

2019 AFP DFW Philanthropy in Action Conference

Simone Uncensored and Unplugged

I can promise you one thing: ranting. T'will be focused ranting about: Bad governance, the silent killer. Funky boards. Misused power. Luring knowledge deficits. Easy answers versus expertise (or get that shiny new thing out of my face).

And other pet peeves that the sector and its professionals – like us – need to fix faster. Why fix – and fix faster?

Because... You'll be happier in your work. Respect will follow you instead of "the other thing". And life will be cooler.

Simone P. Joyaux, ACFRE, Adv Dip, FAFP

Advanced Certified
Fundraising Executive

International Advanced
Diploma in Fundraising

AFP
Distinguished

Paul Dunne told me:
TedTalk on steroids.

And...jump forward
instead of moving the
needle.



People describe me as a rebel and renegade...truth teller and change agent...social equity evangelist.

I'm a CRQ lover (cage-rattling questions). I enjoy popular culture and serious art.

My dress code requires weird hose (when I'm wearing hose). 2 tacky rings required because I have 2 hands. (And gorgeous unusual artist-made jewelry.

I have weirdly cool t-shirts like: "I am my own lifeboat" "Ban jargon" And so many more.

Oh my...What to wear to Dallas? Hmmmm....

P.S. Yes, that's me in front of the original painting.

P.P.S. I explore "unplugged" to decide if that was appropriate.

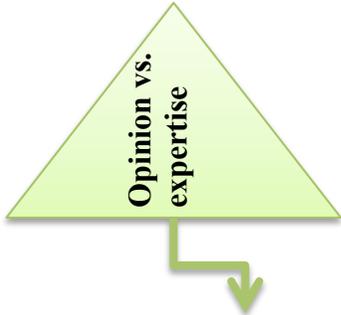
Philanthropy's Moral Dilemma

Social change

Philanthropy in service of democracy

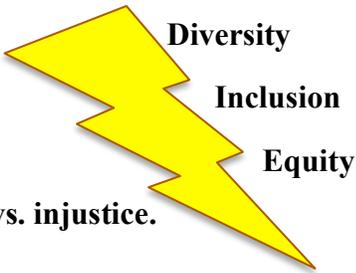
Power dynamics

Major/minor

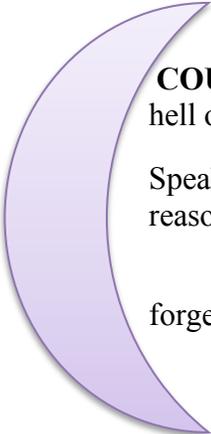


And my "Well, Missy" story.

Unearned privilege...Mine. Yours. Ours. Theirs.
Over & over. Past. Today. Future. Unless we all
choose to act & fix it.



Everybody vs. injustice.



COURAGE & a whole hell of a lot of guts.

Speaking out and reasonable risk

And never ever forget unearned privilege.

Knowledge deficit

Academic research

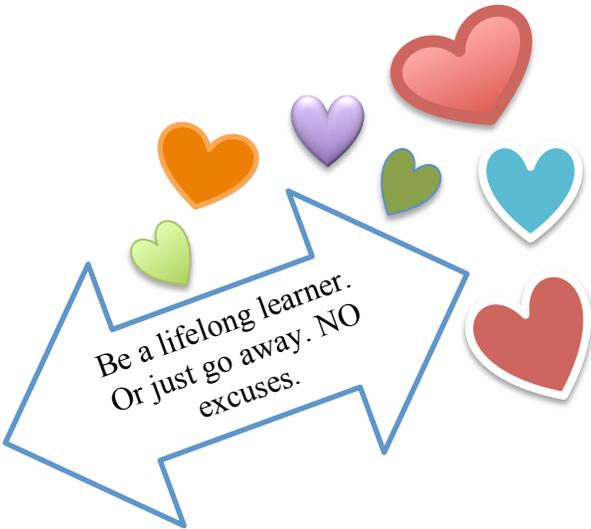
Governance

Organizational development

Phil Psych

Sociology

And more...



Uncensored. Unplugged. Uncut. Not suppressing parts deemed objectionable on moral, political, or other grounds.

You either like or dislike Picasso's work. That's your personal view or attitude. But art experts (body of knowledge and expertise) judge Picasso as a seminal artist, a game-changer.

You hire a lawyer and pay attention to what she says without wasting too much time offering your ill-informed or uninformed opinions about the law. You hire a doctor and don't second-guess her surgical methods.

There's a substantive difference between personal opinions that are not based on expertise – and informed opinions, which are based on expertise and body of knowledge and research.

Unfortunately, the nonprofit sector seems full of opinions, and far too many are the bad kind, ill informed and uninformed.

For example: Your boss doesn't like the direct mail letter you wrote. Your letter is based on the body of knowledge¹ and research from people like Mal Warwick, Sean Triner, Jeff Brooks², Jerry Huntsinger, and Tom Ahern³.

But your boss isn't "comfortable" with the letter. In his opinion, the letter doesn't represent the agency well.

Who is the fundraising expert at your agency? Not your boss. (And not your board chair or any of your board members either, by the way!) The expert better be you!

Here's another example: Your board chair, the bank CEO, runs a tight board meeting. She uses the executive committee⁴ to work through all issues before the board meets. Committees report at each meeting. Board dialogue⁵ is limited.

As the executive director, you've studied the body of knowledge about governance⁶ by attending workshops and reading books and research. You also serve on boards. You're trying to improve governance at your agency – and that certainly includes board meetings. But your board chair graciously chuckles and says, "I've served on more boards than you are old. We'll stick with my tried and true approach."

Your board chair thinks her years of board service make her an expert in governance and board development. But she's wrong. Experience alone doesn't make her an expert. She needs the book knowledge and the research findings.

¹ Visit www.sofii.org, the global Showcase for Fundraising Inspiration and Innovation.

² Subscribe to Jeff's free daily blog, www.futurefundraisingnow.com.

³ Subscribe to Tom's free e-news about donor communications. Read his books. www.aherncomm.com.

⁴ I'm on a worldwide mission to destroy all executive committees. Read my web column at www.nonprofitquarterly.com. And see my article in NPQ's print edition.

⁵ Visit the Free Download Library on my website. Read "Conversation is a Core Business Practice" in the library section called Other Nonprofit Resources.

