



UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

**Moving Towards Dignity:
Using Inclusive and Equitable Fundraising Language to
Dismantle Philanthropy's White Savior Narrative**

by

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Dedication

*To my fellow fundraisers:
We have a responsibility
to the communities we represent.
Let's listen actively
and center their needs above all.*

Abstract

This qualitative research examines the role that the white savior narrative plays in fundraising and philanthropy. I will begin with a literature review of relevant topics including, white saviorism, examples of white saviorism in nonprofit communications, power dynamics, effective fundraising strategies and donor motivations, inclusive and equitable language and centering the community in fundraising. A content analysis of 20 annual report leadership letters from 20 501(c)3 organizations demonstrates the ways in which nonprofit leadership individuals talk about their programs and program beneficiaries. The content analysis shows that most leadership individuals are white, do not reference equity in their letters and mostly describe program beneficiaries in a generally negative light, thus depicting saviorism. A summary of semi-structured interviews shows how frontline fundraisers, nonprofit leaders and board members all agree that despite the prevalence of the white savior narrative, it is both damaging and not an impactful fundraising method. Finally, I will reveal a new model for dignity-focused fundraising that centers the needs of the community and I will offer recommendations for how fundraisers can generate revenue in an inclusive and equitable way that ultimately centers the community. My recommendations include thoughtful use of fundraising language, prioritization of unrestricted funds and an emphasis on donor relationships that align with organizational values.

Keywords: white savior, philanthropy, fundraising, equitable language, community-centric

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Section 1. Introduction

In the summer of 2020, we witnessed what can be described as a national racial uprising. Compounded by an intensely polarized political climate leading up to the presidential election, a global pandemic then wreaked havoc across our communities, took too many lives, livelihoods and jobs, and shook our health systems to their very core. Then we watched former police officer Derek Chauvin kneel on the neck of and eventually murder George Floyd. This galvanized a nation and enraged many that had previously been able to ignore the treatment of Black men, women and children. Police have taken many lives before Derek Chauvin took George Floyd's (Breonna Taylor, Philando Castille, Freddie Gray, Eric Garner, Michael Brown...) and the Black Lives Matter movement had been hard at work for years, but many agree that the timing, cruelty, the visuals and deliberate violent nature of this case felt different. Americans of all identities still hurting from the pandemic took to the streets in a wave of protests to affirm their support for Black Lives and call out the blatant injustices of police brutality. The combination of our heightened political climate and the intense national pain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic placed racial justice issues under a microscope. Some of us took a cold hard look in the mirror to confront our own participation in white supremacy and the privileges it allows us, and others doubled down on belief systems refusing to acknowledge any personal responsibility. Regardless of our stance or position, the summer of 2020 will be one we all remember.

Organizations across industries and sectors publicly affirmed their support for Black Lives Matter and made public commitments to address diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)--although the legitimacy and actuality behind those statements remain to be seen. The nonprofit sector was no exception as many of our own organizations affirmed their dedication to DEI both internally and externally. As many of us looked around at the makeup of our board of directors, leadership staff and donors, we saw whiteness. Within fundraising and philanthropy, we began discussions about how to diversify our boards and our donor pipelines. There was a palpable mad dash to recruit board members of color and reach out to donors of color; however, there were also questions about the authenticity of this effort. Were our organizations really ready to invite donors of color into our spaces with intention? Have we done the proper pre-work and laid the groundwork so that we could actually be inclusive? Would donors of color

feel that they belong in our organizations? These issues were not new last summer and many nonprofit leaders had been addressing them for some time.

As I began to think about my own role in the white-dominated spaces of fundraising and philanthropy, the white savior narrative kept ringing in my head. As a white woman frontline major gifts fundraiser at a child rights organization, it is my job to ask ultra-high-net-worth individual donors for their support. These partnerships are with predominantly white donors who are philanthropically supporting largely Black and Brown children around the world. Too often they view their role in this exchange as a savior and too often I do not correct them. Donors will approach me with their own ideas about where they want to give their money and ask me to find out what is possible for them. A traditionally donor-centric culture of philanthropy teaches that we must get close to our donors, understand our donors' interests and philanthropic goals and ultimately meet their desires in order to secure funding. This gives donors all the power and removes any dignity or voice from our program beneficiaries.

