arts and culture can play in shaping a better future for this country?

Carol Bebelle says it plainly in her post: the US is undergoing a profound and irreversible culture shift.

Your report documents that many arts and culture funders are not keeping up with this shift. So to me this means that we need to look outside arts and culture philanthropy to craft new visions of the greater change that we want/need to accomplish. To me, the question is not only how can we make a difference in art and culture philanthropy, but how can our funding make a difference in our communities and our nation?

One way to start is to learn from the people who are already working to make a difference now. Some of them are the very groups that the report identifies as underserved. They may be underserved by us arts and culture funders but, meanwhile, they are going ahead and integrating arts and culture in their strategies to strengthen their own families and communities.

Take, for example, the Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation based int the Porcupine District of the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota

http://www.thundervalley.org/projects/

The young folks who are leading this community development in their home place are well aware of the history of murder and destruction their people have faced. They can't forget that because they are located down the road from Wounded Knee. But they declare, "We have never stopped being incredibly resilient and extremely capable human beings. Thunder Valley Community Development follows the vision brought to us by a large group of own Ogala Oyate (people): Empowering Lakota youth and families to improve the health, culture and environment of our communities through the healing and strengthening of cultural identity."

So there it is; a strong vision of how culture strengthens the life and well-being of this community.

I had the joy–and the sorrow–of visiting Pine Ridge this past September. Many folks there are truly powerful visionaries. They have to be to survive.

I would venture to say that many arts and culture founders who read this will know some powerful visionaries in your own communities, states, regions and across the nation. Maybe we are funding them or maybe they fall outside our current guidelines. But is isn't just about our current guidelines. Visionaries like these have much to teach us about fresh conversations and new designs for funding arts and culture that make a real difference and help create a better future.

Lessons from Public Funders

December 8, 2011 at 11:40 pm

by Barbara Schaffer Bacon, co-director, Animating Democracy, Americans for the Arts

GIA asks, "What can private foundations learn from public funders who are working with marginalized communities?" I think public support programs, some old, and some more current have a few lessons to offer. Though neither was without problems or controversy, both Roosevelt's Federal Arts Projects in the 30s and The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) in the 70s suggest that light structure can produce great results. They provide evidence that talented artists will answer the call and can produce great works that are relevant to and reflective of the communities for which they are created. While the Federal Art Project was more prescriptive, artists had a very public platform and some latitude to create their work. The public works they created and the artist's interaction with the public is credited with stimulating national interest in American art and laying the groundwork for the National Endowment for the Arts to be established.

As a jobs and not an arts program, CETA had a looser structure. Artists and creative administrators were deployed, often creating their own job descriptions as they went to work in neighborhoods and community centers around the country. But they found their way and many of the programs created had staying power. The San Francisco Art Commission's Neighborhood Arts Program, and later SOMArts Cultural Center, began a Technical Services Program that helped support the establishment of many neighborhood and culturally-specific parades and festivals that still thrive today. In Minneapolis, the American Composers Forum, The Loft, Dance Today (formerly the Minnesota Dance Alliance), Forecast Public Artworks, Warm, Illusion Theater, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, Springboard for the Arts (formerly Resources and Counseling for the Arts), Milkweed Chronicle and many others grew out of the CETA era.

The lesson from these federal programs seems to be that we should keep program structures loose and expectations open. Instead of prescribing outcomes, we need to trust the artists and communities we seek to serve to couple creative expression with community engagement in meaningful ways. *While we're thinking about it, a jobs program for the arts would be a pretty good idea now — any interested funders?*

Lessons and models are also available from local and state arts agencies that have evolved effective programs to serve marginalized communities. The most impactful have worked systemically, sustained leadership and funding over more than a decade, and combined training with program support. For example, the St. Louis Regional Arts Council Community Arts Training Institute (CAT) is a five-month curriculum fostering successful partnerships among artists, social workers, educators and community activists with the goal of creating significant arts programs in community settings such as neighborhood organizations, social service agencies and after-school programs. Now in its 15th year, CAT as developed a cadre of over 200 skilled artists and social service agencies through a well conceived community arts training and project support program focusing on strong partnership work.

