

# **COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY AND RACIAL EQUITY: SIGNS OF PROGRESS**

Effective Communities Project  
Minneapolis, USA  
February 15, 2005

In a project supported by the Ford Foundation, the Effective Communities Project began to examine “how community philanthropy can deepen social justice work, especially in the American South.”

During the summer of 2004, we visited nine organizations<sup>1</sup>, quite diverse in form, mission, and territory, to explore what progress in such endeavors “looks like.” The following “signs of progress” were distilled from this experience:

- 1) The guiding use of explicit principles and values, coming from conceptions of social justice and faith.
- 2) A growing use of “lived experience” and “relationships” to build an infrastructure of trust, cooperation and mutual assistance.
- 3) Active bridging to different parts of the community, and even across divides, to gain more base, legitimacy, and momentum.
- 4) Creating processes to listen, reflect, learn, and share, contributing to the motivation and direction of the group’s work.
- 5) Strengthening an organizational infrastructure that includes African American donor development, governance, communication, and activities.
- 6) Filling pools of philanthropic capital, and creating opportunities to fund advances in racial equity.
- 7) Using the above relationships, capital, and skills to hook up to and move key levers of change.

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<sup>1</sup> The nine organizations visited were AJAMM Ministries, based in New Orleans; Black Belt Community Foundation, based in Selma; Faith Partnerships Incorporated based in Raleigh; Foundation for the Mid South, based in Jackson; Institute for Church Administration and Management, based in Atlanta; National Rural Funders Collaborative, based in Dallas; New Generation of African American Philanthropists Fund, a project of Hindsight Consulting, based in Durham; Southern Partners Fund, based in Atlanta; Twenty-First Century Foundation, based in New York.

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In addition, several avenues for strengthening such efforts to use community philanthropy in advancing racial equity were identified. These lend themselves to outside support joined with inside effort:

- a) Creating applied learning opportunities that are globally aware and culturally appropriate.
- b) Supporting change to the context in which these groups work.
- c) Softening up the territory so that forward progress can be made.
- d) Encouraging culturally appropriate ways to organize the work.
- e) Helping both established and emerging funders appreciate the merits of this work.
- f) Helping such groups develop the communications to attract African American donations of time, talent, and treasure.
- g) Developing ways to deploy philanthropic capital more intentionally or strategically in the struggle for racial equity.

Adapted from Mayer, Steven E., Betty Emarita, and Vanessa McKendall-Stephens, *Community Philanthropy And Racial Equity: What Progress Looks Like.* Minneapolis: Effective Communities Project, 2005. ([www.effectivecommunities.com](http://www.effectivecommunities.com)).

This paper in turn contains three separate papers:

Emarita, Betty. *“What We Are Learning about Community Philanthropy and Its Potential for Addressing Issues of Racial Equity.”*

McKendall-Stephens, Vanessa. *“Developing Community Philanthropy in the American South: Emerging Organizational Practices.”*

Mayer, Steven E. *“Community Philanthropy and Racial Equity: What We Are Learning About Noting Progress.”*