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Queering the Feminist Dollar

A History and Consideration of the Third Wave Fund as Activist Philanthropy

MELISSA MEADE AND RYE YOUNG

The Third Wave Fund is a self-proclaimed activist philanthropy organization. Based in New York City, it supports youth-led activism for gender justice while challenging orthodoxies of both feminist and LGBTQ philanthropy.[1] When it was created in 1992 as the Third Wave Direct Action Corporation by daughters of second-wave feminism Catherine Gund, Dawn Lundy Martin, Amy Richards, and Rebecca Walker, its initial goal was to harness the burgeoning theories of multicultural and intersectional feminism to inspire young leaders to work together in new justice movements. As it quickly grew into the Third Wave Foundation, its focus became philanthropic, granting and regranting funds to support youth feminism, transform philanthropic institutions, and build philanthropic leaders among women of color and queer, low-income, and transgender activists. After two decades of work in this area, the board voted to close the foundation, citing insurmountable financial challenges. Response to this announcement was swift, however, with founders, early participants, grantees, and other stakeholders assembling to keep Third Wave open. As a stand-alone foundation, it shut its doors, but reopened recently as a smaller fund housed at the Proteus Fund, a clearinghouse for progressive philanthropy.

In this essay we explore the conceptual and political terrain opened up by the closure and reopening of the Third Wave Fund—asking how and when philanthropy is an activist endeavor, as well as how and when feminist and LGBTQ philanthropy work together. The transition from direct-action organization to foundation to activist fund illuminates some critical junctures in the philanthropy for transformative justice. In addition to probing the relationship between philanthropy and social justice, these junctures include recognizing changing power dynamics between grantees and granters and how funding structures can create unintended divisions, hierarchies, priorities, and conceptual constraints. LGBTQ and feminist funding have been artificially separated at times, making it difficult to build effective and strong feminist-queer and queer-feminist initiatives. Third Wave began as an implicitly queer and explicitly feminist organization, and has worked to become explicitly both. In

channeling funding to the work of community-based intersectional feminism, Third Wave positions itself as a force for queering feminist philanthropy, and for highlighting the ways in which all philanthropic work concerns gender and sexuality. Gender and sexuality are inextricably linked to our social worlds and material existence, and a queer future of philanthropy is one that pays close attention to how that works.

Our caveat in writing this piece is that both authors are directly involved in the Third Wave organizational structure. Melissa was among the newest members of the board during the time of transition from Foundation to Fund, joining just at the time of its closure. Rye has been with Third Wave since 2008, first as an Abortion Fund intern, then holding several positions before becoming the first executive director of the new Third Wave Fund in January 2014. What follows is a brief history of the organization, followed by a dialogue between the authors about the implications of this history for thinking about queer futures in philanthropy.

Feminist Philanthropic Waves

Although historians of social movements agree that feminist activity has been ongoing in the history of the United States, the metaphor of waves is often conjured to describe particularly salient moments of feminist activism in the United States.[2] The first wave, marked by attention to women's participation in political and public life, culminated with the ratification in 1920 of the Nineteenth Amendment, the amendment granting suffrage for women. Women's activism and philanthropy, however, were generally distinct endeavors. In fact, the law often dictated this separation, interpreting social services as distinct from political work. In the 1897 case of *Garrison v. Little*, the court rejected the legality of a bequeathment left to support women's suffrage, arguing that it was not within the realm of charitable work. The logic of the court was that charitable giving ought not to be in service of advocacy work, that it was for social services, education, and research into social problems. The courts confirmed a split between advocacy and education, between feminism and women's charity.[3]

Women played a large role in charitable giving, however, with the development of more accumulated wealth and attention to social problems. Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage started what is considered to be the first modern foundation in 1907 after the death of her husband, Russell Sage. Sage set up the Russell Sage Foundation to study social problems, and she gave money to education, religion, children's aid, and programs for women's education.[4] She helped professionalize social work, gave generously to both women's and men's colleges, but notably did not give to the suffrage movement.[5] Women's activism in philanthropy was largely directed towards the realms of education, welfare, and healthcare programs, less towards explicitly feminist work.[6]