⁶ Visit the Free Download Library on my website and see all the resources for governance and boards.

Too-often lousy fundraising and governance

There's something else that severely limits the quality of personal opinions and experience in fundraising and governance: the too-often lousy fundraising and governance that people observe and participate in...and then copy.

For example: I find that most boards are somewhat (or lots) dysfunctional. I'm talking about the supposedly sophisticated boards with their supposedly knowledgeable staff and their power broker board members. Yes. Most boards are not that good. And it's not just me who says so. Read the research and the for-profit and nonprofit sector publications like *Harvard Business Review* and *Nonprofit Quarterly* and and and ...

Another example: Fundraising isn't doing all that great either. There's the donor retention crisis that began before the 2008 recession. The lack of knowledge about donor satisfaction. Insufficient personal face-to-face solicitation. Lousy donor communications. Too many fundraisers don't know the body of knowledge or follow research. And those that do too often get stymied by bosses and boards with personal opinions.

Living in a fact-free zone

There's another problem we have in our work – and in our society at large: fact denial and fact deniers. “We live in a world where scientific knowledge is subordinated to political and religious dogma, where intellect and expertise are denigrated as elitist, where demands proliferate that history be taught as an exercise in national self-congratulation, not critical self-examination.”⁷

Instead of acting as critical thinkers⁸ – learning the body of knowledge and using good research – too many people assert their personal opinion. And these people demand that all others accept the validity of their personal opinions. In fact, parts of our society (and our enterprises, no matter the sector) too often deny facts and assert opinion. Global warming anyone? There's actually a science of why we don't believe science⁹.

Have you heard of the movie *Anonymous*? It's about Shakespeare not writing Shakespeare...the suspicion that someone else wrote Shakespeare... (And, most likely an English lord wrote Shakespeare because how could a commoner write something as great as Shakespeare! In this movie, the author of Shakespeare is supposed to be Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.)

When the movie premiered, a *New York Times*¹⁰ Op-Ed (James Shapiro, October 17, 2011) wrote this about fact or fiction: “*Anonymous* offers an ingenious way to circumvent...objections: there must have been a conspiracy to suppress the truth of de Vere's authorship; the very absence of surviving evidence provides the case.

“In dramatizing this conspiracy, Mr. Emmerich [film director] has made a film for our time, in which claims based on conviction are as valid as those based on hard

⁷ Eric Foner, May 13, 2012 commencement address for doctoral candidates at Columbia University, published in *The Nation* magazine, June 25, 2012, www.thenation.com.

⁸ Read the marvelous *Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking*, www.criticalthinking.org/store. Also available at Amazon.com.

⁹ Read Chris Mooney's marvelous article in *Mother Jones*, “The Science of Why We Don't Believe Science,” www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/03/denial-science-chris-mooney.

¹⁰ www.nytimes.com

evidence. Indeed, Mr. Emmerich has treated fact-based arguments and the authorities who make them with suspicion. As he told an MTV interviewer...when asked about the authorship question: ‘I think it’s not good to tell kids lies in school.’”

Are you wondering which is the lie? Shakespeare or Lord deVere?

Stop the uninformed and ill-informed opinions and the fact-deniers!

So let me summarize, after this rather long rant! Uninformed or ill-informed personal opinion is irrelevant to the work we do. These opinions – too often promoted by whichever “powers that be” control your life or our agency or our world – stop forward progress. These opinions distract us from the right work and compromise integrity.

The job of good and competent professionals – and ethical leaders – is to graciously and forcefully disengage from uninformed and ill-informed opinions.

Read Seth Godin’s¹¹ wonderful blog from April 9, 2012, “Is everyone entitled to an opinion?” Seth responds: “Perhaps, but that doesn’t mean we need to pay the slightest bit of attention. There are two things that disqualify someone from being listened to... Lack of standing... No credibility.”

You and I need to pay particular attention to “no credibility.” As Seth notes, “An opinion needs to be based on experience and expertise.” So you and I better acquire and maintain that expertise and experience.

P.S. Check out Scott Adams’ *Dilbert* cartoon from October 7, 2012... “I like to have opinions. But not informed ones.”¹²

¹¹ Subscribe to Seth’s free daily blog, www.sethgodin.com. And read Seth’s great books like *Tribes*, *The Big Moo*, *Permission Marketing*, and *Linchpin*.

¹² www.dilbert.com/strips/comic/2012-10-07

Philanthropy's Moral Dilemma

Excerpted from *Keep Your Donors: The Guide to Better Communications and Stronger Relationships*¹³, Simone Joyaux and Tom Ahern

“Giving isn’t a posture reserved for the rich or the powerful. It is the responsibility and privilege of every man, woman, and child to participate in the task of building more just and humane societies.” (Alfre Woodard, *Robin Hood Was Right*)

“Small acts of resistance to authority, if persisted in, may lead to large social movements...ordinary people are capable of extraordinary acts of courage...those in power who confidently say ‘never’ to the possibility of change may live to be embarrassed by those words...the world of social struggle is full of surprises, as the common moral sense of people germinates invisibly, bubbles up, and at certain points in history brings about victories that may be small, but carry large promise.” (Howard Zinn, *You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train: A Personal History of Our Times*)

THE POLITICS OF POWER IN PHILANTHROPY

As in any human endeavor, politics are alive and well in philanthropy. NGOs seek power, just like everyone else. Witness the following actions by nonprofit / NGOs, just a sampling:

- Recruiting people of influence for the board to help get big gifts and special favors.
- Retaining board members who do nothing but give big gifts, despite this violation of good governance principles.
- Depending on executive committees¹⁴ without considering the negative power dynamics, and effect on other board members.
- Admitting less-than-qualified kids from socially powerful families to elite schools because social capital is so important.
- Recognizing donors by gift amount, with no discussion about any possible negative impact.
- Use terms like “major gifts” and “major gifts officer” with donors, with little thought about the messages communicated. (I recently heard a story about a donor who asked if she should call the “minor gifts officer”. And in Australia, I just heard of a position called “medium gifts officer.”)

Each of these actions reflects some form of privilege. When (rarely) confronted about these (often) unquestioned acts, organizations may respond: “We need money because we do

¹³ Modified from *Keep Your Donors*, Chapter 25 | Coda | Philanthropy's Moral Dilemma. *Keep Your Donors* is part of the AFP / Wiley Fund Development Series, copyright 2008, released November 2007. Chapter 25 includes an expanded discussion of this topic, accompanied by examples and questions to stimulate conversation.

