SEF
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Essays

Combating Racism in the Global Era: Challenges to Philanthropy

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No individual or nation can stand out boasting of being independent. We are interdependent.
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.
—John Muir

Introduction

In our time together, I invite you to think along with me about how global forces are interacting with and affecting the struggles of peoples of African descent in the Diaspora and on the continent of Africa to be free from racism and its frequent companions, poverty, sexism and inequality. Very often our place in this privileged nation called the United States infects us with the kind of "exceptionalism" that keeps us from seeing or valuing our connection with peoples outside of the country. We fail to recognize the imperative to share what we have in order to create workable futures for us all. We think of human rights as something for others, not for ourselves. We measure the conduct of foreign governments by their compliance with human rights standards and forget to measure our own government by the same criteria. We get so caught up thinking about our own problems we forget that there are others suffering from problems more grave than our own to whom we are bound by bonds* of descent or shared humanity. We become so preoccupied with the immediate that we fail to apprehend or prepare for the sea change swirling around us. If we are not careful, we may drown.

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For these few moments, let us think together beyond national boundaries and see how our interests and those of others abroad intersect. The changes being wrought by globalization present serious challenges that we must find fresh ways to overcome. Let us also think together about philanthropy's stance and role in responding to these challenges. Much is at stake.

On Globalization

Let me begin with a brief reflection on globalization, a phenomenon about which a lot is written these days. In the book, *Governance in a Globalizing World (2000),* editors Joseph Nye and John D. Donohue begin with these words:

> Globalization is at once a rallying cry, a riddle and a Rohrshach test. Traditionalists lament it. Investors exploit it. Pundits dissect it or debunk it. But what *is* globalization? Is it mostly a matter of money, or microbes, or media or something else all together? Is it new or a durable trend discernible only when history's more distracting dramas quiet down? What propels globalization? Will it deepen divides between the world's winners and losers or reshuffle the deck with wider opportunity? How is it altering the challenges of governance within and among nation states? And how can public leaders come to terms with governance in a globalizing world?

Nye and Donohue go on to define globalization as "a state of the world involving networks of interdependence at multicontinental distances." Put another way, globalization is a process—today driven largely by advances in technology—by which peoples, institutions, cultures, economies and nations are becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent. The revolution in technology is helping to create a "global village," albeit a "gated" global village, bringing peoples, nations and institutions into contact and proximity in ways never before possible. Globalization is creating new problems, new possibilities, new bedfellows (some of them strange), a new constellation of intergroup and power relations, and new levers to pull to effect change.

For example, today well over 100 million people in the world live in countries where they were not born. In the United States, one out of ten people is foreign born. Globalization is creating

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transnational constituent groups for a variety of causes from women's rights and human rights to the environment, peace and democratization, trade, arts, and religion, among others.

The rapid transfer of capital and businesses from one country to another is globalizing the economic marketplace. This is creating new levels of instability in national governments. Over $1.56 trillion is transferred across national boundaries *each day*. Technology based industries are driving international economic growth. New technical knowledge and skills are becoming a minimum requirement around the world for everyone—from assembly worker to social worker, from secretary to CEO. Recently, the World Bank declared that "knowledge has become the most important factor in determining the standard of living."

Social expectations about employment longevity and career paths are altering dramatically. Countries and cities and regions within countries are competing as never before for trade, aid and investment. Many low skilled workers in developed countries are losing ground, and their counterparts in the developing world are being exploited. Global capitalism is triumphant.

Globalizing forces are spreading ideas, ideals, information and innovations. They have the potential for good or for ill. They can raise standards of living by deepening trade and investment in the world's poorer regions or promote economic displacement of low skilled workers in the developing world.

Of course, in a sense, globalization is not all that new. The world has always been interconnected through migration, military adventurism and trade, even trade in human beings. The over 12 million people of Africa who were sold into slavery in the Americas and Caribbean are testimony to European global trade. The colonialism that separated the peoples of Africa into artificial nation states still fuels conflict, a legacy of globalization in another era.

But what is new about the global forces we face today is the pace and magnitude of the change. We ignore this change at our peril for it has everything to do with the outcome of our efforts and those of our brothers and sisters abroad to overcome racism and poverty.