Feminist activist Matilda Joslyn Gage, who broke from the National Woman Suffrage Association in order to form the more radical Woman's National Liberal Union, connected women's education and political activity and wondered, "Why aren't women of means funding our causes?" She remarked on this false distinction:

> The two great sources of progress are intellect and wealth. Both represent power, and are the elements of success in life. Education frees the mind from the bondage of authority and makes the individual self-asserting. Remunerative industry is the means of securing to its possessor wealth and education, transforming the laborer to the capitalist. Work is itself not power; it is but the means to an end.[7]

Historians, however, have argued that women's volunteerism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries helped contribute to the development of feminist consciousness and politics.[8] Indeed, when the second wave of feminism emerged in the 1960s, fueled by advocacy for women's equality in the workplace, the family, the law, and healthcare, activism and philanthropy were more directly connected. It was a resurgence of both a women's movement and women's philanthropy, and often the women's philanthropy was explicitly feminist. The Ms. Foundation for Women, an adjunct of feminist *Ms.* magazine, was founded in 1973 by activists Patricia Carbine, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Gloria Steinem, and Marlo Thomas. Its intention was to have women lead the movement for equality by funding initiatives for women and girls. In 1977 the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice opened its doors, driving a "philanthropy of inclusion."[9]

LGBTQ and women's funds emerged in the 1980s. Funders for LGBTQ Issues began as a "Working Group on Funding Lesbian and Gay Issues" in 1982 within the National Network of Grantmakers. The working group aimed to both support lesbian and gay organizations and research existing funding structures within LGBTQ communities. The Ms. Foundation awarded it its first grant to do this work, making a clear connection between feminist and LGBTQ grant making.[10] In 1984 the Women's Funding Network was developed at a meeting of the National Black United Fund and the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, pulling together more than sixty women's funds across the country.

Marcia Gallo, commenting on histories of lesbian philanthropy in particular, has noted that it is "rooted in a tradition of radical giving." In the mid-twentieth century more explicitly radical community foundations arose (though not necessarily feminist or LGBTQ focused), with a focus on systemic change rather than isolated moments of charity. Gallo argues that these kinds of grassroots funding structures gave rise to LGBTQ philanthropy, and argues for lesbians to "recognize that the intersection between the radical philanthropic movement—which seeks to disrupt the power relations of traditional charitable giving—and the lesbian/gay/bi-sexual/transgender movements—which seek at least to

dispel homophobia and at best to disrupt heteronormativity—is where both can become more inclusive, representative, and revolutionary."[11] Too often these funding initiatives have been considered separate, attending to distinct concerns.

The phrase "third wave feminism" appeared in the 1990s. As a body of thought it took as a starting point multiculturalism and postmodernism and what we think of now as intersectionality. In January 1992, Rebecca Walker, daughter of author Alice Walker, in an article in *Ms.* magazine describing a newer generation's interest in feminism and responding directly to Clarence Thomas's appointment to the Supreme Court despite allegations of sexual misconduct, used the term to call women to action: "I write this as a plea to all women. . . . [T]he fight is far from over. Let this dismissal of a woman's experience move you to anger. Turn that outrage into political power. I am not a post-feminist feminist. I am the Third Wave."[12]

Walker continued to build a media presence for this idea of a third-wave feminism, and, along with another recent college graduate, Shannon Liss, organized "Freedom Summer 92." Inspired by the voter registration drives of the early 1960s, this was a twenty-city voter registration campaign targeting young women. The press began to take note of this activity as marking the beginning of a new wave of women's movement and its inchoate organization. For example, the *SF Guardian*, San Francisco's alternative weekly, wrote an article announcing the arrival of Third Wave's Freedom Summer 92 campaign and quoted Walker announcing the Third Wave as "a grassroots resurgence of feminist activism on college campuses that comprises women and men of diverse backgrounds."[13]