For other writings and resources on social justice and social justice, see www.simonejoyaux.com. Click on social change / justice in the left hand navigation bar.

¹⁴ I'm on a worldwide mission to destroy all executive committees. And lots of people are signing up!

good. Politics makes the world go round so we act accordingly.” Ah yes, the end justifies the means.

It seems to me that nonprofits accept these politics as the status quo, the way of doing business. Organizations often reinforce this approach, either intentionally or unconsciously. Or, because the sector doesn't talk much about the issue, let alone alternatives.

I don't think politics are hidden in philanthropy, merely masked with a hint of entitlement and self-righteousness. Power, authority, and influence *do* offer advantages, but not without one big consequence, what I call the moral dilemma and crisis of philanthropy

THE MORAL DILEMMA FACING PHILANTHROPY

For me, this is the moral dilemma: In general, philanthropy and fund development reinforce the status quo. The haves remain haves. The have-nots remain have-nots. By depending upon power, both philanthropy and fund development honor privilege, which destroys the likelihood of a level playing field. And finally, philanthropy's transformational capacity too rarely touches equity and social justice.

Don't get me wrong. There is so much to admire and value in philanthropy. But I'm increasingly concerned about privilege and power, the fashion of the world. Philanthropic organizations use both to move their missions forward. At that moment, philanthropy embroils itself in a moral dilemma, an actual crisis in my opinion.

POWER, SOMETIMES SILENT BUT EVER PRESENT

None of this is a secret. It's just not mentioned much. And discussed even less, except in special circumstances.

You know power when you see or experience it: control and influence.

Just visit your thesaurus. Better yet, check out www.visualthesaurus.com. The diagram of a word – like power – morphs each time you click. For power, you'll see words like baron, big businessman, king, magnate, mogul, and tycoon. What's not to like? Or how about “so powerful that you can influence events around the world?” Personally, I want that one.

Then click on the little dotted line that leads to “powerlessness.” There you'll see “impotence,” “lack of strength,” and “weak and feeble.”

The most common origin of power is based on privilege. For example, the privilege of having money, being male, born to the majority race, and being able-bodied.

This traditional privilege and power reinforce the status quo, too often devaluing those with less (or different) privilege and power. Too often traditional privilege excludes other community voices. And by reducing community voices, we limit change.

I think this dynamic compromises the broader purpose of philanthropy, which I believe is about building community. Moreover, privilege and power can compromise the “inherent and inalienable rights of all,” stated in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

Privilege, the driving nature of power

We talk lots about the disadvantaged. We worry about the poor and the infirm, those without job skills, those without education. And wonderful nonprofits help relieve the suffering of the disadvantaged.

But how often do you, me, others talk about the advantaged?

Try it. Soon. Now.

Stop asking who is disadvantaged. Start asking who is advantaged. Advantage – unearned, unrecognized, and too often invisible to those who have it.

Advantage is just another word for privilege. And it's privilege that people don't want to talk about because privilege is so personal. Yet some of my privilege and yours come at the expense of others.

Without a fundamental awareness of privilege, it's almost impossible to understand the politics of human relationships. It's hard to ask the tough questions about power. And how can we change – if we want to – without asking the most cage-rattling questions (another one of my worldwide missions).

Let's start with the obvious: Each person experiences life differently. A person of color experiences life differently than a white person. A wealthy person experiences life differently than a poor person.

Consider how you experience life. Consider what advantages you might have because you were born a particular gender or ethnicity / race. Because you were born into a wealthy family.

You must read Peggy McIntosh's "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"¹⁵. Back in the late 1980s, Peggy examined her own privilege as a white woman. Things like begin able to buy flesh-colored bandages for a cut. Or speaking out against racism without appearing self-serving. Or readily getting a cab on the street.

Peggy reminds us that this privilege is not a result of something a person has done. On the contrary, privilege is the result of "invisible systems conferring dominance on a particular group."

And what happens with these unearned privileges? They become the norm. A culture's socialization about norms produces hierarchies and power dynamics that are often unquestioned and accepted as reality. As authors Capek and Mead note in their book *Effective Philanthropy: Organizational Success through Deep Diversity and Gender Equality*, the norms of our respective cultures advantage some and disadvantage others.

And it's not just about racism, which was Peggy's focus. Privilege is found at the intersection of gender, ethnicity/race, class, and sexual orientation.

What does privilege or unearned advantage look like? It looks like me.

I'm a white, heterosexual, well-educated, affluent woman. White, heterosexual, well-educated, affluent.... All privileges that offer me rights and benefits in the U.S., Canada, and most everywhere in the world. Unearned advantages provided to me through birth, via my parents. Sure, I've worked hard. But I had a head start, a really big one.

I do have one glaring disadvantage: I'm a woman. It's a disadvantage in every country of the world to be a woman – yes, even in the United States of America, that bastion of democracy and freedom. But at least I'm white, heterosexual, well educated and affluent, compensating somewhat for the gender disadvantage.

I can get married and I can buy a nice house. I can get lots of different jobs although I won't get paid as much as a man for doing the same thing. Also, I've hit the age when age is a problem again, too old. But I'm still enormously privileged.

¹⁵ You'll find "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" all over the Internet. Check out Peggy's new articles – *White Privilege: An Account to Spend* and *White People Facing Race: Uncovering the Myths That Keep Racism in Place*, sponsored by the Saint Paul Foundation, 2009. Contact McIntosh at the National SEED Project, wcwonline.org/seed.

You know what's really sad? When I talk about my privilege – my unearned advantage – people flinch. People say I shouldn't talk like that because "nice women" don't talk like that. Don't rock the boat. Don't talk about advantages like class, race, gender, sexual orientation. That makes people uncomfortable.

Damn. If the privileged won't talk about their own privilege, how will change happen? Do we actually expect the disadvantaged and marginalized to continue this war without us there, too, and leading it? Shame on us.

I believe it is our moral obligation – as philanthropic leaders – to talk about privilege and politics and power. Talk about this with your staff and with your board. Talk about it with your donors.

Yes, this can be done. Surely we can explore ideas about what to do to minimize the negative affects of privilege. Then make those changes.

