



Data Snapshot on Racial Justice Grantmaking

By Rick Cohen

As we noted earlier in this publication, PRE recognizes there is no simple category for grantmaking with a structural racialization lens. Grants that could be included in a portfolio using a structural racialization approach might include research, media, organizing, advocacy or other categories. They might include grants focused on housing, education, health, economic, environment or other sectors. They may or may not be people of color-led and serving. What would make them part of a structural strategy would not necessarily be evident or measurable at the individual grant level – just as one cannot fully understand a system by looking at a single part.

While all grants that apply a structural racialization lens would be considered “racial justice grants,” many in the field would consider some grants to be “racial justice grants” that may not be at all structural. For the purpose of its 2009 report tracking social justice grantmaking, the Foundation Center defined social justice philanthropy as “the granting of philanthropic contributions to nonprofit organizations based in the United States and other countries that work for structural change in order to increase the opportunity of those who are the least well off politically, economically, and socially.”¹ However, knowing there is still wide variation in interpretation of what in fact constitutes working for structural change, we recognize for some this may require approaches that clearly involve organizing, advocacy or intentional system change policy work, but others have made the case for targeted service delivery and outreach as contributing to structural change given certain scale.

The data below are not proxies for understanding progress around a structural racialization approach, but can provide some sense of the trajectory of the field’s commitment to broader racial justice issues. We share this both as some measure of progress, as well as to fostering further discussion and commitment to the kind of data collection that will more effectively guide future advocacy or investments. –Lori Villarosa

Drawing from analysis of grant data prepared by the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, in 2004 the Applied Research Center (ARC, now called Race Forward) circulated a report on the available data on giving to communities of color and to civil rights and social action organizations. ARC’s Short Changed report² generated discussion within philanthropic circles about what institutional philanthropy was accomplishing in its grantmaking directed toward communities of color. Then, as now, ARC faced the challenges of working with official collections of foundation grantmaking information, relying on Foundation Center tabulations that track giving to populations of color. These tabulations are subject to definitional and coding programs that ARC acknowledged could result in over-counting grants in some areas while undercounting grants in others. ARC pointed out that grantmaking to communities of color might not equate to racial justice grantmaking, and that grants for other categories of recipients, such as the Foundation Center’s category of grants for “civil rights and social action,” could intersect with racial justice funding but together presented only a partial picture.

Nonetheless, the statistics on foundation grantmaking addressing communities of color is important context for understanding contemporary discussions of racial justice grantmaking. Even allowing for differences among foundations regarding how they describe and code their grantmaking, the proportion of grant dollars of the largest foundations compiled annually by the Foundation Center shows relatively small amounts dedicated to specific racial or ethnic groups:

Designated domestic population group	Grantmaking Year													
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Ethnic/racial	9.9	7.9	7.7	7.0	8.1	8.0	7.6	8.2	7.4	6.9	6.8	8.9	9.5	8.8
General	4.4	3.9	4.4	3.7	3.7	4.1	3.9	4.0	3.5	3.4	3.8	5.6	5.3	4.9
Asian-American	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3
African-American/Black	3.8	1.9	1.4	1.4	1.9	1.6	1.6	1.9	1.5	1.4	1.2	1.4	1.3	1.5
Hispanic/Latino	0.9	1.2	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.0	0.8	0.9	1.4	1.2
Native American	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4
Indigenous									0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3
Other									0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2
Immigrants/Refugees	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.1

Source: Foundation Center

While there is no guarantee that organizations led by people of color are automatically pursuing racial justice work, grants that “target” or “benefit” racial and ethnic community-based groups are a commonly-used measure of the philanthropic sector’s commitment to racial justice.