From Direct Action to Foundation

In the several years following Walker's declaration of a third wave of U.S. feminism, Walker joined with Amy Richards, Dawn Lundy Martin, and Catherine Gund (née Saalfield, and of the George Gund family of philanthropists) in New York City to form the Third Wave Direct Action Corporation. They worked together to devise activist plans and develop both collective identity and strategy for entering the activist field. The Direct Action Corporation was quickly joined by a Third Wave Fund, housed at the now-defunct Funding Exchange, to raise money for feminist work. In an interview comment reflecting back on that time, Martin suggested, "Most second wave feminist organizations were not friendly places for young eager women to have a say in the movement, so we decided to start our own thing."[14]

The earliest meeting agendas combined professionalized language with open-ended inquiry. Richards brought connections to *Ms.* magazine, where she had worked as an intern, and a burgeoning friendship with Gloria Steinem, who was an early supporter of Third Wave. Agenda items included discussions of "what is 3w really about?" and "who are the other orgs and how do we differ?"[15] They

also continued to regularly ask themselves about the state of feminism, what it meant to members, and what Third Wave meant to each other. They agreed that they wanted Third Wave to serve as feminist watchdog, though the focus was still undetermined; initially, the thinking seemed to suggest that the organization would serve as watchdog on politics, but Third Wave would eventually become a feminist watchdog on philanthropy itself. They agreed that a mission of the Third Wave should be to "demystify" feminism for potential activists, and that an organizational strength they had from the outset was their multi-identity lens into feminist activism, or "our multi's," as they called it.[16] The first group of Third Wave members, while sharing common experiences in elite U.S. universities, were a diverse group of women; they were women of color, white women, lesbians, and straight women.

Third Wave had program ideas in 1994 for an underground railroad for abortion services, domestic violence prevention and support, women's literacy development, conferences on the status of women, and consciousness-raising-type discussion groups. In summer 1994 the group published its first newsletter, *3w News*, which included book reviews and information on women's health issues, voter registration drives, and feminist activism more generally.[17] The Third Wave Fund, stemming from the direct-action group, was in nascent form, and in early 1995 the group began consulting with philanthropic experts in a more formal way to learn the logistics of foundation work—how to do budgets, apply for grants, send appeals and letters of inquiry, for example. Richards and the board members saw this move as part of a strategy to become a "communications and networking organization."[18] Above all, they wanted to connect young women in a new third-wave feminism that drew together the multiple and shifting layers of identities informing grassroots politics.

Organizational documents from 1995 reveal a continued search for an identity as an organization, continued interest in expanding and connecting, and an eye towards professional philanthropy. Board members met monthly, served on committees, and volunteered at least five hours each month in the office. They shared feminist reading lists and ideas for growth. They planned for press packets, business cards, and visibility strategies:

> We will concentrate on building a strong membership base. We need to begin to make ourselves more visible. We are building towards being an effective lobbying base on issues concerning young women. We will educate people on issues affecting and concerning young women. We want to build a constituency that will mobilize people around issues that affect young women.[19]

With an explicit interest in becoming a "network organization," Third Wave planned for membership groups in such cities as Boston, Washington, DC, and San Francisco. They had plans for film festivals, feminist parties, an early online

presence, and inclusion of high-profile feminists on their advisory board. At the same time as they relied on grassroots participation, they were targeting foundations to raise and distribute money for youth feminist activism.[20] In their third formal board meeting, the board advised each other "to use 'see it, tell it, change it' as our philosophy. We are presently in the 'see it, tell it' phase and are working toward being able to 'change it.' "[21] The founders saw a long-term strategy for the organization that started with communications and moved towards direct action and philanthropy.