In the pages that follow, I argue that this model of donor-centric fundraising is yet another system within our society rooted in white supremacy. The white savior narrative is the process by which white, wealthy individuals in positions of privilege or power act on their emotional response to poverty by using philanthropy to 'save' individuals they regard as needy or vulnerable. After an in-depth look at the white savior narrative and how it plays a role in philanthropy, followed by a discussion on contributing factors to successful fundraising, I will offer solutions for how we, as fundraisers, can thoughtfully guide our donors and supporters away from saviorism. I suggest that we use more inclusive and equitable fundraising language to help shift power dynamics and honor the communities in which we work with dignity and with respect. I ask that we really listen to program beneficiaries and view those individuals as the experts and leaders that they are. I challenge the notion that we need to lean on any savior narrative in order to appeal to donors--that's the easy road. Finally, I call on my fellow fundraisers to do the honorable work of using our position to guide our donors the right way, and that this does not need to have any negative impact on our ability to successfully raise funds. In fact, this is our responsibility--to our organizations and most importantly to the communities we represent.

I will begin with a literature review, which will provide an overview of key concepts, including the white savior narrative and the role it plays in nonprofit communication and fundraising as well as how it has impacted program beneficiaries and the communities our organizations represent. Next, I will discuss effective fundraising, what resonates with donors and power dynamics within the donor

relationship. The literature review will then offer examples of inclusive and equitable language and the impact of centering the community in the philanthropic process. The data analysis section will provide the results of my continued qualitative research collection, which includes a content analysis of nonprofit annual report leadership letters and semi-structured interview conversations with seven expert individuals. Finally, I will offer my recommendations for how fundraisers can help shift the narrative towards dignity and away from the white savior narrative.

Section 2. Literature Review

Understanding White Saviorism

In 2012, Nigerian-American author Teju Cole coined the term White Savior Industrial Complex in a series of tweets and subsequent articles. The White Savior Industrial Complex became known as the impact of a white person's seemingly well-intentioned charity or activism for a non-white person or community. In his tweets, Cole responded to the release of the documentary *Kony 2012*, which was produced by Invisible Children depicting Ugandan cult, militia leader and war criminal Joseph Kony (Cole, 2012). Cole writes, "The white savior supports brutal policies in the morning, founds charities in the afternoon, and receives awards in the evening...The White Savior Industrial Complex is not about justice. It is about having a big emotional experience that validates privilege" (Cole, 2012). The white savior is not thinking about long-term systemic change or about justice, rather the white savior acts out of pity or guilt. Cole's tweets went viral and he received a wide range of responses, particularly in regards to his mention of celebrities and well-known, well-respected individuals such as Oprah Winfrey and New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof. While many people wrote to Cole in support of his sentiments, many others called him a racist, questioned his integrity and accused him of resentment. Regardless of the support or criticism he received, Cole challenged the actual outcomes of charitable behaviors and illustrates the root of the problem with white saviorism, "...there is much more to doing good work than 'making a difference'. There is the principle of first do no harm. There is the idea that those who are being helped ought to be consulted over the matters that concern them" (Cole, 2012). He points to this very issue pervasive in American philanthropy, too often wealthy people of privilege engage in charity for self-serving, emotional reasons with little regard for the actual needs or agency of the community they are hoping to serve. Cole disagrees with the notion that all charitable efforts are actually 'doing good' and suggests that often it might be doing more damage. Similarly, in his book *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance*, Edgar Villanueva explains, "...what ails philanthropy at its core is colonialism. Almost without exception, funders reinforce the colonial division of Us vs. Them, Haves vs. Have Nots, and mostly white saviors and white experts vs. poor, needy, urban, disadvantaged, marginalized, at-risk people (take your pick of euphemisms for people of color)" (Villanueva, 2018, p. 5). The colonial mindset is pervasive throughout philanthropy as donors reinforce the myth that they are the experts able to provide aid to the 'needy.'

Similar to Cole's concept of the White Savior Industrial Complex, saviorism and the hero narrative are other examples of the damaging mentality in which those in a position of power or privilege feel entitled to rescue the less fortunate. In his research, Gary M. Walsh examines saviorism and the hero narrative and the role they both play in global citizenship education (Walsh, 2020). These narratives, Walsh explains, lay the groundwork for individuals to engage in "feel-good" charitable activities without addressing the need for actual structural change. Walsh uses political journalist Jordan Flaherty's book *No More Heroes: Grassroots Challenges to the Savior Mentality* as a basis for understanding the implications of the hero narrative and saviorism. Flaherty explains,

The savior mentality means that you want to help others but are not open to guidance from those you want to help. Saviors fundamentally believe they are better than the people they are rescuing. Saviors want to support the struggle of communities that are not their own, but they believe they must remain in charge. The savior always wants to lead, never to follow. When the people they have chosen to rescue tell them they are not helping, they think those people are mistaken. It is almost taken as evidence that they need more help. (Walsh, 2020, p. 2)