For example, a 2008 report from the Foundation Center titled *Embracing Diversity: Foundation Giving Benefiting Communities of Color*³ initiated by the foundation community in response to reports from the Greenlining Institute earlier in the decade, steered clear of broaching the question of giving to organizations that not only benefit communities of color, but are led by people of color. A similar Foundation Center study two years later, *Grantmaking to Communities of Color in Oregon*,⁴ emphasized grants “reaching” communities of color, perhaps an implicit acknowledgement that a grant made to a community of color might not necessarily benefit that community.

The reality of the composition of the nonprofit sector is that it is largely White – proportionally much more White than the population of the country and even more than the population of the “communities of color” identified in these foundation grantmaking studies. One report indicates that 84 percent of nonprofits are led by Whites, and even within organizations where people of color are in relatively senior positions they are more likely to be deputy directors (15 percent) than executive directors (10 percent).⁵

Grantmaking that is more aligned with a racial justice analysis is more likely to go directly to organizations led by people of color that are both located in and serve communities of color. Despite the reluctance of many kinds of nonprofits to report on their governance and leadership by race, the gap between the ratio of people of color in the population and people of color leading nonprofit organizations is significant and shows little sign of closing.

Various studies identify this gap in several localities and states. For example, the Urban Institute’s 2009 demographic assessment of California’s nonprofit sector revealed that people of color, while accounting for 57 percent of the state’s population, comprised only 24.8 percent of nonprofit sector executive directors—with the gap most extreme for Latinos who comprised 35.8 percent of the state’s population but only 6.5 percent of nonprofit CEOs.⁶

Regarding nonprofit boards in California, the proportion of people of color differed little from the CEO proportion—just under 28 percent of board members. Nearly a third of nonprofit boards in the state—31 percent—were 100 percent non-Latino white.

References to grantmaking to organizations specifically led by people of color are few. A study by Philanthropy New York⁷ surveyed over 500 New York-based nonprofits, of which nearly 199 self-identified as minority-led. Of those minority-led nonprofits, 37 percent did not have a person of color serving as executive director, and generally justified their self-descriptions because their staff were made up predominantly of people of color on (and in a few cases, simply because they served communities of color). Based on those self-descriptions, smaller New York-based POC-led nonprofits (budgets of less than \$1 million) reported little difference from non-POC-led nonprofits regarding levels of foundation support, but the number of nonprofits studied with larger budgets was too small to make a determination regarding the comparability of foundation support.

Overall, in the only nationally representative survey of nonprofit board governance, the Urban Institute found in 2005 that 86 percent of nonprofit board members were white while only seven percent were black and 3.5 percent Latino.⁸ Even more striking, more than half of all nonprofit boards were 100 percent non-Latino White.

In any review of foundation grantmaking, some organizations repeatedly receive foundation grants with purposes clearly articulating “racial justice.” In a search of foundation grants with “racial justice” as a keyword, organizations consistently receiving those grants include the Advancement Project, Applied Research Center (recently renamed Race Forward), the Organizing Apprenticeship Project, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and the Western States Center, just to name a few. How foundations describe their grants and how Foundation Center staff code them makes comparison of foundations by racial justice grantmaking size and volume somewhat difficult, but a number of foundations show up repeatedly with racial justice in their grant descriptions. These include the Arcus Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, the Otto Bremer Foundation, the Public Welfare Foundation, the C.S. Mott Foundation, the Surdna Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and the Fund for New Jersey.

In its analysis of the grantmaking of roughly the 1,000 largest foundations in the U.S., the Foundation Center counts grants loosely termed as “civil rights and social action.” Like other categories, this is a subjective category within the broader grantmaking arena of what the Foundation Center describes as “public and societal benefit.” As a picture of one of the elements of foundation grantmaking that may intersect with potential grantmaking for racial justice purposes, the trends over the years look to be as follows:

Year	Number of grants for civil rights and social action	Dollar value of grants for civil rights and social action (in \$millions)	Percentage of all grants in the Foundation Center's top 1,000 grantmakers
2004	2115	\$193.4	1.29%
2005	2142	\$220.5	1.32%
2006	2206	\$228.6	1.19%
2007	2219	\$274.4	1.18%
2008	2481	\$322.7	1.33%
2009	2199	\$316.2	1.40%
2010	2491	\$347.7	1.59%
2011	2470	\$340.9	1.39%