The Massachusetts Cultural Council's YouthReach Initiative promotes out-of-school arts, humanities, and science opportunities that are providing at-risk youth with in-depth experiences in arts and culture. Whether it's linking a high school dropout to a teaching artist, or introducing an incarcerated teen to Shakespeare, these programs find innovative ways to inspire positive growth. The award winning program reaches deeply into communities and neighborhoods across the state and has helped to shape programs of the highest quality that are garnering national awards themselves. YouthReach is informed by and grounded in strong youth development principles. It has enjoyed consistent leadership, invested in evaluation, provided training opportunities, and developed effective partnerships at the state level that have helped to advance appreciation for the role the arts play in positive youth development.

As Sidford cites in *Fusing Arts Culture and Social Change*, public arts agencies have provided significant support for artists and groups whose roots may be more in the community than the academy as well as leadership for reaching marginalized populations. They can offer more than models and lessons to private foundations seeking to broaden the scope and impact of their investments in art, culture, and society. They can be strong partners or intermediaries for reaching marginalized communities.

Next Steps

December 8, 2011 at 11:41 pm

by Carol Bebelle, co-founder and executive director, Ashe Cultural Arts Center

Private foundations, convinced of the need to expand their reach to community-based organizations that serve marginalized communities, should begin with a two-fold strategy (1) Altering their guidances to their traditional grantees (museums, operas, symphonies, etc.) to require significant partnerships with diverse community-based organizations in their communities, and (2) Using the networks of community-based arts organizations (National Performance Network, Diverse Spaces, Leveraging Investments and Creativity etc…), artists (Alternate Routes etc.), and funders (Grantmakers in the Arts…), to identify potential grantees for consideration.

These strategies should be accompanied by involvement with foundation industry organizations and colleagues that fund diverse community-based arts organizations, and regional convenings focused on culture/art/community and change which would allow foundation representatives the opportunity to learn about organizations and models that are effective in this work.

To strengthen the capacity for foundations to recognize effective organizations and programs in this targeted area, grant review teams should also be adjusted to include representatives from currently funded programs by other funders (Ford, Nathan Cummings, Lambent, Kellogg, Open Society, etc…) and grant officers with a history of this style funding when possible.

This is a beginning plan for adjusting the course of grant-making for a foundation. To become good at grant-making in this area, foundations should also review the values, mission, knowledge base and analysis of America's sociology, demography and capacity to meet the democratic principles of social justice. The foundations armed with this reflection should look to find an evolved strategy and approach that serves the foundation well and the nation better than their previous style of grantmaking.

NCRP's *Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change* by author Holly Sidford is a most recent wake-up call to us in the cultural and creative communities that we are in a non-reversible cultural shift. Our increasing diversity is meeting with a sluggish to absent capacity to adapt and rather than becoming stronger and richer as a country we are stalling, resisting and denying the obvious reality.

The curriculum for learning about and working to accept our new neighbors, co-workers, fellow-students, and fellow-Americans is being provided in community-based cultural and art programs where people are encountering each other, checking each other out and making the gradual and necessary acceptance of new folks in our communities.

This community making is intimate and careful. We are meeting our different neighbor/friend/family member on the block around the corner at the store etc. Community gatherings are another place where this delicate diplomacy takes place.

This is a rich opportunity for the cultural and creative communities to be the acknowledged guides to this better practice of diversity at work. There are thousands of efforts, initiatives and programs attempting this work across America because it is necessary and because it appears be do-able at the community level.

Foundations that appreciate culture and art and are investors in culture and art should recognize the service this community diplomacy work is to our American community as a whole. Supporting this work is a very important part of building sturdy bridges to our richly diverse present and tomorrow.

Creatives on the Rise

December 8, 2011 at 11:42 pm

by Ken Grossinger, chairman, CrossCurrents Foundation

The NCRP report is striking in the stark display of inequity it outlines. And the press coverage the report received was significant, fueling further interest in creating baselines for measurement and ideas for action.

In the last decade, an increasing number of funders, artists, scholars and art advocates has accelerated a slow but forward movement toward embracing arts and culture as an essential element in the lives of ordinary people. Their activities reflect small but scalable steps towards what is needed to re-direct funds to reach low-income, minority, and otherwise disenfranchised communities. They are, at least, signs of forward movement.

Many funders and arts advocates also have been pushing for quantifiable measures to determine the amount of money that funders allocate for art and social change. Some of these funders include large institutions such as Surdna, Nathan Cummings and Open Society Foundations, and others are smaller family foundations and donor advised funds such as the Lambent and CrossCurrents Foundation. The NCRP report followed in that vein.