Flaherty continues to illustrate how saviorism plays a role in multiple sectors and is deeply rooted in colonialism and imperialism. Dating back to Western dominance and superiority, saviorism plays out through the belief that white Westerners know best. Walsh uses Flaherty's discussion to further depict the concept of the hero narrative, which he explains takes saviorism beyond consciousness and one step further into social action. Walsh argues that the education system is an example of how the hero narrative is constructed and Westerners are taught that their need for philanthropy is based upon the concept of 'charity' (Walsh, 2020). He believes that the hero narrative shapes our worldview, "The hero narrative manipulates our understanding of social justice and civic action by subtly distorting the frames of reference" (Walsh, 2020, p. 5). Both saviorism and the hero narrative center the identities of the oppressor while neglecting the identity of the one being 'saved'. The hero narrative teaches us that it is the hero who knows how to 'do good' while the one being 'saved' is simply the one in need. Walsh argues that in order to dismantle these pervasive threats to social justice and systemic change, there must be a shift in which identity is centered (Walsh, 2020, p. 5). There must be a reflection and acceptance of historical implications and a new emphasis on establishing agency in place of 'saving'.

Before a further discussion on the role that the white savior narrative plays within philanthropy and nonprofit fundraising communications, I'll offer another example of the white savior mentality in the context of international volunteerism. While somewhat different in nature from philanthropy and

fundraising, the volunteer power dynamic will be helpful in understanding the implications of these concepts. In her research, Jenna N. Hanchey offers a helpful case study as she reflects upon her time spent in Tanzania as a researcher at an international aid non-governmental organization (Hanchey, 2018). As a participant-observer, Hanchey uses her field notes, audio recordings of interviews and conversations as well as her own observations to analyze her experiences in Tanzania. Hanchey observed the political relationships between the organization's Western leadership and local Tanzanian staff as well as unskilled Western volunteers, which were mostly burdening the staff instead of offering any actual assistance. She uses the concept of 'foreclosure' to explain the self-distancing and repeated denial from any notion of neocolonialism and the concept of 'fantasy' to explain how white American volunteers hold superiority. Hanchey notes, "...whiteness is tied to the nationalistic idea of US American exceptionalism—where anyone, regardless of qualifications, has the ability to be a savior in Africa simply because of their national identity. The assumption of a white body is inherent in cultural narratives of the Global North as purveyor of aid, and US Americans as exceptional" (Hanchey, 2018, p. 147). Instinctively, the American white savior sees themselves as exceptional because of their national identity and the color of their skin and furthermore, they believe that they hold the unique ability to improve other societies and save those they deem less fortunate.

Hanchey also explores two themes that occurred in the reactions of the volunteers when they were challenged on their white savior fantasies: denial and irony (Hanchey, 2018). Throughout her observations, conversations and interviews, she witnessed repeated deflection, dismissal and self-preservation when confronted with the realities of their saviorism. Even when ironically recognizing the white savior mentality in someone else, she saw volunteers place themselves as the exception and refuse to see it in themselves. She witnessed volunteers use their self-identified privilege as evidence for why they are qualified to volunteer, not based on any actual skills or expertise (Hanchey, 2018). Finally, and arguably most notably, Hanchey confronts her own biases as a white American researcher, "By assuming that I had an exceptional understanding of whiteness and neocolonialism in aid, I had enacted the very same irony I was critiquing in other volunteers" (Hanchey, 2018, p. 157). She uses her reflection combined with all of her research to inspire her suggested changes for the organization. Her suggestions include shifting the power and agency onto the Tanzanian staff and encouraging them to challenge perpetual white savior fantasies. In addition, she urged for the volunteers to be held accountable for their work through performance reviews much like paid staff, which would force the volunteers to confront their 'privilege' as a perceived job qualification.

Hanchey's thorough review and discussion provide a valuable case study as I begin to analyze the implications of white saviorism. While international volunteerism is only one specific example of where this phenomenon occurs, many of the same concepts and themes can be applied to philanthropy and fundraising. The idea that the individuals she encountered see their whiteness and privilege as qualifications for providing aid in other communities can also be seen within philanthropy. Similar to Hanchey's conclusions and suggested shift in power dynamics, Walsh calls for re-centering the identities of the oppressed. Both agree that we must first confront and accept the realities of the savior mentality before we can truly dismantle it. Once we understand the role of white supremacy in volunteerism, in philanthropy and in the nonprofit sector as a whole, we can begin to recognize the urgent need for a power shift and ultimately re-center the community in our organizational directives.