Globalization's Impact on the Struggle Against Racism at Home and Abroad

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Historically, African Americans' struggle against racism has had an inward and an outward looking aspect. We have sought first to make our national government and the American people honor the promise of the United States Constitution by granting and protecting our civil rights. We have used every conceivable strategy to make our case and escape the cruel grip of racism and poverty.

Kenneth Clark in his classic book, *Dark Ghetto,* reminds us of some of these strategies. We have sought divine intervention. We have tried to make ourselves and our communities secure through isolation and emphasis on self-help. We have made accommodations to the prevailing culture in order to gain acceptance. Sometimes we have been filled with despair and simply withdrawn from contesting for our rights and entitlements. Says Clark: "Despair may not seem properly identified as a strategy and yet, in a real sense, it is: for to abandon hope—to withdraw—in the presence of oppression is to adjust to and accept that condition."

We have pursued with some measure of success what Clark calls, "the strategy of law and maneuver." In addition, through direct encounters—marches, boycotts and other such efforts—we have sought to promote change. We have undertaken research to tell the truth about our country's failure to live up to its democratic aspirations. And, of course, we have pursued economic empowerment, education, political participation, and used the arts to reach hearts and minds, among other bedrock strategies.

These efforts have been largely directed toward domestic forums. Since we are residents of the United States, the emphasis on national efforts is, of course, appropriate. Residents of a country must always in the first instance seek to hold themselves, their countrymen, national laws, institutions and governments accountable.

But in the global era, recourse to domestic forums alone to combat racism and its effects will be necessary but insufficient for several reasons:

First, national governments are having increasing difficulty in controlling their own borders or economies. Global forces are increasingly affecting our economy—look at the volatility of stock markets or our trade imbalances or the growing attentiveness to trade policy. Such forces are

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shaping the labor markets, national demographics, policies and resources available to undo the legacy of present and past discrimination and poverty in our nation and abroad.

Second, businesses with global reach are gaining power. As capitalism spreads, its emphasis is on profitability, not human welfare or creating just societies or us! The transnational reach of these businesses makes it difficult for national governments to effectively regulate this sector. Since people of African descent are not well represented in the high echelons of global business and are disproportionately mired in poverty in all nations in which we are found, we are among the groups most vulnerable to loss of low-skilled employment due to job exportation or in-migration of other poor low skilled peoples.

In his books, *The Crisis of Global Capitalism* and *Open Societies: Reforming Global Capitalism,* international financier George Soros warns that business community, national governments and international institutions are directed toward protecting "interests" rather than "principles." This point was borne out for me when I attended a briefing of the business community about investment opportunities in South Africa. The South Africans framed their invitation to invest in their country in social justice terms—to help their nation generate the jobs and capital needed to dismantle apartheid's material legacy. The businessmen were interested only in the bottom line and what concessions the South African government was prepared to put on the table. Ships in the night.

Workforce requirements are changing. In our information-driven economy and workplace, workers need to have more and more advanced skills, better education and be technologically proficient. As America's economic structure changes, our community must adjust and excel or be left behind.

Within the United States and abroad, the social Darwinistic idea of "merit" as the primary basis upon which societal goods and benefits should be apportioned among diverse groups is growing in popularity. "Merit" is understood to mean those who can compete for resources and opportunities most effectively are deserving of all that they can grasp—whether it is through higher test scores, more experience or better access to education or high skilled employment or gaining concessions and tax breaks. Those who are the "losers" get what they "deserve."

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In this regard, it is noteworthy that the US Supreme Court has held that our nation's anti-discrimination law, Title VII, related to employment has no extraterritorial reach and is not enforceable by foreign nationals. Thus, the same company that may honor anti-discrimination law in the United States is free to violate this basic human rights principle abroad.

Third, international institutions are facing new challenges. The interests of African Americans in most international institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, development banks and the World Trade Organization, are represented by our government. And we are likely entering into an era in which new and different types of international structures and efforts will be born. Without sustained pressure from and input by African Americans into the functioning of such institutions, we cannot be assured that our interests and those of others who are poor around the world will be adequately reflected in policy and practice. Even the United Nations, the primary purveyor and protector of human rights, has a very limited capacity to enforce international human rights treaties barring discrimination based on race and needs help and support from us. The US government's continuing hostility toward the United Nations is tragic and threatens to further hobble worldwide efforts to combat racism and other linked forms of discrimination.