There are other notable initiatives to watch as well. A year before the NCRP report, Animating Democracy, a program of Americans for the Arts issued a report entitled *Trend or Tipping Point: Arts and Social Change Grantmaking* that focused on the scope of this emerging field. The report was unable to exactly quantify the proportion of funding going into this field, but it demonstrated that tens of millions of dollars went into art and social change work, and illustrated this finding with many key projects. The report laid out a road map for future research including the need to develop more relevant and rigorous assessment metrics and for the field to come up with common definitions of this work.

Among practitioner-led initiatives are two significant projects that focus in part on issues of equity. The Creative Change convenings, organized by the Opportunity Agenda, have brought artists, funders, and academics together to develop effective strategies for public engagement. The annual convening serves as an important communications hub for the several hundred people who have been involved, and it has generated projects — most recently on immigration and the economy — that address some of the issues reflected in the NCRP report.

Another relatively new formation closely associated with Creative Change is The Culture Group, a group of artists and activists working to deepen progressive cultural activities while generating theory from that work. On the research side they plan to assess the impact of cultural strategies and to map where these activities are taking place. And they plan to generate sustainable revenue models for cultural work. They've also initiated pilot projects such as Culture Strike, a multi-pronged initiative that includes writers, visual and performing artists who are focusing some of their work on immigration and migrant communities. Recently, some 50 artists met in Arizona to learn first hand about immigration policies and to develop projects in response.

Within the GIA family a few years back, former Nathan Cummings Foundation program officer Claudine Brown and others began organizing The Art and Social Justice working group, convening primarily at the annual GIA conference. The first meeting I attended had attracted about 15 people. This year the daylong GIA pre-conference on Artists and Social Justice had to close registration owing to space limitations. The level of interest among funders in providing a more equitable distribution of philanthropic resources can be seen even in this small measure.

Taken together, these new initiatives (among many others that might be discussed) simply reflect a field in development. Some two billion in philanthropic dollars every year goes into the arts, but a relatively scant proportion of these resources goes to strategies aimed at engaging poor and minority communities. When a family of four has to pay $80.00 to enter the Museum of Modern Art it is right to question whether the museum is receiving philanthropic dollars for the 1% or the 99%. These new initiatives are meant to occupy a new space. They and others like them should be more fully supported.

Equity and Community Arts Education

December 8, 2011 at 11:43 pm

by Jonathan Herman, executive director, National Guild for Community Arts Education

I commend the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy and Holly Sidford for reporting on a critical disparity in funding within the arts sector — particularly for community-based organizations who are serving low income communities — and thank Grantmakers in the Arts for hosting this forum.

Community arts education organizations are deeply affected by the circumstances described in this report. The National Guild for Community Arts Education's constituency includes more than 5,000 organizations and government agencies in the U.S. that employ professional teaching artists to provide arts learning opportunities to people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Collectively the National Guild's 430 member organizations serve 1.2 million students, employ 16,000 teaching artists, and reach an additional six million Americans each year through performances and exhibitions in rural, suburban and urban communities. Approximately 35% of students served by these institutions are Black/African American; 33% White; and 18% Hispanic/Latino.

Most of our constituents operate at the bare bones with annual budgets under $1 million. But even those organizations whose budgets are more than $5 million do not typically fit the "conventional assessment criteria" of an arts institution used by funders to determine success. In addition to providing studio and project-based instruction, many community arts education organizations also intentionally effect learning and development *through* the arts with a focus on healthy aging, youth development, community building, etc. They share a common commitment to quality in *both* arts instruction and community well-being, and focus on both process (e.g. classes, rehearsals) and product (e.g. performances, recitals, exhibitions). Most serve increasingly diverse student populations.

They do this vital work despite serious difficulties securing the kind of funding that would allow them to make their greatest impact. As the economic crisis continues to take its toll, these organizations are facing greater demand for subsidized programs that help to ensure access. At the same time, grants that support these programs are drying up or simply not available.

When funders cut back, the most deeply affected are youth and families with the least access to arts education. Examples of arts programs cut in the past two years include a program for teenage girls recovering from substance abuse, a partnership with a local housing authority, a music therapy program for autistic children, and numerous in-school and afterschool partnership programs. Additionally, community arts education providers across the country have had to reduce financial assistance to families who otherwise would not be able to afford arts classes for their children.