Policy vs. Philanthropy

While not the primary focus of my research, I would be remiss not to briefly address an important component of the White Savior Industrial Complex that points to the relationship between policy and philanthropy. Every year wealthy Americans give away millions of dollars to support international humanitarian relief, particularly during a natural disaster, and simultaneously vote for elected officials who back damaging, money-hungry foreign policy initiatives that inevitably contribute to poverty creation in those very same places. There is often a complete lack of acknowledgment of the role we play in these systems. As Cole expertly points out, "We can participate in the economic destruction of Haiti over long years, but when the earthquake strikes it feels good to send \$10 each to the rescue fund...we must do such things only with awareness of what else is involved. If we are going to interfere in the lives of others, a little due diligence is a minimum requirement" (Cole, 2012). Similarly, we have seen the wealthiest Americans make public statements condemning systems rooted in racism and white supremacy while they simultaneously pay the workers at their companies--many of whom are people of color--less than a living wage while they collect billions of dollars per year. Their philanthropy and statements might seem impressive, but they ultimately participate in creating policy initiatives that only contribute to poverty creation, not alleviation. The White Savior Industrial

Complex creates an outlet and an opportunity for the white privileged to feel that they are ‘doing something’ to address the poverty that they help create.

Examples of White Saviorism in Nonprofit Organizations

In her analysis of Product (RED), Katherine Bell provides a thought-provoking discussion on the campaign as it uses celebrity endorsements and brand name products to commodify the AIDS crisis in Africa (Bell, 2011). Product (RED) was originally founded by Bono and Bobby Shriver and according to the current website, “(RED) harnesses the power of people and companies to fight AIDS. (RED) partners with the world’s most iconic brands that contribute profits from the sale of (RED)-branded products and experiences to the Global Fund” (Product (RED), 2021). Through marketing, celebrities and brand recognition, Product (RED) encourages consumers to buy red products that will, in turn, benefit the AIDS crisis. The campaign uses provocative imagery and videos to illustrate how (RED) can essentially transform and improve lives just by purchasing an expensive red product. It minimizes complex social, political and historical contexts and then frames solving poverty in Africa as something as simple as Westerners participating in capitalism. In addition to minimizing the complexities of the AIDS crisis, the campaign completely ignores race. By referring to ‘Africa’, it overgeneralizes an entire continent eliminating the vast variety of identities that exist and reducing it to one single group of Black people. As Bell points out, the strategy of (RED) is to “...create a sunny narrative of universality by refusing race, even though it is a spectral presence hovering over the entire effort...This racially sanitized rhetorical strategy is part of the subtle, yet pervasive, neo-colonial stance” (Bell, 2011, p. 168). Bell confronts an extremely important issue at the heart of the (RED) strategy that also exists in a variety of nonprofit campaigns, fundraising messaging and philanthropic efforts. The tone screams loud and clear, ‘*those* people need us to save them’. The white Westerner is given the opportunity to ignore the actual realities and can just feel good about participating in capitalism because they are told their (RED) purchase is saving lives. Finally, companies that participate in the (RED) campaign tell us that designs are inspired by artists in Africa but those individuals and their stories are completely invisible. Their labor is anonymous.

There is no doubt that the life-saving drugs that the campaign is providing are desperately needed and the AIDS crisis must be stopped; however, as Bell explains, “A campaign that trades on overconsumption, narcissism and white privilege cannot but help perpetuate the devastating “problem child” narrative. It constructs commodities, celebrities, and consumers as agents of social change and Africans as passive and weak, their only hope another handout” (Bell, 2011, p. 177). The White Savior

Industrial Complex and the hero narrative can be seen so clearly in campaigns such as (RED) as it places perceived power in the hands of Western consumers and strips Africans of any agency or authority over their own communities.

In her research, ArCasia D. James-Gallaway examines white philanthropic support for Black education initiatives in the postbellum South. James-Gallaway suggests that white philanthropists will only support racial justice causes if there is some benefit in it for them (James-Gallaway, 2019). According to James-Gallaway, although white philanthropists have supported Black schools, they have done so under the pretense that they would maintain their power and authority (James-Gallaway, 2019). Black teachers and Black school officials are not given any more autonomy and white philanthropists continue to make gifts as long as they have control and decision-making power, particularly over curriculum and hiring. James-Gallaway argues that just because philanthropists are offering large investments, it does not mean that exchange necessarily helps further Black achievement and ultimately it perpetuates a racist and white supremacist society (James-Gallaway, 2019, p. 352). As long as white philanthropists continue to hold power over the Black education system, white supremacy will prevail. There is no racial justice without a power shift. Similar to how the (RED) campaign casts the narrative that Black bodies are the ones in need of saving, the dynamic that James-Gallaway discusses illustrates that white philanthropists are the ones that need to control Black education. James-Gallaway explains, “Even philanthropists with the best of intentions enacted a condescending, paternalistic form of engagement that demonstrated the low esteem they held for African Americans” (James-Gallaway, 2019, p. 358). The story we hear over and over is that Black teachers could not possibly know the needs of their Black students just as Black ‘Africans’ could not possibly survive without Western intervention.