The board was reflectively focused on promulgating the idea of a third-wave feminism in the United States and developing a cohesive organizational identity. While a philanthropic ethos was not explicitly articulated in these early documents, there was an implicit philanthropic approach to all of this early organizing. That is, the board was comprised of recently educated women of means beginning to use their resources to acquire capital for a new feminist movement. They occupied a space between movement building and philanthropy. There was always an eye on visibility, not just about funding activist work, but about building coalitions and raising awareness of issues facing young women. Some of the specific issues on their minds included get-out-the-vote campaigns, campus activism, scholarships for women, abortion access, women's healthcare, women's culture and arts (such as the Lilith Fair music festival), advertising for public action campaigns, electoral politics, microloans for women, and legislative policy development.

The Third Wave Foundation

In 1996 the Third Wave Direct Action Corporation moved towards becoming the Third Wave Foundation with the unveiling of the Third Wave Fund. Reminiscent of the first-wave feminists who wondered why women of means were not funding their political and advocacy work, the Third Wave board made sure to highlight that only 6 percent of all philanthropic money was directed toward women and girls, and that the creation of a new feminist community fund "grew out of the need to have young people more involved in the issues that affect them, as well as to create a permanent funding base for young women."[22] The movement Third Wave was building was to redirect philanthropic money to women's needs.

The first grants, administered in 1997 and totaling almost thirteen thousand dollars, largely fit an individual self-empowerment model, with money given to individuals for emergency abortion services, scholarships, and travel to conferences.[23] There were three funding areas identified, with a fourth category designated for projects that would not fit those categories. For the first funding area, Third Wave partnered with the National Network of Abortion Funds to address issues of reproductive rights and abortion access. Thirty-two abortion funds

already existed across the country, and Third Wave wanted to contribute to the states that did not yet have a fund set up. Third Wave also wanted to provide funding for emergency abortion services for young women.

The second funding area was a scholarship fund. The third was for small-business and micro-enterprise loans. The goal was "to empower women financially," and the first grant ever received from Third Wave was in this funding area, to members of Eagle Staff for travel to a development conference.[24] The First Nations Development Institute was founded in 1980, and in 1993 its Eagle Staff Fund began its national grant-making program, a Native American–controlled program directed at addressing Native American poverty.[25] The fourth funding area was a general fund. Here Third Wave was interested in responding to growing needs of young feminists, rather than locking itself into categorical funding boxes, "because the issues affecting young women may change from year to year." This category was key in its move from funding individual needs to funding activist groups; this category was also key in considering nimble and responsive ways to conceptualize grant making.

The earliest fundraising strategy outlined three potential sources of resources: individual and corporate donors, Third Wave membership dues, and college students targeted by direct mail campaigns aimed to "increase young women's philanthropic participation."[26] The initial goal was to raise one hundred thousand dollars, which it reached by the end of 1996. For 1997 it increased that goal to five hundred thousand dollars, applying for grants from large foundations and drawing plans to build an endowment with half of all donated money. In its first set of foundation appeals it identified itself as concentrating on regranting to young women, ages fifteen to thirty, nationwide: "The 3w Fund seeks to help young women foster self-confidence and self-sufficiency so they can become the leaders of tomorrow. The TWF will create a permanent funding base for young women."[27] By 1997 Third Wave had twenty-six board members, one part-time staff member, and thirty volunteers. It continued to increase its goals for fundraising and grant making.

In shifting its attention to raising money through large grants, Third Wave moved away from direct-action feminism and into the realm of regranting intermediary philanthropy. The board developed leadership giving goals, though without sustained dedication to this board fundraising development, and focused on grants appeals. The Funding Exchange administered the grants, with Third Wave identifying as the Third Wave Fund, a project "based on the principles of the Third Wave Direct Action Corporation."[28] The direct action newsletter was called *See it? Tell it. Change it!* and the fund newsletter was the *Signal*.