Finally, the potential for terrorism based on the divide between the developed and developing nations, religious intolerance or group identity, as well as environmental degradation and the spread of disease across national boundaries is enhanced by globalizing forces. The Internet propagates hate as well as tolerance. Biological warfare and other forms of eco-terrorism that can harm us all loom large on the horizon.

These developments and others not here mentioned are too important, too far reaching to be ignored. We as a people have come of age. Now is the time for us to lift up our eyes to vistas beyond ourselves and participate in efforts to grapple with the great issues of the day more fully, not just as citizens of the United States, but as citizens of the world!

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As we move into the new century, African Americans of a certain age look with concern at the generations in line to assume leadership of the struggle against racism, discrimination and poverty. A consequence of our advances as a people is that, using income data as the measure, one-third of African Americans are members of the middle class, while the other two thirds swell the ranks of the working poor or the isolated and, to use William Julius Wilson's turn of phrase, "truly disadvantaged." Our community is being decimated at the lower end by the privatization of prisons and creation of financial incentives to incarcerate more and more poor and minority group people and political incentives to keep them disenfranchised. The ghettos of our nation continue to suffer from neglect, drugs, police violence, poverty, spatial isolation and despair. The middle class fights its own battles day after day to maintain its toehold, too often distancing itself through indifference to those left behind. And we face a rapidly approaching day when most African Americans will have been born after the era when segregation in the United States was legal and we marched for our civil rights. The implications of this shift in experience and consciousness of the next generation are profound.

I am old enough to remember that during the civil rights era, there were always two interlinked goals: the first was to secure equal opportunity; the second was to secure equal opportunity within a transformed, more egalitarian social order. Sometimes I feel today that we have lost sight of the second goal and are, to quote Dr. Martin Luther King, "integrating into a burning house." Globalization may help us to focus afresh on the nature of the house, nation, or world of which we are a part and our role, now inside, in continuing to press for transformation. Our children and others who come behind us need our guidance if they are to engage on both fronts. The materialism of American culture is a siren to too many; the desire to seek social justice is an acquired and learned taste.

We have made enormous progress toward achieving respect for our human rights. It was only 100 years ago that Black people in the United States were being lynched in America for such "crimes" as "testifying against whites in court, seeking another job, using offensive language, failing to say 'mister' to whites, disputing the price of black berries, attempting to vote and accepting the job of postmaster." The story of our struggle and that of other people of African descent to free themselves from enslavement, *de facto* and *de jure* segregation, apartheid, colonialism and other forms of oppression that disadvantage and stigmatize is one of the great, transcendent stories of

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the twentieth century. Emerging is a hard-won consensus, a deeply felt conviction, that notions of racial or male superiority are destructive myths best left in the scrap heap of the 20th century. Today, most people of all races and ethnicities no longer accept White supremacy or the hierarchy of power based on race and appearance that was once the ruling order of the day.

Now, as we look to the future, we must focus on the institutional structures that work to perpetuate our marginalization as a group. A couple of years ago, my Mother, then a grey haired matron of 70, shocked my Dad and me by shouting "Free James Brown" in a restaurant where we were dining. She did it for dramatic and comedic effect, but I learned for the first time that she knew anything about James Brown, or that she had been following his trial and was saddened by his imprisonment. Several years later, I called my Mother up to say that she must be happy since James Brown had been released from prison. My mother said, "He may be out of prison, but he is not yet free."

In a sense that is where African Americans are today in America. We have been released from *de jure* segregation and legalized discrimination, but we are not yet free from the institutional arrangements that continue to perpetuate our inequality. These structural arrangements—inferior educational opportunity, lack of knowledge about the labor market, continuing *de facto* discrimination, poverty, crime and hopelessness—are still retarding our progress.

We need both civil and human rights strategies to combat racism and discrimination and anti-poverty and educational strategies to overcome the disadvantages created by past and present discrimination. We need also to wage battle against forgetting from whence we have come and what we as a people stand for. If we lose that sense of group cohesion, or shared destiny and responsibility, our divided house will not stand.