In her post in *Nonprofit Quarterly*, “Hidden in Plain View: Philanthropy, Mission Statements, and White Supremacy”, Nikki Pieratos discusses how philanthropic organizations often put forth well-meaning mission statements and claim to want to invest in giving a voice to the community, but when it comes down to it, they are still rooted in white supremacy. She offers her recent experiences with the Clinton Foundation as one example of how philanthropy can say one thing publicly and do another. The Clinton Foundation wrongly made assumptions about her and her Indigenous organization and their authenticity (Pieratos, 2021). She asks for funders to be active listeners, approach communities with dignity and respect and redefine their role as a funder to partner, which empowers community-led organizations and avoids power imbalances. Pieratos explains, “there is a white-dominant mindset inside the field in terms of who is lifted up as experts, who is seen as credible, and who has capacity” (Pieratos,

2021). The Indigenous community is often the victim of the harshest marginalization, but that does not mean they are inferior. Rather, they know best how to enact social change in their communities and Pieratos calls for philanthropists to finally regard Indigenous communities as the experts that they are. Similarly, in her article in the Guardian titled “Yes, charities want to make an impact. But poverty porn is not the way to do it” Jennifer Lentfer explains that nonprofit organizations need to decentralize their role in the narrative they present (Lentfer, 2018). Our job within the nonprofit sector, Lentfer says, is to illustrate impact and tell stories without trivializing people's lives. She notes, “...non-profit organisations rarely highlight that they have a supportive role rather than a leading one. Instead, the equation too often presented to the public is that the organisation plus your money will equal the end of poverty” (Lentfer, 2018). Pieratos and Lentfer would agree that there is much more to the story than philanthropists’ intentions and the appearance of investments in nonprofit community programs.

Mission Drift, Movement Capture

In her research, Megan Ming Francis takes the impacts of white saviorism one step further as she cautions how donors and funders can use their privilege and power to engage in a process she calls ‘movement capture’ (Francis, 2019). In her piece titled “The Price of Civil Rights: Black Lives, White Funding, and Movement Capture”, she reveals how the NAACP began as an effort to protect Black lives from state-sanctioned violence and lynchings and eventually shifted to address issues related to segregated education. Francis highlights how NAACP activists caved to the demands of well-intentioned white donors who had opinions about the direction of the organization. Kelsey Piper reflects on this research and her conversations with Francis in her post on Vox, “‘I’m concerned that sometimes even with the best of intentions, the priorities of the poorest and marginalized get replaced by the priorities of the rich and powerful,’” Francis told me” (Piper, 2019). At the beginning of the twentieth century, NAACP established itself as the leader in the fight for civil rights and protection of Black lives from violence. At the time, the organization and community activists believed that ending violence was the top racial justice issue and needed to be tackled first in the pursuit of Black liberation. However, after 1930, and with a new partnership with The Garland Fund, the priorities shifted to segregated education and eventually economic empowerment. Charles Garland was a philanthropist interested in education who had first tried to refuse his inheritance, but eventually committed to giving it all away. The Garland Fund was established with the focus on “organized labor, education, and the protection of minorities” (Francis 2019, p. 285). The Garland Fund began with a firm stance on not dictating the agenda of grantees, but as Francis

explains, that eventually changed. Despite these shifts, there is no doubt that the education work of the NAACP was incredibly important and led to some of the most influential moments in the racial justice fight, including the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (Francis 2019, p. 300). However, Francis calls into question what the movement may have lost if it had not allowed The Garland Fund to proceed with ‘movement capture’. Violence against Black lives and state-sanctioned police brutality remains one of the most urgent and pressing issues today. Francis wonders what the movement would look like now if Black activists had been allowed to lead in the way they wanted and remained focused on their number one issue. Francis explains that donors with power and privilege too often believe that they have the answers and that they have a better idea of how to address problems. While the intentions of The Garland Fund were pure, the fund took on a leadership role in the organization and maintained influence and power. Too often, donors refuse to relinquish their power to the experts on the ground. As Hanchey might explain, The Garland Fund uses its whiteness and its privilege as qualifications to dictate the NAACP agenda.

