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Seeding by Ceding



Mackenzie Scott · 1 day ago · 7 min read

Sitting down to write this post, I felt stuck. I want to de-emphasize privileged voices and cede focus to others, yet I know some media stories will focus on wealth. The headline I would wish for this post is “*286 Teams Empowering Voices the World Needs to Hear.*”

People struggling against inequities deserve center stage in stories about change they are creating. This is equally — perhaps especially — true when their work is funded by wealth. Any wealth is a product of a collective effort that included them. The social structures that inflate wealth present obstacles to them. And despite those obstacles, they are providing solutions that benefit us all.

Putting large donors at the center of stories on social progress is a distortion of their role. Me, Dan, a constellation of researchers and administrators and advisors — we are all attempting to give away a fortune that was enabled by systems in need of change. In this effort, we are governed by a humbling belief that it would be better if disproportionate wealth were not concentrated in a small number of hands, and that the solutions are best designed and implemented by others. Though we still have a lot to learn about how to act on these beliefs without contradicting and subverting them, we can begin by acknowledging that people working to build power from within communities are the agents of change. Their service supports and empowers people who go on to support and empower others.

Because community-centered service is such a powerful catalyst and multiplier, we spent the first quarter of 2021 identifying and evaluating equity-oriented non-profit teams working in areas that have been neglected. The result was \$2,739,000,000 in gifts to 286 high-impact organizations in categories and communities that have been historically underfunded and overlooked.

Higher education is a proven pathway to opportunity, so we looked for 2- and 4-year institutions successfully educating students who come from communities that have been chronically underserved.

Discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities has been deepening, so we assessed organizations bridging divides through interfaith support and collaboration.

Arts and cultural institutions can strengthen communities by transforming spaces, fostering empathy, reflecting community identity, advancing economic mobility, improving academic outcomes, lowering crime rates, and improving mental health, so we evaluated smaller arts organizations creating these benefits with artists and audiences from culturally rich regions and identity groups that donors often overlook.

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Over 700 million people globally still live in extreme poverty. To find solutions, we all benefit from on-the-ground insights and diverse engagement, so we prioritized organizations with local teams, leaders of color, and a specific focus on empowering women and girls.

We also assessed organizations focused on supporting community engagement itself. The 1.6 million non-profits in America employ 10% of our country's workforce, and 63 million volunteers. While political pendulums swing back and forth, redistributing and re-concentrating wealth, we can choose to fund organizations with the potential to increase the impact of every dollar and hour donated by others. Social sector infrastructure organizations empower community leaders, support grassroots organizing and innovation, measure and evaluate what works, and disseminate information so that community leaders, elected officials, volunteers, employees, and donors at every level of income can make informed decisions about how to partner and invest. These organizations, which are themselves historically underfunded, also promote and facilitate service, which in turn inspires more people to serve.

We chose to make relatively large gifts to the organizations named below, both to enable their work, and as a signal of trust and encouragement, to them and to others. Would they still benefit from more (more advocates, more money, more volunteers)? Yes. Like those we shared in [July](#) and [December](#) of 2020, these 286 teams were selected through a rigorous process of research and analysis. These are people who have spent years successfully advancing humanitarian aims, often without knowing whether there will be any money in their bank accounts in two months. What do we think they might do with more cash on hand than they expected? Buy needed supplies. Find new creative ways to help. Hire a few extra team members they know they can pay for the next five years. Buy chairs for them. Stop having to work every weekend. Get some sleep.

Because we believe that teams with experience on the front lines of challenges will know best how to put the money to good use, we encouraged them to spend it however they choose. Many reported that this trust significantly increased the impact of the gift. There is nothing new about amplifying gifts by yielding control. People have been doing it in living rooms and classrooms and workplaces for thousands of years. It empowers receivers by making them feel valued and by unlocking their best solutions. Generosity is generative. Sharing makes more.

A favorite verse by Rumi captures this well:

“A candle as it diminishes explains,

Gathering more and more is not the way.

Burn, become light and heat and help. Melt.”

[317 Main Community Music Center](#)

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[ACCESS](#)

[Achieving the Dream](#)

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[Allied Media Projects](#)

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[Amarillo College](#)

[American Indian College Fund](#)

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[Amref Health Africa](#)

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[Apollo Theater](#)

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[Arts Administrators of Color Network](#)

[Arts for Healing and Justice Network](#)

[Arts Forward Fund](#)

[Arts Midwest](#)

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[Ashoka Innovators for the Public](#)

[Asian American Federation](#)

[Asian American LEAD](#)

[Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy](#)

[Asian Pacific Community Fund](#)

[Asian Pacific Fund](#)

[Atlanta Music Project](#)

[Authors League Fund](#)

[AWID \(Association for Women's Rights in Development\)](#)

Ballet Hispánico

Big Thought

Black Ensemble Theater

Black Organizing for Leadership and Dignity (BOLD)

BoardSource

Borealis Philanthropy

- Black Led Movement Fund
- Communities Transforming Policing Fund
- Disability Inclusion Fund
- Emerging LGBTQ Leaders of Color Fund
- Racial Equity in Journalism Fund
- Racial Equity in Philanthropy Fund
- Racial Equity to Accelerate Change Fund
- Spark Justice Fund

Brazosport College

Broward College

Building Movement Project

CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities

Cal Poly Pomona

California State University Channel Islands

California State University, Fullerton

California State University, Northridge

Candid

Center for Asian American Media

Center for Cultural Innovation

Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP)

Center for Evaluation Innovation

Center of Life

CFLeads

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CHANGE Philanthropy

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[Co-Impact Gender Fund](#)

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[Flamboyant Arts Fund](#)

[Florida International University](#)

[Fondo Semillas](#)

[Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grants COVID-19 Funds](#)

[FSG](#)

[Fund for Shared Insight](#)

[Funders for LGBTQ Issues](#)

[Girls First Fund](#)

[GiveDirectly](#)

[GiveIndia](#)

[GivingTuesday](#)

[GOONJ](#)

[Grantmakers for Effective Organizations](#)

[GreenLight Fund](#)

[Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center](#)

[HIAS](#)

[Homeboy Industries](#)

[Hyde Square Task Force](#)

[IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts](#)

[IDinsight](#)

[Inner-City Muslim Action Network \(IMAN\)](#)

[Institute for Transformative Technologies](#)

[Interaction Institute for Social Change](#)

[International African American Museum](#)

[Jan Sahas](#)

[Japanese American National Museum](#)

[Jazz at Lincoln Center](#)

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[MDRC](#)

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[MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership](#)

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[mothers2mothers](#)

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[NTEN](#)

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[Penumbra](#)

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[Professional Assistance for Development Action \(PRADAN\)](#)

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[RYSE Center](#)

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[San Francisco Community Health Center](#)

[San Jacinto Community College](#)

[Sanku — Project Healthy Children](#)

[Santa Barbara City College](#)

[Save The Music Foundation](#)

[Self Help Graphics & Art](#)

[Service Year Alliance](#)

[Shining Hope for Communities \(SHOFCO\)](#)

[Sins Invalid](#)

[Sipp Culture](#)

[SNEHA \(Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action\)](#)

[Social Finance](#)

[Solidaire Network](#)

[Souls Grown Deep](#)

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[The Door](#)

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