UNDERSTANDING THE TWO TYPES OF PHILANTHROPY

There are two kinds of philanthropy: traditional philanthropy and social change (also called progressive) philanthropy.

I'm using the term "traditional" in the sense that this philanthropy is the most prevalent, most common. Operating in the mainstream, it needs no adjective. This is simply philanthropy, including the full gamut of endeavors. For example, healthcare, education, arts, environment, human service, and so forth. This is voluntary action for the common good, to address community needs and improve the quality of life.

This traditional philanthropy is great. But it's not alone.

"Traditional philanthropy is based on responding to, treating and managing the consequences of life in a society with a capital-based economy. Progressive philanthropy, on the other hand, analyzes and responds more to cause than effect. Progressive philanthropy supports...social change...actions that seek to right the imbalances of an unjust society or unequal distribution of resources... often making people, institutions, and government uncomfortable. Progressive philanthropy strives to fund work that is proactive rather than reactive. Progressive philanthropy... challenges the assumptions that economic and social inequities are somehow unavoidable as the price of progress or prosperity." (Tracy Gary and Melissa Kohner, *Inspired Philanthropy: Creating A Giving Plan*, Chardon Press. New edition now available.)

Social change / progressive philanthropy requires an adjective to distinguish its focus and approach. This kind of philanthropy focuses on root causes and supports systemic change.

An often-told story illustrates the difference between the two types of philanthropy.

Imagine that you're walking along a riverbank. Suddenly you notice babies floating down the river, drowning. You wade into the river and rescue them. But there are still more, so many. Soon, you see another person walking along the riverbank. You call out to her, "Come and help me save the babies who are drowning in the river." But she hurries on by saying, "I'm going to the head of the river to figure out who is throwing them in and stop them."

“Rescuing the babies” is the traditional and dominant approach in philanthropy. Going to the head of the river to fix the root cause is less common and often controversial.

Of course, the choice is not either or. Every society needs both. And some organizations do both. Equally important, everyone chooses his or her own interests and causes, as it should be.

My complaint, however, is that social change philanthropy is not well enough known in the sector. Nor is there enough of it to fulfill part of philanthropy’s purpose, building community in terms of that U.N. Declaration of “inherent and inalienable rights for all.” Moreover, philanthropy itself succumbs to the politics of power and privilege.

TRADITION DOMINATES

More than one hundred books fill the walls of my office; yours, too, I imagine. Countless articles fill my files and yours. Great books and great articles. Some of the best in the field.

But most don’t mention anything but mainstream philanthropy. Same experience with all my continuing education over 30 + years. There’s limited exposure to social justice or social change / progressive philanthropy, except in specialized publications or at special conferences.

This isn’t my experience alone. Most fundraisers I encounter aren’t familiar with the concepts of social change philanthropy or social justice, the purpose of this other philanthropy. Most fundraisers that I know talk about mainstream traditional philanthropy, not the full spectrum of philanthropy, which includes social change.

That’s my concern. The lack of familiarity with social change philanthropy. We’re missing part of history, an essential component of our practice, a critical element of building community.

The dominant culture, the voice of the “majority,” wins. The status quo reinvents the status quo. I’m angry, ashamed, and feel guilty.

I expect a fairer approach from philanthropy and fund development and the nonprofit / NGO sector. Hopefully the globalization of fund development will introduce new experiences that can fight these dominant voices.

HAVE YOU NOTICED: THE LESS SOCIAL JUSTICE WE HAVE, THE MORE PHILANTHROPY WE NEED?

Ironic, isn’t it? We need more philanthropy because we refuse to deal with social injustice. We need more traditional philanthropy to compensate because we never give enough to social change philanthropy to actually make change.

Martin Luther King, Jr., said it well, “Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice that make philanthropy necessary.”

Social injustice. What does that actually mean? Unfairness. Inequity. Privilege and advantages available to some but not all.

You know the old saying about giving a person fish to eat – or teaching the person to fish? The thing is, even if you’re taught to fish, you need a place on the riverbank to fish from. We teach people to fish but we don’t give them a place on the riverbank.

Unequal pay for the same work. No living wage. Vastly fewer women in elective office. Marriage for opposite sex couples but not same sex couples. Prisons filled with black men.

And the list is endless and ever growing. We're good at maintaining the status quo and reinforcing the haves and have nots. Because some changes would threaten your privilege and mine just too much.

Injustice is contagious. To quote King again, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

If we gave more money to stop injustice, then we would have less injustice and less need to compensate for injustice through traditional mainstream philanthropy. Surely that's what Martin Luther King Jr. meant when he said philanthropy was commendable, but...

We are complicit

Candidly, I think much of the sector is complicit in social injustice. That's part of the sector's moral dilemma.

Complicit because we don't acknowledge the harm of privilege and power and figure out how to discuss these issues. Complicit because we're comfortable with the status quo and have figured out how to use politics. Complicit because it's easier and less risky to be conventional than it is to question.

Injustice demands social change, a leveling of the playing field. "Social change means community empowerment, redistribution of resources, and transformation of social and institutional systems that perpetuate all forms of inequity." (Frank J. Omowale Satterwhite, Ph.D., President and CEO, National Community Development Institute.)

Redistribution of resources – oops. Maybe taking something away from me because it's become apparent that the world's resources are not unlimited. Transformation of systems – hmm. Maybe overturning the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to outlaw college admissions based on race. Gee, we white people won and got to keep the affirmative action we live with daily.

This is hard stuff because it's about my personal privilege and yours. It's about the personal privilege of our donors and our friends and neighbors and families. Because change could hurt those of us who are privileged.

PHILANTHROPY AS A DEMOCRATIZING ACT

My view is that philanthropy is *not* particularly democratic. As you read in this paper, I believe that usually we accept (and design) philanthropy as an act of traditional power and privilege.

Instead, I think philanthropy can, should, and must amplify all voices, especially those that are traditionally ignored. I expect philanthropy to behave as an empowerment tool. I want philanthropy to be a strategy to democratize our communities and our organizations. A strategy to fight the haves / have nots model of society. A strategy to democratize our communities and organizations.

I expect philanthropy to empower people, to empower the donor regardless of gift size. I expect nonprofit organizations to speak out about privilege, politics, and power in philanthropy.