Source: Foundation Center

Racial justice as a description of a grant recipient's purpose is not an "official" grantmaking category in the Foundation Center's Online Directory of grants, however, among U.S.-based recipients, the most frequent grant recipients by number of grants under the "civil/human rights minorities" category of grants in the online database were as follows per year:

Top Minority Civil Rights Recipients of Foundation Grants (by Number of Grants)					
2006 (n=881)	2007 (n=743)	2008 (n=738)	2009 (n=733)	2010 (n=810)	2011 (n=752)
NAACP (77)	NAACP (78)	NAACP (74)	NAACP (68)	NAACP (69)	NAACP (63)
National Council of La Raza (41)	National Council of La Raza (46)	National Council of La Raza (52)	National Council of La Raza (56)	National Council of La Raza (39)	National Council of La Raza (47)
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (35)	NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (33)	NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (28)	Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (28)	NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (32)	Advancement Project (32)
Focus: HOPE (26)	Focus: HOPE (32)	Advancement Project (23)	Advancement Project (21)	Advancement Project (29)	Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (28)
Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California (25)	Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (18)	Focus: HOPE (21)	Focus: HOPE (21)	Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (29)	NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (28)
Advancement Project (24)	Washington DC Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation (18)	Washington DC Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation (21)	NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (21)	Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California (24)	Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California (16)
Chicanos Por La Causa (22)	Advancement Project (16)	Chicanos Por La Causa (20)	Applied Research Center (20)	Focus: HOPE (24)	Chicanos Por La Causa (14)
Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development (21)	Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (15)	Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (20)	Chicanos Por La Causa (19)	Applied Research Center (20)	Focus: HOPE (14)
Applied Research Center (19)	Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development (15)	National Civil Rights Museum (17)	Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California (14)	National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund (17)	Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development (14)
Washington DC Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation (17)	Applied Research Center (14)	Applied Research Center (13)	Chinese Progressive Association (14)	Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (14)	Asian Law Caucus (13)

The real challenge in exploring these grants is to get beyond the largest organizations to determine which foundations are making small- and medium-sized grants that might reach organizations that are working more at the grassroots level and with a potential structural racism framework. For the period of grants from 2006 through 2011, the top grantmakers making civil rights grants by size were as follows:

Top Foundation Grantmakers to Minority Civil Rights Organizations (by Size of Grants)					
\$1,000 to \$4,999 (788)	\$5,000 to \$9,999 (528)	\$10,000 to \$49,999 (1605)	\$50,000 to \$249,999 (1267)	\$250,000 to \$999,999 (408)	\$1,000,000 to \$4,999,999 (61)
Wells Fargo Foundation (36)	Wells Fargo Foundation (24)	Verizon Foundation (51)	Foundation to Promote Open Society (61)	Ford Foundation (100)	Ford Foundation (15)
San Francisco Foundation, The (29)	New York Community Trust, The (21)	Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc., The (50)	Ford Foundation (53)	California Endowment, The (23)	Kellogg Foundation, W. K. (8)
New York Community Trust, The (21)	San Francisco Foundation, The (18)	San Francisco Foundation, The (48)	Open Society Institute (52)	Kellogg Foundation, W. K. (20)	Gates Foundation, Bill & Melinda (5)
Boston Foundation, Inc. (18)	Verizon Foundation (15)	Comcast Foundation, The (39)	Haas, Jr. Fund, Evelyn and Walter (41)	Gates Foundation, Bill & Melinda (18)	Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc., The (3)
Oregon Community Foundation, The (15)	UPS Foundation, The (12)	California Endowment, The (30)	California Endowment, The (35)	Foundation to Promote Open Society (15)	Coulter Foundation, Wallace H. (3)
Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, The (14)	Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc., The (11)	New York Community Trust, The (30)	Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc., The (32)	Verizon Foundation (14)	Knight Foundation, John S. and James L. (3)
Tides Foundation (14)	Macy's Foundation (11)	Tides Foundation (30)	Casey Foundation, Annie E., The (32)	Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc., The (12)	Mott Foundation, Charles Stewart (3)
Gill Foundation, The (13)	Weingart Foundation (11)	Wells Fargo Foundation (28)	Casey Foundation, Marguerite (29)	Casey Foundation, Marguerite (11)	PepsiCo Foundation, Inc., The (3)
New York Foundation (13)	California Community Foundation (8)	Casey Foundation, Annie E., The (27)	Kellogg Foundation, W. K. (29)	Johnson Foundation, Robert Wood, The (9)	BP Foundation, Inc. (2)
JPMorgan Chase Foundation, The (12)	Casey Foundation, Annie E., The (8)	Citi Foundation (22)	Ford Motor Company Fund (27)	UPS Foundation, The (9)	California Endowment, The (2)