Most importantly, we must begin to fashion remedies and strategies to promote our continuing advancement in the global era. Racism is a global ill that calls for responses of commensurate scale. We must see and use the linkages between ourselves and others victimized by discrimination to forge a global network of activists committed to supporting each other and combating racism in all of its many forms. Racism is just another variant of human selfishness, a way of using "difference"

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to disadvantage some and privilege others. It is a form of selfishness found in our hearts and that of others that we should confront and strive always to overcome.

There is a relatively unknown history of African Americans' struggle to engage international institutions and other nations to combat racism in the United States. A vanguard of African Americans has always understood that world opinion, peer pressure, embarrassment and exposure of racism in the land of the free and the home of the brave were powerful weapons in our search for fair treatment and human rights.

For example, in 1947, W.E.B. DuBois, then Director of Special Research for the NAACP, and his colleagues, submitted an *Appeal to the Commission on Human Rights in the United Nations,* a newly formed body, urging it to take necessary steps to end discrimination, segregation and other gross forms of human rights violations from which African Americans suffered. Their aim was to expose to the world the betrayal of democratic values due to racism. In October 2000, I was privileged to be part of a delegation of activists that presented *A Call to Action* to the United Nations, protesting the racial impact of the criminal justice system in the United States. The leadership of African Americans in the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa is well known and was instrumental in ushering in a new, inclusive democratic government. Dr. Leon Sullivan, may he rest in peace, pioneered in fashioning and promoting principles, the *Sullivan Principles*, to govern the conduct of the international business community in South Africa, and before his death, fashioned *Global Principles* with that same end on an international scale in mind. The impending United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance to be held in Durban, South Africa in August/September 2001, will provide another opportunity for us to weigh in on, learn about global racism and globalization, and forge linkages with others struggling against racism in distant parts of the world.

Efforts such as these need to be expanded. With a United States Secretary of State who happens to be Black, Colin Powell, and a National Security Advisor, Condoleeza Rice, who happens to be Black, we may have an improved opportunity to influence US policy internationally in ways that complement and enhance domestic efforts already in play.

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Make no mistake about it: we must have a dual agenda going forward. We must work domestically and internationally, if we are to make progress against racism in the global era at home or abroad. We must expand our conception from civil rights to human rights and realize that we have responsibility and the obligation to work as hard in the international arena as we do in the local if we are to make progress.

We must remember that we are not fighting for ourselves alone. Lest we act like "ugly Americans," we must push for advancement of others in other parts of the world, even as we fight for ourselves:

- According to the World Bank, close to half of the 6 billion people alive today subsist on less than $2 a day and more than a billion live on less than $1 a day. A disproportionately high number of these people are Black.
- Over half of the 165 million people of Brazil are people of African descent or appearance. This is the largest population of people of African descent outside of the continent of Africa. Forty percent of these Afro Brazilians subsist on less than the equivalent of $2 US a day.
- Close to 40 percent of the 41 million South Africans live on less than $2 US a day.

The reasons for global poverty and inequality are many and complex—incompetent and rapacious governments, lack of resources, staggering national debt, among them. *The New Yorker* (October 9, 2000) reports that:

> "In 1962, roughly 3 percent of the US federal budget was devoted to development aid. This year, the share going to economic aid for poor countries is less than 1 percent, which is just twenty-nine dollars per American. The typical developed country gives about seventy dollars per person. The entire aid budget for sub-Saharan Africa would just about pay for one new destroyer."

The article goes on to report the US contribution of $10 million to help Nigeria meet the needs of its 2.5 million HIV carriers and AIDS sufferers.

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These are shocking figures, and there are more that could be mustered. But the point should be clear: As bad off as African Americans are, as many problems and unmet needs as we have, we are still far better off than most of our brothers and sisters living in the developing world. We live in the belly of the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world. We have an obligation to use our influence and power, not just for ourselves, but also for others in areas such as foreign aid, trade, and other areas of interconnectedness. If we don't use the power that we have, not only for ourselves but also for the benefit of others, then, I submit, we are part of the problem and have no claim to being part of the solution.

What kind of world are we bequeathing to our children? How will they survive in the globalizing world of the future? What are we telling them about what lies ahead? Below I share a few thoughts about elements of a forward-looking global agenda for our community.

Combating Racism in a Global Era

I believe that out of enlightened self-interest and fidelity to human rights values, we must all pay increased attention to the challenges presented by globalization. We must use the ingenuity that has brought us thus far along the way to surmount the obstacles to our equality that lie ahead, and we must use our power for the benefit of others, as well as for ourselves.