ATTACKING THE MORAL DILEMMA

“Charity is good, but supporting and creating social change are about power. Power can infuse lives with purpose and dignity. That opens up the possibility of joy. The life of the giver, as well as that of the receiver, is transformed...No matter who we are, no matter how much money we have, whatever our color, gender, age, religion, or language, we can bring change to the world around us. We can open our minds, roll up our sleeves, and reach out our hands.” (Alfre Woodard, Preface, *Robin Hood Was Right*)

Rest assured I’m not naïve. Fundraisers *will* focus more on the donors who are most loyal and who give more money. Nonprofits *will* recruit board members with connections. And on and on and on.

But certainly we can certainly manage power and privilege in our organizations, and in our society. That’s my challenge and battle cry directed to myself, to you, to organizations, donors, and volunteers.

Philanthropy has enormous power for good – as long as donors, volunteers, professionals, and organizations don’t get confused about the distinction between social change philanthropy and traditional mainstream philanthropy. We don’t need to trap ourselves as replicators of the status quo, purveyors of haves and have nots.

Of course, it’s up to the donor and volunteer and organization to chose which philanthropy to engage in. But I think it’s up to all of us in the sector to demand broad recognition of both kinds of philanthropy.

Moreover, I think philanthropy could better stimulate the evolution of society. Of course, maintain traditional mainstream philanthropy in its full panoply. But also embrace progressive philanthropy that fights for social change.

I think the nonprofit / NGO sector must examine itself and how organizations and professionals are complicit in privilege and power. Let’s use the philanthropic process – including fund development – to question privilege and power in the doing of this work.

Leaders can – no let me say should – raise these issues at every opportunity. In organizations where we work and give money and time. Within our professional associations and in writings and presenting.

For me, this is an obligation. It’s about speaking out because silence is consent. It’s about taking risks – all the time knowing that even the ability to take a risk may be based on privilege, e.g., I can afford to lose my job.

I believe that one of the obligations and glories of philanthropy is questioning privilege and its resulting power. I’m convinced that philanthropy can and should be – more often – a subversive act.

IN CONCLUSION

Here is one of my favorite stories, told by Warren Buffet based on John Rawls *A Theory of Justice*. I modified Buffet’s words somewhat. For me, this story represents philanthropy’s moral dilemma.

Imagine that it’s 24 hours before you were born. A genie appears and says: “You get to set the rules of the society into which you will be born. You can set the economic rules and the social rules and all the other rules. The rules you set will apply during your lifetime and for the lifetime of your children and even grandchildren.

Just imagine how thrilled you are with this offer! But you're smart. You ask, "What's the catch?"

And the genie says: "You don't know if you're going to be born poor or rich, White or of color, infirm or able bodied, homosexual or heterosexual, or female or male.

So what rules do you want?"

I know what rules I want, equity and social justice for all.

I know that to create this world requires social change / progressive philanthropy, not only traditional mainstream philanthropy.

And I know that this means transformation, more probably revolution. I think it's time for more subversive acts like asking cage-rattling questions. Confronting complicity and challenging privilege and power. Exploring morality and speaking out. Increasing philanthropy for social change.

But I have hope.

"La esperanza muere última." Hope dies last. (Jessie de la Cruz, retired farm worker recounting the days before Cesar Chavez and the founding of the United Farm Workers. Studs Terkel uses this quotation in his 2003 book *Hope Dies Last: Keeping Faith in Difficult Times*.)

Please pay attention!

Fundraising isn't about money...neither is giving Please stop the money travesty now.

Stop! Stop! Please stop now!

If you and your board and your staff think fundraising is about money...not good.
If you think donors are just giving money... not good at all.

Fundraising helps people follow their own interests, express their values, and advance their own aspirations. Our work is about emotional fulfillment.

As Dale Carnegie (1930s American self-help guru) said: "You'll have more fun and success when you stop trying to get what you want and start helping other people get what they want."

Why is it so hard for fundraisers and NGOs¹⁶ to understand, accept, and embrace this donor focus?

Because you're all focused on your mission? So you think everyone else is focused on your mission? You universalize your own passion. You think that donors give money to your organization to fulfill *your* mission. The truth is, donors have their own personal missions.

Let me ask you: When was the last time you thought about why you give? And don't tell me, "I'm giving to the mission." Probe your own heart. Think about how you feel. Ask yourself why this mission is important to you. Why you care about this cause.

You're not answering a questionnaire! You're telling a story to yourself. Think about your story.

Part 1: Fundraising and giving aren't about money

Donors give *through* your organization to achieve their own desires... to fulfill their own aspirations... to live out their own values. Your organization is the means to the donor's end.

I'm a huge Seth Godin¹⁷ fan. This is a marvelous blog:

"The brand is a story. But it's a story about you, not about the brand."

"Yes, every brand has a story—that's how it goes from being a logo and a name to a brand. The story includes expectations and history and promises and social cues and emotions. The story makes us say we "love Google" or "love Harley"... but what do we really love?

"We love ourselves.

"We love the memory we have of how that brand made us feel once. We love that it reminds us of our mom, or growing up, or our first kiss. We support a charity or a soccer team or a perfume because it gives us a chance to love something about ourselves.

¹⁶ NGO = non-governmental organization. Worldwide, NGO is used more frequently than nonprofit.

¹⁷ www.sethgodin.com

“We can't easily explain this, even to ourselves. We can't easily acknowledge the narcissism and the nostalgia that drives so many of the apparently rational decisions we make every day. But that doesn't mean that they're not at work.

“More than ever, we express ourselves with what we buy and how we use what we buy. Extensions of our personality, totems of our selves, reminders of who we are or would like to be.

“Great marketers don't make stuff. They make meaning.”

And by the way, if you think the donor's focus on self-fulfillment is bad, you're wrong. The fact that people – like you and me – have aspirations and fulfill them through charitable giving...that's glorious and beautiful. The fact that people – like you and me – choose to give through different organizations...that's glorious and beautiful.

I've told you before...so has Tom Ahern...and so have researchers worldwide: emotions drive much of decision-making. Emotions – like fear – are a biological imperative.

Fundraising and fundraisers are story listeners and storytellers.

We fundraisers listen to stories about clients, those who are served...whether that's a child, a puppy, a tree, a melting glacier, a patient, the actor, or dancer.

Then you and I retell those client stories. And we invite those clients to tell those stories in their own voices.