While Francis does not specifically name white saviorism or hero narrative in her research, there are very clear parallels. Francis claims “It was the product of a black organization desperate for funding and a white philanthropy that exploited this resource disadvantage” (Francis 2019, p. 305). Similar to many cases of white saviorism, the intentions, in this case, are undoubtedly good in nature, “...domination or capture of black freedom dreams by white funders becomes reclassified as cooperation or collaboration in the production of civil rights history” (Francis 2019, p. 306). This does not change the fact that power and privilege set the agenda instead of the Black activists living in their truth every single day. Francis does add that her concept of movement capture does not only take place in a racialized context, but it is hard to ignore the ways in which white philanthropy so often dictates the direction of grassroots activists of color.

Effective Fundraising, Donor Motivations and Relationship-Based Fundraising

With an understanding of what the white savior narrative looks like and how it impacts philanthropy, the nonprofit sector and the communities we work in, we can begin to think about how to approach fundraising differently. Ultimately, organizations across the sector must ensure that they can still effectively generate the revenue they need in order to continue the important work that they do. A deeper look at what really inspires donors to give can help provide a roadmap for a new fundraising model that will tell a different story. If we want to, the nonprofit sector can completely abandon the white savior

mentality, the hero narrative and the damaging power imbalances within white-dominated philanthropy and still produce successful fundraising results. What would it look like if we could bring in just as much--if not more--money for our organizations, and do it with integrity, respect and authenticity? Do donors need to hold all the power or can we take some of that power back without threatening our bottom line?

A team of Stanford psychologists provides compelling evidence that suggests that language has a meaningful impact on the beneficiaries of philanthropic support, but perhaps not on the donors. Researchers Thomas, C. C., et al. found that when organizations use language that conveys dignity and diminishes shame, program recipients were more motivated and confident (Thomas, et al., 2020). In addition, the study found that philanthropists were equally motivated to give to causes that used empowerment language as causes that emphasized poverty and neediness. Thus, there is no reported impact on the motivations of the donors in this study and only positive impacts on the program recipients. In the first part of the study, 565 individuals living in low-income communities in Kenya were randomly assigned to hear one of three different messages about a cash transfer program. The first narrative focused on poverty alleviation, the second and third focused on empowerment through financial independence and community growth. The second part of the study asked participants questions that reinforced the messages they received in part one and then they were asked to watch a series of videos, two about business improvement skills and four for entertainment (Thomas, et al., 2020, p. 15548). Individuals who heard empowerment messages were more likely to select business skills videos and those who received poverty messages gravitated towards entertainment videos, which demonstrated the impact that messages had on their self-worth. Finally, in part three, the researchers surveyed 1,400 potential donors who received the same sort of messages as the participants and found that the wording, positive or negative, had no influence on how much they were willing to give (Thomas, et al., 2020, p. 15549). This study shows that nonprofit organizations can avoid using damaging language that shames program recipients while still continuing to raise the critical dollars needed to support the work. If donors are equally motivated to give, and empowerment language has a deeper impact on the program itself, there is absolutely no reason to use such disparaging language. This research is helpful in crafting the argument that fundraisers can and should be thoughtful about the language they use when talking to donors. The use of inclusive, equitable and dignity-focused language can only benefit programs and, according to Thomas et al., there is simply no evidence that it will negatively impact fundraising success.

Examining donor motivations can help further the argument that fundraisers do not need to rely on damaging narratives in order to raise funds. There has been a variety of studies in the field on why

donors give and what causes inspire them most. A survey of 3,000 donors conducted by Network For Good revealed the top seven reasons individuals support nonprofit organizations, “They’re mission driven, they trust your organization, they get to see the impact, they have a personal connection to your cause, they want to be part of something, you’ve caught their attention and they want tax benefits” (Saracini, 2020). A 2016 study conducted by Abila used survey responses from 1,136 donors across the United States, representing all age groups who made at least one donation to a nonprofit organization in the past 12 months (Dietz et al., 2016). The study took basic motivations for giving one step further and analyzed donor behaviors and attitudes. The Abila research shows that giving is deeply personal and the top reason donors choose to donate to an organization is that they are passionate about the cause. In addition, the study reflects that donors benefit from highly personalized communication and relationships with representatives at the organization. Abila also shows that another key motivator is rich, quality content (Dietz et al., 2016). Donors reported that vague, boring, impersonal content would cause them to lose interest in supporting the organization and 72% of respondents said that poor content would impact donations (Dietz et al., 2016). Two major themes from Abila’s 2016 research show that personalization and quality content are key motivators for donors.