Let me just tick off a few modest suggestions of what we can do. We can:

- urge and help our network of local, regional, national and international institutions and leaders to increase our presence and voice in the international arena;

- infiltrate the labor, human rights and other organizations involved in international work in order to spark greater attentiveness and responsiveness to African American interests and those of others victimized by racism. Right now there is no international organization whose sole aim is to combat discrimination against people of African descent or press for implementation of the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and most traditional human rights organizations give little attention to the prohibition against

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discrimination based on race. At a recent meeting of the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, whose aim and purpose is poverty alleviation, the leadership readily admitted to having had little interest in targeting resources on Afro Latins, who are among the poorest of the poor in Latin America;

- create new institutions and revivify old ones to promote our interests and those of others at risk of being harmed by global forces. There are a growing number of such fledgling institutions; all need support and a mandate from our community. If we don't press philanthropy to invest in capacity building, these institutions, like those before them will founder;

- support and encourage our elected and appointed officials to be more proactive in international affairs and policy development. Rather than seeing such efforts as a diversion from our interests, we should be pressing our leaders to be more aggressive in representing Black perspectives and concerns in the international arena. They must be held accountable to advancing our strategic interests, not just in the United States but abroad as well;

- open ourselves up to work more effectively in coalition with other domestic constituencies whose interests are also affected by global forces. While working across racial or ethnic lines is often difficult, we still need to establish such linkages. African Americans are a permanent minority in the United States. We do not have the numbers to be outcome-determinative on many matters of policy and practice. As members of broader communities, we can amplify our power and potential. I heard Jesse Jackson put this point this way once. He said, "Don't fight for a house, fight for housing for all, then you're bound to get a house. " Don't fight for a job, fight for jobs, then you're bound to get a job." The challenge, as he put it, is to become bigger than ourselves;

- nourish African Americans who are working in fields such as foreign policy, international trade, development or education and encourage them to ground their work in the interests of African Americans and other vulnerable groups. There are more African Americans in such fields than we think, though clearly not enough. We need also to encourage more of our young people to pursue careers in the international arena, so that our interests can be better represented around the table;

- form closer ties to Africans in the United States, Afro descendants in Brazil and the many other peoples who share our struggles and our values and find ways to make common cause. The Black people in Africa and other parts of the Diaspora continue to look to us to champion their cause, as well as our own. And, as Robert Kinloch Massie's book*, Loosing the Bonds,* amply conveys, people of African descent, wherever we are found, have always been inspired by each others' examples and reinforced when brought together in pursuit of shared ends.

There are many other things that we can/should promote, but these should suffice to illustrate the point.

Challenges to Philanthropy

When the word "philanthropy" is used, most of us immediately think about foundations, donor institutions that many of us look to for support of work by civil society institutions. We do not often enough think about ourselves—the traditions and practices, patterns of giving and volunteerism and engagement within our own community. Nor do we focus often enough on organized philanthropy as a sector to examine its track record in meeting our community's needs.

In a speech delivered before the Association of Black Foundation Executives in 2000, Dr. Emmett Carson, president of the Minneapolis Foundation, offered the following data about organized philanthropy:

> It is estimated that there are 44,146 foundations in the United States with collective assets of $329.9 billion. Data from the Foundation Center indicates that of $9.7 billion granted by the 1000 largest foundations in 1998, only 3.8 percent, $367 million of foundation resources were specifically directed to the African American community.

He observes, "While these statistics are disappointing, they are not surprising. Foundation resources are allocated based, in large part, on the interests of their founders and how succeeding boards and staffs interpret the original grantmaking priorities." Carson goes on to say that:

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> In 1985, Elizabeth Boris found that 99 percent of foundation CEOs and 92 percent of program staff were white. Nearly 15 years later, more comprehensive data from the Council on Foundations indicates that 93 percent of trustees, 96 percent of CEOs and 87 percent of foundation professional staff are white. African Americans represent 6.1 percent of trustees, 3.2 percent of CEOs and 16.6 percent of program staff.