Now, you and I should also be listening to donor stories. Because donors are the real heroes of all fundraising stories. Then you and I must retell those donor stories. And let those donors tell their own stories in their own voices.

Unfortunately, we're pretty darn poor at listening to and then retelling donor stories. We don't do much inviting. We retell...seemingly grudgingly.

Instead, we tell our organization's stories. How great our staff is. How swell our board members are. How absolutely great our organization is.

We fundraisers and our bosses and boards and program staff make our organizations the heroes. And then we expect donors and prospects to applaud from the grandstand. We expect prospects and donors to applaud by throwing money at us.

And we're pissy when they don't. Yes, pissy and whiny!

How much longer will nonprofits act so stupidly? How longer will you ignore what so many experts keep telling you? The donor is the hero. The donor isn't sitting in the grandstand looking down at your great plays on your great field. Donors are the heroes. And donors are right down there on the field, part of your team.

Everything is a tale. Life is stories.

Fundraising isn't about money. It's about the hearts and minds and values of donors. Giving isn't about money. Giving is about the hearts and minds and values of donors. And donors are the heroes of the story.

Here are two of my favorite quotations. Post them on your wall. Chant them at board and meetings.

- “The universe is made of stories, not atoms.” [Muriel Rukeyser, American poet and political activist]

- “Everything is a tale. What we believe, what we know. What we remember, even what we dream. Everything is a story, a narrative, a sequence of events with characters communicating an emotional content. We only accept as true what can be narrated.”
[Carlos Ruiz Zafón, *The Angel’s Game*]

How good a story listener are you? How about your board members and your staff? How effectively do you celebrate your donor heroes? How effectively do you tell your story?

Now think about your own philanthropic stories

My dear deceased friend Tim Burchill would ask his students to write their philanthropic autobiography. Tim founded – and taught in – the Masters Program in Philanthropy and Development at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota. I teach there, too. And, I ask the program students to interview each other and then write the donor hero’s story.

The Buddha tells us it’s the journey that matters. And that’s the donor’s journey – not your organization’s journey.

If you’re reading this article, I assume you’re a donor. You’re acting out your own emotions and fulfilling your own aspirations.

So what are your stories, Madame Hero?

What are the stories those fundraisers and those organizations should be telling about you, Monsieur Donor?

As a donor, do you feel listened to and also heard? Are those fundraisers and those organizations honoring you by asking and hearing your stories? Or do they seem like they’re taking notes by rote...just applying some strategy, interviewing donors to keep them around? Do you feel respected and admired? Do you feel part of the team on the field? Or are you just applauding with your hard-earned money?

I have my stories. You have yours. In Part 2 of this article, I’ll tell you about experiences I’ve had telling my stories as a donor. And the risks I choose to take. And the respect and care I receive in return...or not.

I wonder how you will treat me when you read my stories?

Part 2: Part of my philanthropic story

I grew up in an international household.

My dad was French. He came to the U.S. as an adult after World War II.

His own life story – and his daily experiences living and teaching in the U.S. – taught us kids about being different.

Papa Georges was a university professor. (Michigan State University) After more than 40 years in the U.S., he still had a French accent. Sometimes he wasn’t clearly understood when he was talking. He ate different foods and had different life experiences, living through a war and living in another country and...

Because he lived with one foot in the U.S. and one foot in France, so did us kids and my American mom. Different foods. Different stories. Regular trips to France and a different language and society and sense of community.

I was raised as an existentialist. And an FDR Democrat (President Franklin Delano Roosevelt). I had an international perspective and saw the Ugly American all too often when we traveled.

My family was against the War in Vietnam before it was popular to be against that war. My dad always asked, “Why do you Americans think you can win? The French were in Indochina for years and never won.”

I’ve always felt different. A lot of people feel that way.

In fact, we are all different. And yet all the same. Never forget that. Some of our stories are similar. Some are different. But they are all stories. Stories that belong to individuals who live their lives with other individuals in different communities all over the world.

My beliefs. My values.

When I was 13 years old, the local newspaper quoted my dad: “The most important thing is to step out of your linguistic ghetto and become aware that there are other people in the world who live, eat, learn, and make love in a medium which is not English.”

Over the years, I’ve commandeered that story. Tom and I have translated that into our own slogan, our family battle cry: “People eat, sleep, dream, and make love in languages other than English, in colors other than ours (White), and in pairings other than opposite sex. And that’s glorious! That’s what we’re fighting for.”

And, now I embrace being different.

My life and my work are one and the same. Philanthropy and the nonprofit sector.

If I believed in gods or goddesses, I would say that I was put in this world to do the work of philanthropy.

I chose to speak out because I believe that silence is consent. I’m a self-proclaimed change agent. I’m an agitator. I choose to be provocative.

Whether I’m consulting or writing or presenting around the world or volunteering...I speak out. I raise the tough issues. And yes, that makes other people uncomfortable sometimes. But that’s who I work hard to be.

Sometimes I’m gracious and kind. Sometimes I push and provoke. Sometimes I go for gentle explaining and careful care. Sometimes I go for shock and awe.

I make fun of myself. I share my mistakes and my embarrassments.

I wear weird hose. I have 65+ cool but tacky rings – and I mostly always wear one on each hand. (After all, I do have two hands!)

People tell me all this is my brand.

And yes. I chose and choose over and over to be this.

Telling my stories and truly hearing yours

I tell my stories and invite others to tell theirs. I listen to your stories and her stories and his stories and their stories. I find joy in the listening. I work hard to hear the anger and fear and joy and love and anxiety and guilt and confusion and desire and hope and...

Even if I disagree.

Even if I very much dislike his values or her beliefs or their approach to life.

I try so hard to listen and hear and respect and honor him as a human being...her as a fellow person wandering the earth.

Sometimes it’s hard to try because I am so uncomfortable or disagree so very much. But especially when I’m in the nonprofit and philanthropy space...when I’m presenting at a conference or teaching in the Philanthropy and Development Program at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota...when I’m with donors and prospects and professionals from all

over the world. ...then I work even harder to see them all as philanthropists. To invite and listen to their stories. To really hear. To respect and honor.

And I expect the same, by the way.

I take the risk and I use myself. I tell you my stories and my experiences.

I share my weaknesses, my mistakes, and my embarrassments. I use myself as a guinea pig.