Another study conducted by Cassandra M. Chapman, Barbara M. Masser and Winnifred R. Louis, explores how identity influences a donor’s inclination to support a specific cause and how it impacts a donor’s view of the importance of the cause (Chapman, et al., 2020). The authors note that much research has been done on why people make charitable donations in general, but this study seeks to understand why people support particular causes and support specific beneficiaries. The researchers used a mixed-method approach and analyzed open-ended survey responses from 1,849 individuals questioned about why their charity of choice was important to them. Chapman et al. divide the responses into two categories, ‘self’ and ‘other’. Donors indicated giving in relation to ‘self’, which included mentions of shared identities, values, beliefs and experiences and referenced ‘other’, which included beneficiary identities, power, importance and neediness (Chapman, et al., 2020 p. 1279). For example, the ‘self’ inclinations include statements such as “I, myself, am a veteran and have had friends who have been wounded in Afghanistan...” or “Because I was once a foster child and I understand the experience that kids entering the system have to go through” (Chapman, et al., 2020 p. 1281). Thus, some donors give to causes that they can relate to or have a personal understanding of. Examples of the ‘other’ inclinations include statements such as, “[Charity] help disadvantaged children to get the best out of education, by supporting them financially” or “Is one of the organizations in Honduras that really help, financially, to

people who need it” (Chapman, et al., 2020 p. 1285). These answers illustrate a desire to help the ‘other’ in need.

For the purpose of this research, I will focus on donor motivations related to ‘other’ as those responses are the most relevant in the context of understanding white saviorism. Chapman et al. identify four common themes within the ‘other’ category. The first theme is related to the identities of the beneficiaries. Whether the beneficiaries were inspired to support children, the poor, animals or any other identity in need, there was a clear inherent desire to help others. The donors did not feel the need to explain why they wanted to help others and the simplicity of their statements reflected a pure, well-intentioned desire to help. The second theme is power, and donors indicated an identified lack of power that beneficiaries hold describing them as, “vulnerable, helpless, disadvantaged, or unable to look after themselves” (Chapman, et al., 2020 p. 1284). The third theme is importance as donors noted that certain causes are important to support. Finally, the fourth theme is neediness, showing that donors are drawn to support beneficiaries in need. Chapman, et al. conclude that organizations need to better understand their donors’ identities in relation to their beneficiaries, “A key finding of the current research is that the underlying motives for giving—oriented towards helping some “other,” benefiting the “self,” or reflecting an important shared identity—depend on the charity in question. Past research has presented inventories of motives, but not all of these will be relevant to each particular nonprofit” (Chapman, et al., 2020 p. 1289). In other words, Chapman, et al. suggest that fundraisers should use their donors’ motivations in order to craft the most effective fundraising materials. Knowing a donor’s identity and what really moves them to support the cause will help build a case for support.

Perhaps the most influential reason donors support nonprofit organizations is because of skilled and effective relationship-based fundraising. Fundraising is not a simple transaction between donor and organization, rather it is a product of time, deeply personal stewardship and relationship building. Successful fundraising is a long-term process and is carefully crafted, thoughtful and authentic. In their chapter in *The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management*, Sarah K. Nathan and Eugene R. Tempel describe this process, “Fundraising needs to be understood as a cycle because of its ongoing, continuous nature. Supporting the fundraising cycle is a carefully designed plan...Organizations that have invested the time and energy in creating fundraising plans generally raise more money than those that have not (Nonprofit Research Collaborative, 2014)” (Nathan & Tempel, 2016, p. 493). Nathan and Tempel continue to explain that major gift fundraising, in particular, requires highly personalized stewardship and takes a significant amount of time to realize results. Effective fundraising requires

personal and direct one-on-one communication with donors. Once a donor makes a gift, the stewardship process following that gift is instrumental in ensuring that the donor will continue to give again and again. Thanking the donor, sharing updates from the organization and inviting the donor to events and other opportunities to engage further are all essential in the relationship-building process.

Really understanding donor motivations is essential in examining how fundraisers can connect to their donors without relying on white saviorism and the savior mentality. All of the above research points to the important theme that passion for the cause, identity and personal relationships lead to successful fundraising. Thus, I argue that fundraisers can continue to appeal to donors' passion and identities, continue to build meaningful relationships with donors and simultaneously use language that honors our beneficiaries with dignity and respect. Additionally, there is no research to suggest that inclusive and equitable language would ever deter a donor from supporting a cause. Even if our donors do evoke a white savior complex, as representatives of the organization, our mission and our beneficiaries, we do not need to emulate this damaging behavior. I challenge fundraisers to take ownership of the role that they play in white saviorism and consider guiding our donors on a path to dignity-focused philanthropy that centers the voice, leadership and expertise of the program beneficiaries and community.