Third Wave worked with other philanthropic organizations to hold convenings that could transform philanthropy itself, and indeed philanthropic activism became a funding area of the organization. In 1998 Third Wave cofounded, with the Tides Foundation and Funding Exchange, "Making Money Make Change,"

an annual meeting for wealthy young people who want to work in social justice movements.[29] Also in 1998, Third Wave sponsored what was billed as a first annual Young Women's Leadership Forum.[30] By the late 1990s, Third Wave hit its stride, with a functional board of advisors, executive director, and small staff. It had a presence in women's funding circles as well as third-wave feminism nonprofits. Third Wave had small chapters in cities across the United States, and conducted various campaigns such as the "I Spy Sexism" public information campaign, and Reaching Out Across MovementS (ROAMS), a three-year traveling program aiming to connect organizations working for social justice. It was in ROAMS that Third Wave fully expanded its reach into intersectional feminism, connecting activist groups in such arenas as public education, farm labor, lesbian and gay youth organizing, and reproductive rights.

Billed as a series of immersive experiences for youth social justice activists, ROAMS ran from 2000 to 2002, and included road trips through areas in the Southeast, the Pacific Northwest, and the Southwest. On each trip, a dozen or so Third Wave staff members and youth organizers traveled across a region for two to three weeks at a time. They visited community organizations, talked to activists about their work, and compared ideas about organizing feminist politics, making connections, and sharing resources.[31] They were interested in getting the seasoned activists outside of their familiar environments and introducing new activists to a range of organizations. They also aimed to explore connections between rural and urban organizing and investigate particularly underserved geographical areas. And finally, they strove to analyze the ways in which issues of gender and sexuality permeate all community organizing in order to build solid and diverse activist networks.

After these trips, Third Wave sent newsletters and reports back to their community, reporting their findings and building their network. In the 2001 report it was noted, "In keeping with Third Wave's multi-issue approach, we met with organizations working on issues ranging from reproductive rights, day labor organizing, economic justice, sex work advocacy, land rights, race and more."[32] Participants were building an intersectional approach to feminist community work on the ground, strategizing for how to fund the work, and how to build effective coalitions.

Queering Third Wave

Entering the 2000s, Third Wave continued its stride. It was a "by and for" small intermediary foundation, meaning it was run by and for the communities it supported—young women of color, gender-nonconforming youth, and young feminists. Vivien Labaton, the first executive director, left in 2001 after establishing a strong base for the foundation, and several directors and codirectors came through in the following years. While connecting direct-action campaigns with

grant making, as an organization Third Wave worked to change philanthropic approaches to thinking about funding activism. Rather than concentrating on recruiting young women into feminism, or funding individual needs of young women, Third Wave had firmly turned to investing in activist nonprofits and movement building. As Third Wave Foundation (rather than Fund) it developed a conceptual framework for bringing women into a third-wave feminist movement while joining the philanthropic community as intermediary fund.

Third Wave widened the scope of its grant-making programs, connecting social justice projects with a feminist lens. That is, while not all the grant recipients were feminist in name, Third Wave highlighted the gender and sexuality issues implicit in their work, adding a feminist dimension with the financial support. Third Wave continued to grant scholarships until 2005, in 2003 adding to the docket a scholarship program for transgender activists in particular. In 2005 the Reproductive Health and Justice Initiative was launched, abetted by the Leila Breitbart Memorial Fund. This new, enlarged focus on justice for reproductive health facilitated connections among the work of the longstanding Emergency Abortion Fund, reproductive health needs for trans and gender-nonconforming youth, lesbians, and young women of color. Through this initiative Third Wave was able to convene meetings of its grantees for peer reflection and growth. In 2006 this group of nonprofits, consisting largely of Third Wave grantees, founded their own coalition network.[33]

Alongside the grant-making programs and convenings, Third Wave embarked on conceptual work at the organizational level to develop a larger frame of gender justice to encompass its broad-sweeping feminist work. In spring 2003 the board and staff began "an organizational discussion on transgender issues and their intersection with third wave feminism," in conjunction with working with grantees working for transgender justice and supporting programs such as an "I Spy Transphobia" public information campaign and trans fem workshops. In October 2005 the board and staff approved a "gender justice plan," which was to include internal trainings, readings, discussion with foundation peers, and plans to produce a comprehensive report documenting the process. The goal of the report would be to share the process and purpose with other foundations.[34] Data were collected and the report was drafted and redrafted, but was never completed or released to the public.