I tell you my stories. So you can practice listening and hearing stories. I tell you my stories so you can hear passions that might be similar to yours. More importantly, I tell you my stories so you can hear passions that might be different than yours.

If each of us only listens to similar stories, how do we learn and build community? If each of us only welcomes – yes welcomes! – stories that match our own beliefs, how can there be community at all? If each of us – as an individual or a group of individuals – denies the stories of others, how do we build respectful communities?

Here's another quotation. (I'm an inveterate quote collector. I have little notebooks and typed up pages and computer documents. I've been collecting since I was in high school!)

“The world is shaped by two things – stories told and the memories they leave behind.”
(Vera Nazarian, *Dreams of the Compass Rose*)

What are your stories? I want to listen and truly hear. Do you want to hear mine?

Part 3: Fundraising isn't about money...neither is giving

Yes, this is a long article with various sections. And all the parts of this article are like chapters in a story. If you leave out a part of the story, you may not understand. It's like a novel. Are there really parts you can skip?

Are your donors a novel? Or are your donors some business book that you can read out of order and not really get it. And maybe your organization's attitude is, “Hey, who really cares? We need money to carry out our glorious mission!”

As I noted previously, the Buddha tells us it's the journey that matters. And that's the donor's journey – not your organization's journey.

Whose stories do you collect? Whose stories do you understand the best? Why?

Stories told and memories treasured

Such a lovely thought from Vera Nazarian: “Stories told and memories treasured.”

But what is the truth? Is there always a single truth? (By the way, there are facts – often different than truth. Read Chris Mooney's article “The Science of Why We Don't Believe Science,” May/June 2011, *Mother Jones* magazine. And check out the article in my Free Download Library, “Opinion or Expertise.”)

Several years ago, I decided to write my story of Vietnam. You can find that in the download library on my website.

Vietnam was my war.

A seminal moment for me personally and for my family. My first husband is in the story. My brother Alain is in the story.

War. Pulling dead bodies from hovering choppers. Friends dying. Cutting off a finger... on purpose? Who knows?

I showed the story to Alain. Especially the part about him.
He changed part of the story... the facts. His truth because, after all, it was his part of the story.

I remember Alain's part of the story differently. Aligned with my values and beliefs and my memories. Memories... how I experienced it.

It's my story, too. My memory. So I tell it my way.

In his novel *Ordinary Grace*, one of William Kent Krueger's characters says:

"What I know from my studies and from my life is that there is no such thing as a true event.

"We know dates and times and locations and participants but accounts of what happened depend upon the perspective from which the event is viewed...

"What we remember together we often remember differently. I'm sure that each of us has memories that for reasons of our own, we don't share.

Some things we prefer remain lost in the shadows of our past."

When the Vets' organizations call asking for gifts... Which story am I remembering? Which story am I telling myself?

Both fundraising and giving are about your stories and mine.

We have to see ourselves in the story. John Steinbeck, *East of Eden*: "If a story is not about the hearer he or she will not listen... A great lasting story is about everyone or it will not last. The strange and foreign is not interesting, only the deeply personal and familiar."

We have to see our donors in their stories. Carl Jung tells us: "There are some parts of the human self that are not subject to the laws of time and space. And storytelling, the telling of, and the listening to, is one of those things."

This is philanthropy.

Shall I say it again? Fundraising is not about money – neither is giving.

Telling my stories

I tell my stories and invite others to tell theirs. I listen to your stories and her stories and his stories and their stories. I find honor in the listening. Often I find joy.

I work hard to hear what you're feeling and what you're sharing... anger and fear and joy and love and anxiety and guilt and confusion and desire and hope and...

Even if I disagree. Even if I don't share those values or those beliefs.

I honestly and genuinely try hard to listen and hear and respect and honor him as a human being... her as a fellow person wandering the earth.

Sometimes it's hard to try because I am so uncomfortable or disagree so very much. But especially when I'm in the nonprofit and philanthropy space... when I'm presenting at a conference or teaching at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota... when I'm with donors and prospects and professionals from all over the world... then I work even harder to see them all as philanthropists. To invite and listen to their stories. To really hear. To respect the person. To honor the person by hearing.

I won't be convinced to change my own values and beliefs. But I can listen respectfully. I believe that is my obligation as a fellow human being. And I believe that is my accountability as a worker in fundraising and the nonprofit sector space.

And I expect the same, by the way.

I take the risk and I use myself. I tell you my stories and my experiences.

I share my weaknesses and my mistakes and my embarrassments. I use myself as a guinea pig. I tell you my stories. So you can practice listening and hearing stories.

I tell you my stories so you can hear passions that might be similar to yours.

More importantly, I tell you my stories so you can hear passions that might be different than yours. Not to convince you. But to get you more comfortable hearing stories that conflict with yours.

Most importantly, I tell you stories of others whose stories our society too often ignores. I tell stories that aren't told enough in the mainstream. Because those out-of-the-mainstream stories make too many people in the audience uncomfortable.

I tell stories that are avoided in "polite company" and only rarely told at major fundraising conferences around the world. Stories of my friends who happen to be gay. Stories of racism and sexism and homophobia. Stories of reproductive justice.

I share these stories because there are gays and lesbians and transgendered colleagues in the audience. And they're sad about never hearing their stories in the mainstream. I share stories of serving in the Planned Parenthood movement because organizations and individuals that fight for reproductive justice are tired of being ignored in the mainstream so as not to offend someone.

I refer to my husband as my life partner. Yes, I am married to that male. But until there is marriage equality in every state in the country I live in, I will not use the term "husband."

I'm tired of hearing stories from those of religious faith – and rarely hearing any stories of those who don't believe in a god or goddess.

Ah the mainstream...you win. Ah tradition...you win.

The rest of us accede to your wishes and desires. Those of us who want to expand conversations – those of us who want to welcome the full diversity of life – are criticized.

Part 4: Sometimes, my audiences deny me my stories

Several years ago, I was presenting in Illinois, USA. Maybe 100 people were in the room for this 6-hour workshop on keeping your donors through relationship building. Audience members participated actively.

At lunch, a gentleman came up to me and asked if he might speak with me privately. "Of course," I responded.

He was very gracious and gentle. He told me that I was the best presenter he'd ever heard and that he was learning lots of stuff.

Then he said, "But your examples are distracting."

I asked him to explain.

He said, "Your personal stories are about giving to Planned Parenthood and to homosexuals."