At the same time that these funding challenges pose serious threats to our sector, they are driving organizations to develop new ways of doing business and maintaining their ability to serve the public.

Two major opportunities for sustainability and growth include:

1. Collaborations within the Arts Sector: One significant challenge to our sector has been the internal barriers that divide us along the lines of professional/non-professional, high/low and by artistic discipline resulting in a culture of competition for scarce resources and visibility. In cities and regions across the country, organized collaborations within the arts sector—like the Providence Youth Arts Collaborative in Providence, RI, a partnership of six non-profit community-based youth arts organizations—are striving to sustain high quality arts learning experiences and ensure that all segments within the arts learning population (young children, older adults, ESL students, etc.) are adequately served.
2. Cross-sector Partnerships: Similarly, we believe there is great opportunity in promoting arts education as a resource within a much more comprehensive community and human development framework. The arts can positively contribute to youth development, workforce development, place-making, healthcare and other areas. Strategic alliances between the arts and these sectors can be formed based on shared values, commitments and goals.

A new skill set is required to help arts leaders facilitate and sustain these alliances. Additionally, more research is needed regarding the positive impact of these collaborations on individuals and communities. Many community arts organizations are getting better at establishing metrics for their work; however, with limited resources, they primarily focus on providing broad access to high quality programs, leaving inadequate resources to thoroughly and systematically collect and analyze data or to share successful models and best practices.

We believe these kinds of collaborations within and beyond the arts sector hold promise for extending the impact of arts organizations and increasing access to arts learning opportunities for all Americans. Funders can help by increasing their support for professional development, evaluation and research.

Size Matters

December 8, 2011 at 11:44

by Lisa Cremin, director, The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

It was not a surprise to learn the findings of the excellent report *Fusing Arts, Cultural and Social Change*, because I have experienced the phenomena in my work with The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta's Metropolitan Atlanta Arts Fund. The Arts Fund has been funding the stability and capitalization of small and mid-sized arts organizations since 1993. My immediate reaction to the study was that many arts organizations supported by the Arts Fund reflect and embrace much of what the study recommends foundations support.

To dig further, for sport, we looked at the organizations that the Arts Fund supports. We took the categories that *Fusing* attributes to "underserved" (which, unfortunately, spell check really wants to be "undeserved") communities or marginalized populations. We found that many of the organizational and programmatic characteristics the study recommends that foundations embrace occur naturally in small and mid-sized organizations. Of the 75 or so organizations the Arts Fund has supported since it was founded, nine include social justice in their mission; fifteen expressly support individual artists; six work deeply in low-income communities; eighteen focus on non-majority race/ethnic populations; eleven are in rural communities; and two focus on GLBT populations.

There is nothing grassroots about our grantmaking methodology but many of our grantees work very close to or in the grassroots. When reviewing organizations, we look at all the characteristics of a strong nonprofit in a rigorous grant review, even though most of the organizations have budgets under $1M, and some only have one full time paid staff person. Our application process encourages and rewards advocacy and diversity.

For funders seeking to get closer to arts organizations whose mission involves social change and reflect the real diversity of our urban, suburban and rural communities, one approach is to focus on smaller arts organizations. The key is scale. Smaller organizations are comfortable with artistic risk and experimentation and naturally reflect their communities. Smaller arts organizations are usually led by artists and their creativity is often fueled by inequities and a drive to make change.

Walking the Walk at Private Foundations: One Program Officer's Perspective

December 8, 2011 at 11:46

by Lynn Stern, program officer for Thriving Cultures, Surdna Foundation

How can private foundation staff advance equity and inclusiveness in its arts and culture grantmaking? The publication of NCRP's report, *Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change*, comes at an opportune moment for us as we wrestle with this very question at the Surdna Foundation. Like many of our private foundation peers, Surdna is in the throes of organizational restructuring, a process begun in 2009. This journey has led us to a new mission—fostering just and sustainable communities—and redefined core programs in culture, economy and environment. It also affirmed the importance of social justice as core concept to apply to our work going forward. We are now poised to embark on a strategy development process that will result in clearly articulated grantmaking strategies within each of our three programs.