Of the nature of traditional philanthropy Dr. Bernard Watson, former president of the William Penn Foundation, writes:

> Traditional philanthropy operates according to self-defined goals of charity for the poor and the promotion of high culture. Charity is extremely gratifying for those who engage in it, as evidenced by the symbiotic link between art and its patrons. But what makes traditional grantmaking easy—gratification—is precisely what makes empowerment as a strategy for grantmaking so difficult. Building capacity among powerless people requires the creation of alternative sites of decision-making, validation and power. In the abstract, these issues may not seem to be troubling, but in the real world, they frequently involve choices between well-run institutions that are known and loved, and weak, emerging organizations about which foundation boards and staff have little knowledge and with which they may have even less contact. Empowerment is threatening because it is messy. When people have the capacity to act for themselves, they frequently do—and not necessarily in ways that people who have acted for them anticipate or welcome.

To these observations I would add the following vignette. A grantee of the Ford Foundation, Howard University, once sponsored a breakfast meeting to honor me and a colleague from the Lilly Endowment for our work in awarding grants to Howard. Dr. C. Eric Lincoln, the great sociologist of the Black Church, was there and offered the following toast to us:

> Hallelujah, thine the glory
> Hallelujah, amen
> Hallelujah, thine the glory
> Please fund me again!

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His levity conveys one of the most pointed observations one can make about the status of traditional philanthropy. It is largely self-referencing because the people who would ordinarily be its constructive critics are afraid to challenge the actions of their donors, lest they never be funded again. It is a sector largely immunized from external critique. And since these institutions are charitable in nature and presume themselves to be on the side of the angels, and given the lack of diversity within them, one can readily see that we have much work to do if our community is to capture a fairer share of philanthropic dollars.

In 1982, when I joined the staff of the Ford Foundation, there was a lively focus on diversity in the world of philanthropy, at the Council on Foundations and at formal and informal gatherings of people working in this sector. There was a felt need to cherish and lift up philanthropic practices and traditions of diverse racial/ethnic groups. Some foundations, such as Ford, still put a premium on these concerns. But, more generally, I do not think it either harsh or inaccurate to say that mostly what remains is only a scent of the earlier discussion in the air. And, more often than not, when diversity is considered, the concerns expressed are directed toward gender equity. This is fine and needed. But too often, even a concern with gender equity excludes women who are members of communities of color. I worry that African Americans are losing traction and visibility in this important sector. Much remains to be done.

The development of a whole new generation of dot.com millionaires or wealthy venture capitalists who are entering the world of philanthropy may take the field in new directions. Their impact remains to be seen. Clearly efforts to influence the thinking and impulses of this new generation of predominantly non-African American philanthropists must be mounted.

We have a number of African Americans working in organized philanthropic institutions, many of them doing outstanding work. We do not, however, have a loud enough voice at the leadership level of these institutions. Our positions as subordinates may cause us to speak too softly, unaided by a big stick, about the needs of our community and others in need, let alone the desperately poor people of African descent in Africa and other Diaspora venues. Poor people of African descent on the continent of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean have inadequate ways of impacting philanthropic practices and thinking in the United States.

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We need people of courage and conviction who will raise and press these issues. I happen to believe that there are many good people in philanthropy who would be responsive but they cannot know what they do not know. "Power," to quote Frederick Douglass, "concedes nothing without demand. It never has and it never will."

What about philanthropy in the Black community—of and by Black people? In a chapter that he wrote in *Philanthropy and the Non Profit Sector,* edited by Charles T. Clotfelter and Thomas Ehrlich, Carson reminds us of the voluntary associations created by the enslaved and their progeny to meet pressing needs; the role of the African American church, still the principle recipient of contributions from African Americans for charitable purposes; and the etiology of a host of non-profit organizations. Carson also documents the ways in which organized philanthropic institutions outside of the community have responded to our needs.

Within the Black community in the United States, and I will venture the opinion abroad as well, most philanthropic activity—giving of resources and time—has been largely charitable in nature rather than strategic. That is to say that the institutions—especially the African American church and religious bodies abroad—are invariably under great pressure to deal with pressing human needs for shelter, food, protection from domestic or child abuse, help maneuvering within the welfare, prison systems, elder care, matters of this type. The credibility of these religious bodies depends largely on their capacity to meet those types of needs for communities that are in deep distress. As a consequence, the resources that African Americans give to the church do "good" but may not effect long-term systemic change.