On the heels of Third Wave's work to develop a gender-justice lens for philanthropic work was a keen interest in intersectional feminism across philanthropic circles more generally. Larger organizations looked to Third Wave to release its thoughts on gender justice, and Third Wave participated alongside established foundations and funds to develop the concept of gender justice within funding communities. The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy issued a report in 2007 advocating for "creating a philanthropic sector that is more responsive to the needs of diverse communities."[35] In 2008 the Catalyst Fund

of the Tides Foundation released a resource guide for women of color working in the area of reproductive justice, and the Obama-Biden "Advancing Reproductive Rights and Health in a New Administration" 2008 report adopted social-change-impact language to describe the contemporary climate for this work.[36] Kaiser Family Foundation, Tides Foundation, Ford Foundation, and the Applied Research Center all released reports dealing with intersectional feminism and gender justice in philanthropy between 2009 and 2010.[37]

In 2011, the Third Wave Foundation worked with Real Change Partners LLC to develop a five-year strategic plan. The challenges, values, competencies, strategies, and envisioned future all reflected a professionalized foundation approach to queer feminist philanthropy and to "open[ing] up a space of difference," as J. K. Gibson-Graham has put it when she asked, "What if we were to 'queer' capitalist hegemony and break apart some of its consolidating associations?"[38] Third Wave continued to ask those questions of philanthropy, to try to envision new, queer ways of doing things. Reflecting the fifteen years of grant making, core values were thus articulated:

1. By & For: We believe that lived experience generates wisdom, creativity, and expertise and hold that those most impacted by oppression are best positioned to design and lead solutions to the root causes of social injustice. Third Wave is led by and for the constituencies we serve in strategic partnership with our allies.
2. Justice: We do what we do and how we do it because of a deep belief and commitment to social justice. Our view of justice recognizes that all forms of injustice are inextricably interrelated and create systems of oppression that are felt at the individual, community, and structural levels. With a focus on gender, racial, and economic justice, we work toward personal and structural changes that produce well-being, self-determination, and liberation for all.
3. Transformation: Third Wave embraces and drives transformative change. We ourselves are ever evolving. We build and exert collective power in order to create roadmaps for liberation and transform structural inequalities. Together with our grantee partners, supporters, and allies, we represent the leading edge of national movements for social justice and work to transform policies, systems and practices that impede justice and equity for all.
4. Passion: We believe that by operating with passion for our work, we create a culture of joy, commitment, and accountability that we believe are necessary conditions for fostering growth, leadership, and positive change.[39]

Also articulated were three areas of work for Third Wave. First was strategic grant making, in which Third Wave aimed to work "at the intersections of

movements for gender, racial, and economic justice." Second was movement building: "[C]onnecting youth-led organizations from around the country to each other is needed to build a broader, more sustained movement for social justice." And third was philanthropic advocacy. Under this umbrella was the goal to bring attention to underfunded organizations and "help develop progressive and intersectional analyses and funding priorities within social justice philanthropy, ultimately increasing support to youth-led organizations."[40]

At this point less than 7 percent of all philanthropic dollars went to women's and girls' programs, and less than 1 percent were serving transgender youth, so Third Wave's vision was as strong as ever, but its financial situation was not. Losing some key financial grounding led to an unsustainable model of operation, and in early 2013 the board voted to close Third Wave's doors.