So how do we "walk the walk"? The NCRP report has already served as a springboard for revisiting and refreshing the assumptions and strategies that undergird our culture portfolio with an eye toward equity. We were fortunate to have NCRP report author Holly Sidford join us at our September Board meeting for a conversation with board and staff about the report's findings and its implications for our culture portfolio's strategy development. It was a rich and challenging discussion. In view of the demographic, economic and aesthetic trends transforming our cultural landscape, the report's data on philanthropic giving trends in the arts and culture sector gave our board and staff pause. It compelled us to ask: To what extent are Surdna's grantmaking practices across its culture portfolio inclusive, responsive and relevant to these trends? Are we addressing the inequities that face our communities and the pressing needs and concerns of our most marginalized populations?

These questions are not unfamiliar to us. In fact, we've been grappling with issues of equity and access in our support of teens' artistic advancement since the inception of this line of work nearly two decades ago. In the last five years, as these concerns have grown more central to grantees' work, our grantmaking intensified its focus on "widening the door" to the arts training pipeline for underserved teens, particularly those from impoverished backgrounds. Our support to organizations along the arts training continuum—community-based art groups, specialized public art schools, summer intensives, and national centers of excellence in arts training around the country—helps strengthen their capacity to identify talent and provide key supports (e.g. pre-college

preparation, scholarships, financial aid, etc.) to benefit teens with the least access to arts training opportunities.

Our "expanding access" work is one way we've tried to be inclusive and responsive in our grantmaking. But there is much more that we can do. And the NCRP report gives us a helpful framework and fresh set of questions to consider in our strategy development process moving forward. Here are some of the questions the NCRP report has spurred me to ponder. In terms of changing demographics, how can we achieve more equitable outcomes for the young people—and their communities—we want to serve? Alongside our "expanding access" work, we have begun to support the artistic advancement of teens from disadvantaged communities through programs with strong artistic practice and a social justice/cultural equity purview.

In terms of cultural economics, are we contributing to a sustainable ecosystem of arts education/training organizations? Currently, our grantees represent a wide spectrum of organizations in all disciplines along the arts training continuum, from large institutions (e.g., art colleges, university-based arts programs, major museums and performing arts centers) to mid-size and small community-based arts groups. How do we need to recalibrate this mix (e.g. increase percentage of mid-size and small arts groups) to ensure a healthy biodiversity of arts education/training organizations? Given the chronic funding challenges faced by many mid-size and small arts groups, how do we reorient our current grantmaking practice (three-year, project-based support) to promote their long-term financial sustainability through multi-year, general operating support?

In terms of changing aesthetics and cultural practices, are we contributing to greater diversity in art forms and aesthetic practices? We expect to do this kind of analysis of our portfolio in the coming months, though my hunch is that grantees providing arts education/training opportunities for underserved teens in non-European arts forms and cultural practices are underrepresented in our work. We have begun to look at how Surdna can help validate and support the artistic advancement of young protégés/apprentices of master artists in immigrant and indigenous communities. As a national funder with a small staff, this will be challenging. Our notion of what strong arts education/training for young people looks like along the "conventional" arts training continuum is wholly inadequate when applied to the practices by which young people learn and master art forms and cultural practices in these communities. We know that it will be essential to partner with cultural intermediaries and/or community foundations with "on the ground" knowledge of these practitioners and their communities.

So this is a just a glimpse into my thinking and questioning as we bring a greater focus on equity to our arts and culture grantmaking at Surdna in the coming months. It's been a humbling process so far. With "just and sustainable communities" as my north star, it has challenged me to look critically at our culture portfolio with a new set of priorities and identify grantmaking strategies and institutional practices that impede equity. I am grateful to GIA for making this online **Forum on Equity in Arts** available, and I look forward to engaging in dialogue with fellow bloggers and readers on this critical field-wide issue.

Theatres Sharing the Bandwidth

December 8, 2011 at 11:47

by Teresa Eyring, executive director, Theatre Communications Group, Inc.

The *Fusing Arts, Culture, and Social Change* study spotlights concerns about the distribution of private foundation dollars to arts groups in a nation that is witnessing rapidly shifting demographics, emerging artistic traditions from Asia, Africa, Latin American and the Pacific Rim, an increasing number of hybrid forms, and more artists pursuing social justice aims through their work.

What the numbers and this study don't capture are the often invisible ways in which larger and mid-sized organizations deploy financial, human and capital resources for the benefit of individual artists, smaller organizations and diverse communities. These systems of mutual support often go unnoticed by the wider public, but they are tremendously valuable. As we continue our conversation about funding equity, we must also acknowledge the impact of the actions these larger theatres are taking, and share models that are working.