Nor, given the choice, do most of our institutions use scarce resources to build their own managerial and fiscal capacities. As one African American pastor told me when I suggested that the Ford Foundation would make a grant to help his board develop a strategic plan—"We don't have time for all that. Our people need help." The leader of a civil rights organization in deep fiscal distress responded to my question about having a reserve fund by saying: "If we have any money left over at the end of the year, we must be doing something wrong, as bad off as Black people are!" This is a crisis orientation that pervades the thinking of too many of our institutions and keeps them frail.

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Most African American charitable institutions are domestically focused or if they reach to the international arena are concerned with meeting basic human needs. Most organized philanthropies external to our community are also domestically focused—remember Watson's observation—and neither staffed nor structured to work on global issues. Thus the challenge going forward is to build the capacities of both foundations within and outside of our community to give new priority to our needs, to understand those needs in policy, institutional and global perspective, and promote responsiveness and accountability. What they are doing now is fine, but it is not enough. There is a big terrain outside that is going unattended.

Let me share one cautionary note: There is a trend afoot in the world of organized philanthropy to which we should be attentive. It is borne of the perception that the Black middle class and notables such as athletes, musicians and hip hop entrepreneurs, among others, have all the resources needed to support Black causes and institutions and therefore organized philanthropy should not be called upon to meet community needs. It is never framed that baldly, but that is the exaggerated essence of the idea. The perception in some quarters that if Black institutions are not receiving their support from Black people in adequate amounts, then our institutions must not be worthy of support and can be ignored.

Gloria Steinem once remarked that "All most White people have to see is a Black man in a Mercedes to believe that the problems of discrimination are ended." Perception can be stronger than reality. So there is a perception that there is lots of money in the Black community to support our institutions and that Blacks would benefit from "tough love."

Clearly there is money in the Black community that could and should be donated to support our institutions and meet our needs. We obviously need to do more. Black people give at about the same rate as Whites, which is not enough. However, we must be very clear going forward about a couple of things.

First, the noveau riche—such as entertainers, athletes, etc.—have rarely been leaders of charitable giving, whatever their race. It is ahistorical and wrong to assume that mega bucks will come into our community to meet the needs of poor people from this quarter. We ought to be very plain

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about that. Let us applaud those who are the exceptions to this rule. Let us continue to try to reach the others. But let us also remember that high-end donors are too few to absolve organized philanthropy of its obligation to be inclusive.

Second, while it is true that the Black middle class has begun to close the wage or income gap with its White counterparts, let us also be clear about the distinction between income and wealth. The income gap is closing but the wealth gap—accumulated assets such as stocks, real and other forms of property—is enormous. In *Black Wealth, White Wealth,* authors Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro, point out that the claim to middle class status for Blacks is almost exclusively a function of income, not accumulated wealth or assets. They note that Blacks control only 1.3 percent of the nation's financial assets, while Whites control 82.5 percent. They write:

> The black-to-white wealth ratio comes closest to equality among households earning $50,000 or more. Even here where the wealth gap is the narrowest, however, blacks possess barely one-half (0.52) the median net worth of their high earning white counterpart. This analysis of wealth leaves no doubt regarding the serious misrepresentation of economic disparity that occurs when one relies exclusively on income data. Blacks and whites with equal incomes possess very unequal shares of wealth. More so than income, wealth holding remains very sensitive to the historically sedimenting effects of race.

Since accumulated wealth is the stuff of which organized philanthropy is born, African American patterns of giving going forward are likely to reflect lots of relatively small contributions by lots of people. And it remains to be seen if most of those contributions will continue to be channeled through the African American church.

Finally, as African Americans move up the economic ladder, there will be increasing competition for our disposable income, not just from African American organizations or institutions, but also organized philanthropy and mainstream or race-neutral organizations such as the Heart Fund or United Way or others. In some quarters, charitable contributions and activities are a way of promoting upward mobility at work or politically. Thus, I suspect that more and more African Americans will in the future contribute primarily to non-African American causes.

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Combating Racism in the Global Era: Challenges to Philanthropy

We can and will in the future make more donations to philanthropic and non-profit organizations. But the scale of the uptick in giving and its impact on philanthropy within and outside of the African American community remains unclear.