On the Future of a Queer Feminist Philanthropy: A Dialogue

In 2014 Third Wave announced Rye Young as it new executive director. After more than a year of intensive strategizing, negotiating, organizing, and thinking, the Third Wave Foundation wound down its operations and the Third Wave Fund emerged. Currently, the Fund no longer has physical space or a large staff, and is hosted by the Proteus Fund, a philanthropic management organization that supports social change in the arenas of human rights, democracy, and peace. The leadership team is new, with new visions of how to organize transformative justice within philanthropy. What follows is a dialogue between Melissa Meade and Rye Young. Melissa is a member of the Legacy Council of the Third Wave Fund, and Rye is currently serving as its executive director. This new iteration of the Third Wave Fund, while building on the history of the Third Wave Foundation, is in its infancy, working on concepts, logistics, and strategies.

MELISSA MEADE: Third Wave struggled for so long with defining and operationalizing the concept of "gender justice" in philanthropy. How is the new iteration of the Third Wave Fund approaching the concept?

RYE YOUNG: Third Wave started as a feminist organization, and Third Wave has always been queer. Even without the language, and even if it wasn't categorized as LGBTQ work, that's what Third Wave has been doing—queering feminism, expanding the scope of feminist work, expanding the notion of LGBTQ, and working at the intersections of where social justice issues are gendered. Here is the way we are thinking about "gender justice," from an excerpt of a forthcoming piece of our website:

> Third Wave defines Gender Justice as a movement to end patriarchy, transphobia, and homophobia and to create a world free from misogyny. As gender justice activists, we recognize that gender oppression is tied to classism, racism, ageism,

and ableism, so gender justice can only truly be achieved when all forms of oppression cease to exist.

To Third Wave, the Gender Justice movement is (1) multi-issue because no single issue represents all gender oppression and because gender is connected to all aspects of life, (2) community led by those who are directly impacted by oppression, (3) feminist, queer and trans, unapologetically.[41]

MM: In the context of neoliberalism and what's often called the nonprofit industrial complex, I wonder what it means to be an activist fund. In her introduction to the recent *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution,* political theorist Wendy Brown begins with a vividly corporeal metaphor for neoliberalism's hold on radical politics: "[M]ore than merely cutting away the flesh of liberal democracy, neoliberalism also cauterizes democracy's more radical expressions."[42] Here the distribution of resources from the private sector suggests not just a tepid politics, but a destructive antipolitics. Can an activist fund intervene, become intravenous even, to further the analogy?

Further, Dylan Rodriguez, in an oft-cited definition, wrote that the nonprofit industrial complex is a "set of symbiotic relationships that link together political and financial technologies of state and owning-class proctorship and surveillance over public political intercourse, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements."[43] And so relationships between funders and grantees become fraught, overprescribed, bureaucratic, and ineffective.

RY: First, we fund activism. The way we choose what to fund—where the money goes—is about being responsive to the needs of activism, and about understanding how movements of activism work. Second, Third Wave is led by activists, in the movements, aware of the legacies of philanthropy and histories of activist movements, and aware of the neoliberal tensions and contradictions inherent in the philanthropic endeavor. Third Wave exists because philanthropy has left gaps in funding, and we see ourselves as contributing to an undoing of this unequal distribution of resources and leadership. We are not working solely within inherited practices and structures; we are attempting to construct new ways of doing philanthropy, ways that are empowering instead of disempowering. We have done away with issue areas, for example, because funding based on issues has often been a way of creating divisions between communities and needs. It artificially separates the ways in which oppression and hierarchies are woven together, so that funders become "feminist," or "queer," or "anti-racist," but not necessarily all together, all at once. Tactics of oppression are always changing and we want to set up our funding structures to be responsive to the changes. We start with communities.