I think of the La Jolla Playhouse and its "Resident Theatre Program" started under artistic director Christopher Ashley. Each year, a local company without a venue is selected for a year-long residency. They receive two productions in LJP's performance space–rent free. They receive sound and lighting support, as well as marketing and fundraising advice. Companies that have benefited from this relationship are the San Diego Asian American Repertory Theater, MOXIE Theatre, Mo'olelo Performing Arts Company, and Eveoke Dance Theatre. La Jolla Playhouse doesn't receive any special grants in order to serve as home to those companies. They simply do it in order to share their bandwidth, and to support the larger cultural ecosystem.

This is part of a wider trend profiled in a recent *American Theatre Strategies* article. Programs like Arena Stage's Visiting Companies Initiative, Steppenwolf Theatre Company's Garage Rep program, New York Theatre Workshop's Companies-in-Residence program and South Coast Repertory's Studio Series are all examples of the power of collaboration between larger and smaller theatres.

There are also unsung ways in which larger organizations and their staffs lend support, visibility and infrastructure to emerging artistic communities. One example can be found in Portland Center Stage's "Ideas in Play" program, which seeks out diverse community partners whose missions can be served by creative use of PCS facilities and staff. These partnerships include: The Hispanic Chambers "After Hours" networking event; Women & Race, a discussion series presented by PCS and the local YMCA; and the Colored Pencils Art Collective, a vigorous collective of fourteen nationalities and ethnicities and five religious traditions dedicated to facilitating intercultural learning through artistic expression.

My former home, the Children's Theatre Company, is fortunate to have a full-time music director, Victor Zupanc, who is constantly building relationships in the local and immigrant music communities. When CTC premiered Nilo Cruz's adaptation of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings, Zupanc searched for local musicians playing in South American traditions. He found and hired a harpist from Paraguay, a percussionist from Brazil, a guitarist from Argentina and a flute/pan pipe player from Ecuador, and CTC paid for all of them to join the local musician's union. Not only did this build unexpected ties to emerging artistic communities in Minneapolis, but the music was gorgeous!

Here at TCG, where diversity is a core value, the staff and board regularly investigate challenges that exist with respect to an ever-increasing plurality in our field. For instance, there are only a few artistic directors of color at the helms of the largest theatre institutions. What is the right strategy to affect change in this area? We believe that at least one puzzle piece is in the active development of a new generation of leaders of color–and connecting these talented individuals to the larger national theatre community. Through funding partnerships with foundations, such as the Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Joyce Foundation, TCG launched a number of programs, including a young leaders of color initiative, which allows these talented theatre practitioners to attend conferences, develop new thinking and build networks.

One outcome of our national conversation about philanthropic equity may be a shift in the awareness and priorities of some funders to award more dollars directly to marginalized groups. Another outcome may be a series of funding strategies both to document and to cultivate more relationships and practices — such as those described above — in order to help strengthen art-making and build overall capacity in marginalized artistic communities. In a world where there isn't enough funding to begin with, there may be clear advantages to exploring both avenues.

...in reply

December 14, 2011 at 3:38 pm

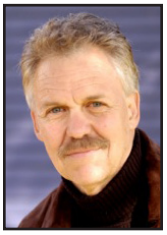
From Justin Laing

Thanks for your comments, Teresa. You rightly offer the caution that the NCRP report might have missed the practices of large and mid-sized organizations when they assist individuals, smalls arts organizations and "diverse communities." I do agree that this work surely does go on and can be very significant in the life of the organizations you mention, but I was curious why there was not a strategy or model offered under the heading of funding direct to "marginalized organizations"? In another blog, Judi Jennings of the Kentucky Women's Foundation talks about the shortcoming of the term "marginalized communities" and she makes a good point. One of the tasks the NCRP report has left the field (it could not do everything) is the development of language and analysis that allows us ways to both think about the "intersectionality" of such areas as race, gender, class and sexual orientation and ways to be intentional about how we weigh and/or prioritize these areas. I raise this because I am not clear what is meant in this blog by the term "diverse communities" and whether that is synonymous with the report's "marginalized communities" and then have difficult time feeling confident I fully understand comments that were clearly carefully crafted. Gaining clarity on what we mean by these terms and what we are trying to accomplish is a real challenge for philanthropy. We don't do the field any favors with language in our guidelines about diversity that is so loosey goosey (sp) that none of us are really sure what we are talking about other then its got something to do with those folks "out there". The NCRP report points out that cultural competence is critical to "making change happen", but even this term is open to interpretation. Maybe there are theater groups that are highly skilled in raising issues of race, power, class, sexual orientation that could assist us? In his blog, Javier Torres raises Critical Race Theory (CRT) as an analysis that should get more attention in these discussions. Obviously, CRT will not be an easy pill to swallow for a field that offers quite a few different terms to avoid speaking plainly about race and power (i.e. underserved, people of color, majority, minority, dominant, urban, etc.) but it could be very helpful in clarifying our thinking, language, intentions and actions. Again, thanks for the comments and examples.