I explained that I was sharing my stories and wanted to hear his stories. I explained that this was about all of us learning to listen and hear the stories of our donors and others.

He responded, "Yes, I know. But your stories are distracting." Then he asked me how I would feel if I was hearing stories from those who believed in God and thought my donations were contrary to God's principles.

I responded, "I teach at a Catholic university. Many students in my courses believe in God and some are evangelicals. I listen to their stories with respect. I honor their beliefs. And I expect them to do the same with my stories."

He responded, "Yes, I know all that. But your examples are distracting."

And I responded, graciously and gently, "Don't you understand? I don't care. These are my stories and I listen to your stories."

He came back after lunch.

And when the workshop ended and I was walking out, two women came up to me. They said: "We're from the local Planned Parenthood affiliate. Thank you for talking about us like we're just another nonprofit organization. That happens so very rarely."

And I'll bet there were homosexuals in the audience, too. And I'll bet there were people who didn't believe in a god or goddess.

I hope to speak for all of them.

Here's another story

I was presenting a workshop in Rhode Island. That's my home state in the U.S.

I was talking about fundraising. I was talking about respecting donors and realizing that people are different and welcoming these differences. Not just tolerating differences but actually welcoming and respecting differences.

At one point in the workshop, I looked at the audience and said: "Just look, Mary is the only person of color in the audience. That's a problem."

Yes, I called out the truth that we weren't particularly diverse. That we had better work on that. That we had better realize that the world and our community is diverse. And we have to respect that and welcome diverse people.

At the end, a white woman came up to me and said: "I don't think you should have said that about Mary." I responded, "Don't you think that Mary immediately knew she was the only black person in the room. We cannot expect those who are marginalized to speak out for themselves. Those who aren't marginalized have an obligation."

Yes. That's what I do. I hope to speak for the marginalized. I will not be silent.

And here's another story of denying the stories of others

I was presenting outside of North America – in an English-speaking country. The workshop title was "Fundraising Is Not About Money – Neither is Giving."

I explained to the audience that this would be very personal. That I would use my own personal stories as examples.

I explained that I was the Chair of the Board of Directors of Planned Parenthood of Southern New England (RI and CT). I told the stories of my gifts to social justice organizations.

I said loud and absolutely not proud: "I'm a white, heterosexual, well-educated, affluent woman. I win – except for gender. Because it's a disadvantage to be a woman in every country in the world and every state in the USA. But at least I'm a white, heterosexual, well-educated and affluent woman. I win and I find that appalling. And that is my life's work – to fight that."

At the end of the plenary, a woman came up to me crying. She asked if she could hug me. I said of course. She was a lesbian and unable to marry her life partner, a woman.

I've had that happen before. Another time at a big conference, a woman came up and hugged me after that statement. She was lesbian.

And gay men tell me how wonderful it that I speak that way. And people of color say that to me. And people who aren't wealthy say that to me.

I respond with thank you. Thank you. Because I'm only marginalized as a woman. But I'm privileged – unearned privilege – because I'm white and heterosexual (born that way!), well-educated (thanks mom and dad), and affluent (partially because I'm white and heterosexual!).

By the way, in my evaluations, I received an eloquent comment from a Christian. The individual talked about how inappropriate I was; how Christians were in the room and didn't expect to have to hear those kinds of comments at a fundraising conference.

There was no way for me to respond directly to that evaluation. So I am responding here. I'll bet there were Muslims in the room, too. And people who don't believe in your God or Allah. I'll bet there were LGBTQ colleagues and friends in the room who are tired of continually being unacknowledged.

Part 5: To all the fundraisers out there

In too many spaces – in too many rooms – the majority seems to think it's okay to deny the stories of some people. Often that's because of unearned privilege. Unearned privilege is how you're born: race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical status, socioeconomic status, and so forth. You don't choose any of these.

I believe philanthropy should be greater than unearned privilege. I believe philanthropy is love of humankind... and that crosses all diversity. I believe philanthropy should be a democratizing activity, embracing donors regardless of socioeconomic status.

And I believe that fundraisers and their organizations should welcome all donor stories. We fundraisers are supposed to be enablers of philanthropy. Fundraising is the essential partner of philanthropy. Without fundraising, philanthropy isn't as frequent or effective or productive as it is and can be.

How can a true fundraiser – any real leader – deny a donor his or her story? How can a true fundraiser – any leader – allow the marginalized to continually be denied their stories?

I tell my stories. I don't tell your stories because your stories aren't my stories.

I expect you to tell your stories.

No matter where I've presented – Eastern and Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, North America, Mexico – I told my stories. I will continue to do. I will be honest and genuine.

That's my obligation as a human being – because you're a human being, too. That's my accountability as a fundraiser – because you're the donor or the prospective donor.

You're the hero. As the fundraiser, it's my honor to listen and hear your story. I'm trying to learn your aspirations, what you're trying to accomplish.

Psychology tells us that human beings need to feel known and understood. We need to know that others heard our stories, and understand our feelings and aspirations. That is what it means to be human. To find connection.

Surely that's what fundraisers do with donors, our heroes: make them feel connected.

As Maya Angelou said, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

My giving isn't about money. I want to join a fight I think I can win. It's my fight, my interests, my aspirations.

Can I give through you? How will you, the fundraiser and your organization, make me feel about my story?



Simone P. Joyaux



RESOURCES... FOR ME, THESE ARE MUST READS FOR ALL PROFESSIONALS IN THE NONPROFIT PHILANTHROPIC SECTOR.

Michael Edwards: *Small Change: Why Business Won't Save the World*.
Also read Mike's book, *Civil Society*

Peggy McIntosh

The Invisible Knapsack of White Male Privilege

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf>

Nonprofit Quarterly: Daily online feed and quarterly print publication...Just a few examples:

- Equity and diversity series. <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2018/09/10/a-museums-transformation-cleveland-museum-of-art-goes-deep-for-inclusion/>
- Remaking the Economy: The Critical Role of Advocacy. <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2018/09/10/a-museums-transformation-cleveland-museum-of-art-goes-deep-for-inclusion/>

Howard Zinn: *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_Zinn

Robin Hood Was Right: A Guide to Giving Your Money. Chuck Collins, Joan Garner, Pam Rogers.

www.everydayfeminism.com

AND SO MUCH MORE!!!