Third, there is an activism in organizing funders to think differently about the ways they approach grantmaking, to think of themselves as being part of social justice movement and not simply donors. Third Wave has always included this part in the work that we do. We ask questions of both grantees and funders—questions about how gender factors into their work, how they think about the ways in which their work has to do with sexuality and gender, alongside labor, race, or literacy. Third Wave has brought together grantees and funders; it's an attempt to collectivize the experience of marginalization. And it's an attempt to re-angle ourselves to listen to what is needed from communities.

As Rickee Mananzala and Dean Spade, in considering tactics of trans resistance, have wisely suggested,

> Trans politics should use a model based on the concept social justice trickles up, not down, prioritizing the needs and concerns of those facing the worst manifestations of gender-based marginalization and exclusion, as well as using a model for social change that centralizes the leadership of trans people of color, trans low-income people, trans immigrants, and others facing intersectional oppression.[44]

MM: And so I want to consider failure. Going through the Third Wave archives I was struck by the precarity of Third Wave's position in the philanthropic world. It has certainly distributed a sizeable amount of grant money, and has had a considerable presence in philanthropic circles dedicated to transformative justice. That said, Third Wave's funding has not always been secure, and its dedication to movement building has never seemed to find solid footing, in terms of philanthropic codification. And, in fact, the board voted to close its doors. After this closure—what we might call failure—however, the new Third Wave Fund has repositioned itself in interesting, vibrant, solid, and ambitious ways.

Jack Halberstam, in the *Queer Art of Failure*, has argued that we ought to name failure "not as the negative space opened up by normalized modes of success but as a habitable space with its own logic, its own practices and the potential for new collectivities." He then goes on to name it as queer, understanding failure as "a practice that builds upon queerness in the sense that queerness is always a failure to conform, to belong, to cohere. Rather than reorienting queerness, we should embrace failure."[45] What do you think of that read of Third Wave?

RY: Third Wave has always existed in a place of precarity and resilience. This is because of its original values—at its starting point valuing multiple perspectives and identities, coinciding issues, complicated and interconnected politics. Third Wave has also valued ongoing reflection and adaptation, a commitment to the margins, to being a fund for the fundless, to being radi-

cal in its work. Eighty percent of the organizations we have funded have closed. Is this a systemic failure? Yes, absolutely. Is it a Third Wave failure? I'd argue no. Third Wave has been a project of sending water upstream, finding outcomes in the process, movement building, and communities rather than end results.

Third Wave, the way I see it, will always be susceptible to ups and downs, to the vicissitudes of philanthropy; it will never be too big to fail. At its heart Third Wave is always engaged in hypothesis work, an experiment in normativity and queerness, even as we stand on the ground built by so many other activists. I cannot imagine this project of funding the margins being complete, and if we were to change our values, that would be the ultimate, nonproductive failure.

Epilogue

Third Wave has been a multi-issue feminist organization, and in its history we can clearly see a trajectory of complicating traditionally feminist issues by taking queerness, race, and class as axis points for the conversation and work.

From its start in 1992, Third Wave's goal was to be led by young activists from the communities it supported, and to engage directly in both movement building and grant making. In bringing together feminist and LGBTQ work and articulating an inclusive gender-justice framework for feminist activism and philanthropy, Third Wave can be instructive in thinking about the future of both the feminist and the LGBTQ movements, and the role of radical philanthropy in them. The lived experience of identity does not hinge on gender alone, but is connected explicitly to our multiple and overlapping identities of class location, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and more. We must build—and fund—movements that recognize this reality.

NOTES

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2 In 1968 journalist Martha Weinman Lear first used the metaphor (Lear 1968). On organizing U.S. feminism into waves, see, for example, Moynagh and Forestell 2015; Nicholson 1997; Freedman 2003; Siegel 2007; Hewitt 2010; Cobble, Gordon, and Henry 2015.

3 Zunz 2014; Illinois Appellate Court, Smith, and Newell 1898.

4 Crocker 2006; "A Sense of Place" 2010.

5 McCarthy 2007; "A Sense of Place" 2010.

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