Hard Questions for Hard Times

December 8, 2011 at 11:48 pm

by William Cleveland, director, Center for the Study of Art & Community



We are living at a time when many of our societies most closely held assumptions are being assailed. Often the push seems to come from the convergence of historic forces outside our control. But in other instances the momentum emanates from more intimate temblors set in motion with intention, by individuals and groups, across sectors, within organizations or communities. Regardless of their locus, the primal tensions disturbing the status quo are no secret. The disparity between rich and poor, climate change, polarized politics, the clash of tradition and modernity, the pervasiveness of corruption are all adding fuel to the fires, above and below.

One interesting byproduct of this tectonic dance is a widespread increase in what I call "gap awareness." Until recently, a critical mass of American stakeholders (and stock holders) perceived themselves to be on the safe side of the "haves/have-nots" divide. Now, for many middle class Americans, the gap is becoming personal and long held assumptions about fairness and equity are getting questioned, right and left. It is inevitable that as global/local economies continue to languish and the inequities and imbalances inherent in our economic, political, and social system become more pronounced, this awareness and the accompanying turmoil will continue to grow. This has implications for every sector, even the arts.

I am a strong believer in challenging my own assumptions — particularly the deeply held ones that help to form my personal worldview. It keeps me on my toes. For some, the NCRP's *Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change* report is probably an assumption challenger. For others, it likely adds substance to existing perceptions about a historic resource gap plaguing country's cultural ecosystem. To be sure, the report presents a pointed analysis of select data; drawing sharp conclusions about what the authors hold is the unbalanced, inequitable state of cultural investment in America. It is clearly intended to provoke, to challenge, to call the question.

Personally, I appreciate this kind of forceful insistence. After re-reading the report the question that it calls up for me is not whether it is mathematically unassailable. I have no doubt that there are many in the cultural philanthropy field that can, and will parse aspects of the report's data and analysis. For me the meta-challenge it poses for each individual reader is whether the "truth" it holds is concerning

and compelling enough to call the questions it raises in ones own back yard.

Is cultural equity a core value that informs our work? If not, why?

If so, how specifically do we define it and hold ourselves accountable?

If we looked hard at the patterns of cultural investment by our organization and across our community, over time, what would we find?

If there were a significant "gap" between our stated values and this investment history, what would we do?

I have no doubt that this is what NCRP would encourage you to do. To that end, the report concludes with a "Typology" that can be used by funders to begin a process self-inquiry into the equity issues it raises. It is by no means an easy set of questions. There is no escaping the fact that this kind of reflection is hard work that can be painful and contentious.

At their core, both the NCRP report and the Typology can be taken as an invitation to arts funders to pause and scrutinize many of the assumptions that have framed cultural philanthropy in the US for the past fifty years. If there ever was a time for this kind of rigorous self-examination it is now — most certainly, as a forthright response to the fairness questions raised by the report but, more importantly, because of its implications for the cultural community, and society at large. This is because the report's thesis describes a cultural ecosystem that is out of balance in a way that threatens both the health and relevance of the entire sector — all artists and arts organizations, in all communities. So, in the end, the question being posed is not "either/or", or "we vs. them, but rather how can cultural investment in America truly make sense and be meaningful in the 21st Century.