To summarize, there are many challenges that must be overcome if organized philanthropy is to respond more strategically and well to the need of the African American community in the United States and the communities of Afro descendants in the Diaspora. We must be better and more sophisticated advocates on both fronts.

We must also attend to the need to help people of African descent be more strategic in their charitable activities. Such monies as we have must be spent very thoughtfully if we are to advance. We should help our communities learn about options for organized giving, and, as importantly, engage in monitoring and advocacy activities in order to increase giving by foundations, corporations and other wealthy groups and individuals. And we must encourage fresh and innovative thinking about the global forces that shape philanthropy and our collective battles to overcome global racism.

I am hopeful but not optimistic about the potential of philanthropy within or outside of our community to effectively combat racism in the global era. Dr. Cornel West distinguishes between optimism and hope with the following words:

> Hope is not the same as optimism. Optimism adopts the role of the spectator who surveys the evidence in order to infer that things are going to get better. Yet, we know that the evidence does not look good. The dominant tendencies of our day are unregulated global capitalism, racial balkanization, social breakdown and individual depression. Hope enacts the stance of the participant who actively struggles against the evidence in order to change the deadly tides of wealth inequality, group xenophobia and personal despair. Only a new wave of vision, courage and hope can keep us sane and preserve the decency and dignity requisite to revitalize our organizational energy for the work to be done. To live is to wrestle with despair yet never to allow despair to have the last word.

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Combating Racism in the Global Era: Challenges to Philanthropy

Wanted: A New Wave of Vision, Courage and Hope

We face ageless challenges in the global era. The questions that animated those who came before us continue to haunt us: how shall people of diverse cultures and appearances find ways to live in peace and equitably meet everyone's basic needs? What can be done to deter or eliminate vestiges of old beliefs about racial superiority or inferiority and the stigma associated with Blackness? How can we enlist allies to continue dismantling the institutional structures that perpetuate White privilege and promote power sharing? How can we marshal the will to work for the common good rather than individual and selfish gain?

These ageless challenges—to be bigger and better than ourselves—lie before us. We have nothing but our lives and minds to use to help meet these challenges. But through our efforts and ingenuity and determination, we can continue to make progress.

Derrick Bell, the author of *Faces at the Bottom of the Well,* and *And We Are Not Saved*, has reminded me often that each of us has a way of making a contribution to the whole. We must continue to struggle against racism, sexism and other linked forms of oppression, not only because it is the right thing to do, although it is. Nor do we struggle only when victory seems to be at hand, although we always hope to prevail. We continue to struggle because to give in and give up is to ensure that all is lost and to betray what we stand for. Ultimately, we struggle in order to affirm on values and who we are.

So our challenge today is not to succumb to the temptation to make the outcome of the struggle the measure by which to gauge whether it is worth fighting. Our challenge is to enhance our efforts at all levels going forward and do our best. That is the only choice worth making.

Around the globe and in the Diaspora, people of African descent have waged an amazing battle for freedom for many years. We have fought against undervaluation, marginalization, denial of our fundamental humanity and right to have rights, and commodification. We have fought against apartheid, colonialism, segregation, lynching, forced labor, and myths of racial inferiority. We have fought against isolating poverty and internalized oppression. We have fought against miseducation, and destruction of our culture and traditional values. And we have fought to make democratic

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values real wherever we have been found. The global forces of which we have been speaking loom large, but we should know by now that fighting for freedom from racism is a long haul battle.

Sometimes, I confess to feeling overwhelmed by all of the information and innovations and breaking developments with which we are all bombarded. I am sure that you feel this way, too. But as William Saroyan has said, "I'm ignorant. I used to be angry about this, but thirty years ago, I began to see the intelligence of this. It is all right to be ignorant, just so you know it."

All of us are ignorant about many things in this world. We are all ignorant of the full measure of impact that globalization will have on our efforts to combat racism, at home or abroad. But if we adopt the stance of lifelong learner and retain the capacity to grow and think outside of the frame of reference into which we have been born, we can adapt, and thrive and grow in the global era. We can help our institutions of philanthropy become more relevant and more contemporary in outlook and in fact. And we can make a contribution to human welfare.

I close with these words of Nelson Mandela from his book, *Long Walk to Freedom*:

> I have walked a long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds us, to look back on the distance we have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended.

Nor is ours. To this, I add: stamina is everything. We can be part of the new wave.