Within these grantmakers' listings, one might debate the consistency of their commitment to racial justice – particularly the corporate grantmaking arms of Bank of America and Citicorp, banks that were among the prime perpetrators of the predatory lending crises that deprived so many people of color of their homes due to rampant mortgage foreclosures; the grantmaking arm of BP, a corporation responsible for an environmental disaster of immense proportions in the region previously devastated by Hurricane Katrina; and perhaps more established foundations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which has been a primary funder of private schools and all-but-private charter schools that redirect resources from struggling public school systems.

For a more current reflection of the range of funders with a focus on racial justice, one might look to the group of funders engaged in grantmaking around issues of Black male achievement (BMA) and/or boys and men of color. But depending on the approaches actually supported by funders, distinctions must be made regarding whether such efforts are simply addressing individual racialized outcomes, or seeking to combat the systemic racism underlying the disparities. While both kinds of approaches have been included among some of the grantmaking, such distinctions are not measured by the available grant data. The Leadership and Sustainability Institute of Black Male Achievement and bmafunders.org – a project of the Open Society Foundations and the Foundation Center, have tabulated more than 2,700 foundation grants for Black men and boys programs between 2008 and early 2014. Our tabulation of the grants in this database for 2012 and 2013, though the 2013 data may not be complete found 330 grants (larger than \$10,000) totaling \$45.8 million, with an average grant size of over \$138,000 and a median grant size of \$50,000.

\$12.8 million of that total—29 percent—is accounted for by grants from The California Endowment; another \$7.7 million comes from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, \$4.23 million from the Ford Foundation, and grant totals exceeding \$1 million from the Coca-Cola Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, the California Wellness Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation. Among the largest individual recipients of boys and men of color grants are two nonprofits advising both private funders and President Obama's "My Brother's Keeper" initiative—PolicyLink (which received \$2.6 million) and Root Cause (which received \$1.2 million). Morehouse College, one of the nation's most prominent Historically Black Colleges and Universities, received \$2.5 million in this grant tabulation. With an emphasis on mentoring, the funders awarded over \$2 million to affiliates of the Boys & Girls Club network and over \$1 million to Big Brothers and Big Sisters organizations.

Analysis of the bmafunders.org database indicates a concentration of grantmaking by health care-oriented funders (118, almost one-third of the grants were focused on health care or health organizations). Almost as many grants (96) focused on education (with a strong component with emphasizing mentoring), and a tiny proportion focused on employment issues (only seven).

Foundation engagement in racial justice grantmaking is still evolving, even within an arena such as support of Black men and boys that many funders hope to see addressing structural or systematic barriers. There are noteworthy efforts by foundations to support civil rights organizations, multiracial community organizing efforts, and media and culture work shifting public perceptions around race—as well as efforts to increase grantmaking to people of color-led organizations and specific populations. But the content of racial justice grantmaking remains a subject warranting discussion and debate among foundations committed to progress in this country.

Endnotes

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