Alternative Pathways to Change

December 16, 2011 at 11:30 am

by John McGuirk, program director, Performing Arts Program, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change raises critical issues that arts funders should address to minimize disparities to accessible and relevant arts opportunities for all Americans. The report recognizes that our communities are evolving due to demographic changes including race/ethnicity, age, income, education and other factors. In addition, it identifies leading organizations that have successfully fused arts and social change, as well as funders that are using this lens in their grantmaking practices. The report indicates funding and participation is rapidly growing for culturally-specific organizations, and decreasing for major arts institutions.

However, the report falls short in describing the evolution of funding practices to meet the changing cultural needs of our communities. It should better recognize the progress made over the past two decades by arts organizations and other "institutions that focus primarily on Western European art forms" to broaden and diversify their audiences and programming. And disappointedly, the report reinforces outdated stereotypes, such as "high art" or "elite" in describing arts organizations. It creates an us-versus-them polarization: large budget versus small budget, western canon versus other traditions, urban versus rural, and on and on.

My suggestion is to take the "Funding Typology and Pathways to Change" from the NCRP report and reframe them to be more inclusive, and to recognize the value of the entire arts ecosystem. Pathway 1 could be titled "Sustaining Diverse Traditions" — this includes *both* the Western classical canon as well as culturally-specific practices from multiple traditions. Then Pathway 1 is about continuity of multiple traditions and artforms that are meaningful to our evolving communities. Pathway 2 could be "Nurturing New Cultural Expressions" from varied backgrounds and aesthetics. Pathway 2 focuses on developing innovative new voices, diverse aesthetics and emerging artforms. Finally, Pathway 3 could be "Ensuring Equitable Access to Arts Education." When multiple cultural traditions are taught to K-12 students, this is the great egalitarian solution to reach all segments of our communities. I would also include lifelong learning in this pathway to recognize that adults and seniors continue to engage in arts and cultural learning.

This is an imperfect taxonomy, but hopefully more inclusive and less divisive. I intentionally did not include pathway

strategies for art-based community development and economic development. In these instances, arts are a tool for achieving other outcomes, but it is a mistake to assume all arts and culture should fuse with these social change goals.

Finally, as we continue this discussion, let's be careful with homogenization and stereotypes. We can't cluster all funders into one homogenous group; nor can we cluster all artists and arts organizations into a homogenous group. It's the differences, the variety, and the vast pluralism that make our communities vibrant and interesting. We must continue to work together respectfully and diligently for a diverse and inclusive arts ecosystem so that everyone has access to the arts.

...in reply

December 16, 2011 at 1:03 pm

From Aaron Dorfman

What progress has been made in recent years to broaden and diversify audiences and programming is to be commended and encouraged, and the report made a point to do just that. The Pathways section with which McGuirk takes issue, "Sustaining the Canons," encourages funders to support classics outside the Western tradition (supply-side) and to ensure communities' access to any of the canons, including the Western tradition (demand-side). Support Mozart, if Mozart is what you love, but do your best to get a little night music out to as broad an audience as possible, including people who don't look like him.

NCRP is not sowing division or creating polarization by accurately reporting data about giving. More than half of the contributions, gifts and grants for the arts go to just two percent of arts organizations in this country. Only ten percent of larger grantmakers' arts dollars are classified as benefitting marginalized communities, broadly defined. Only four percent of larger grantmakers' arts dollars are classified as advancing social justice.

The hard work of building a vibrant arts ecosystem, which is a goal Mr. McGuirk and NCRP share, requires that we face these hard facts about disparities in giving.

January 3, 2012 at 9:22 am

From John McCann

"Philanthropy at its best strengthens democracy by responding to the needs of those with the least wealth and opportunity."

Source: Values Statement from National Committee on Responsive Philanthropy Strategic Plan (2008-2012)

This whole question of 'equity' misses the point. It is not and never should be about equitably funding everybody. It should be about adhering to the above declared core value of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy. Start where the work needs doing, where there is no access to arts participation, then worry about subsidizing $330 dress circle opera seats.

The bond forged between major funders and major arts organizations simply has to be challenged. The entitlement it fosters sustains too many rigid, arcane structures that focus too much on their own survival, and in doing so, are producing questionable art—art as commodity—as a means to that very survival. Whether intentionally or not, we have indeed created an 'us' and 'them'.

Something tells me that a person paying $330 for an opera seat, if forced to make the choice, will choose to pay $350. Yet the person, whether a young child in Grundy, Virginia or the senior citizen in the south Bronx, deprived of any access to arts participation, has no choice. Let's focus our dollars, and our efforts, on giving them one.