Philanthropy's Power Dynamics

There is an innate power imbalance that exists in philanthropy. Inevitably, there are individuals who hold a tremendous amount of wealth and power in society, an organization in search of wealth to carry out its mission and program beneficiaries who are lacking power. In his book, *Helping: How to Offer, Give, and Receive Help*, author Edgar H. Schein offers a thought-provoking discussion on the dynamics of helping relationships (Schein 2009). Schein explains that sometimes help is not actually helping. If not executed properly, help can take away from the task at hand and Schein discusses the inequities that exist within the helping relationship. In order to address these imbalances, both parties need to be aware of their power in the situation (Schein 2009). Schein's analysis and discussion on helping is a useful tool when examining the power dynamics within philanthropy. Thus, philanthropists need to be aware of the power that they hold.

Schein notes that when someone is asked to be a helper, they immediately gain both status and power in that relationship (Schein, 2009, p. 73). Power imbalance creates tension and both should be dealt with in order for parties to have a productive relationship. If those anxieties are not dealt with, the relationship will be dysfunctional (Schein, 2009, p. 77). Schein explains, "...needing help and having to

ask for it creates an uncomfortable and anxious situation that will produce emotional responses. A helper unaware of these responses may react inappropriately and make it harder to build a balanced relationship in which roles are clear” (Schein, 2009, p. 84). Finally, Schein notes that the helper has the ability to decide how they want to provide help and that choice has a lasting impact on the recipient. According to Schein’s theories, in the context of philanthropy where the donor is the helper and the program beneficiary is the recipient of help, the imbalance of the relationship from the start needs to be addressed. The donor has the ability to be thoughtful, attentive and actively listen to the needs of the recipient. The donor should acknowledge the anxieties that may exist and use their own power to lift up the recipient. Schein explains this piece, “The first intervention must always be...humble inquiry, even if the inquiry is merely careful observation and listening... it is essential that the helper take a moment to think about what the client is actually asking...” (Schein, 2009, p. 125). This listening part is too often what is lacking in philanthropy. Donors will approach a situation claiming to have all of the answers and skip right over actually listening to the needs of the community. This can be seen clearly in the case of the NAACP as Francis explains the process of the organization shifting priorities to meet the demands of the donor. The donor failed to listen to what the organization deemed urgent at that time and used their power in the helping relationship to influence the NAACP to shift their priorities. Schein’s theories on the helping relationship emphasize active listening by the helper, which contributes to re-shifting inequities and power imbalances. In an inclusive, equitable and dignity-focused fundraising relationship, fundraisers can carefully guide donors (helpers) to relinquish some of their power and wholly listen to and understand the needs of our communities (recipients).

In her article in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, Anne Wallestad discusses the role of nonprofit boards, their power within the sector and calls for a move towards purpose-driven leadership (Wallestad, 2021). According to Wallestad, boards have collective power in nonprofit organizations; however, many are misguided in their focus and priorities. Referencing a study of more than 800 public charity CEOs and board chairs conducted by BoardSource, Wallestad reveals that--among other issues--boards are largely “disconnected from the communities and people they serve” and “ill-informed about the ecosystems in which their organization is operating” (Wallestad, 2021). Wallestad describes boards that are disconnected from the community, have an absence of knowledge, are focused solely on fundraising and lack racial and ethnic diversity (Wallestad, 2021). All these factors contribute to a savior-like exchange instead of a more purposeful and thoughtful philanthropic approach.

Wallestad offers ways for boards to make changes and ultimately more effectively honor the work and social missions. Instead of being mission-driven, Wallestad suggests that boards need to be purpose-driven, which centers the fundamental reason the organization exists instead of the organization's specific mission (Wallestad, 2021). While a traditional board might ask, "What is best for our organization?" a purpose-driven board will ask "What is best for the desired social outcome we seek?" (Wallestad, 2021). Boards also need to understand how their organization fits within the broader context, which often includes many organizations working towards one outcome, "If a decision is good for the organization but bad for the ecosystem, the purpose-driven board pauses and considers a different path" (Wallestad, 2021). In addition, boards must view their work through an equity lens and Wallestad explains how a lack of equity focus can lead to "flawed strategies and a damaging effect on programmatic participants and the community as a whole" (Wallestad, 2021). If boards are not thinking about equity, they threaten adversely impacting the communities they are seeking to serve. Finally, Wallestad reflects on the importance of power and listening to the communities, "It is not enough to have good intentions or be well-informed; boards have a responsibility to engage directly with those they seek to serve in a way that ensures that organizational decisions are made within the context of real understanding of community assets, needs, preferences, and aspirations" (Wallestad, 2021). As Schein points out, listening is absolutely imperative in power dynamics. In order for organizations to facilitate a more equitable exchange with donors, fundraisers must guide supporters to participate by actively listening--and that includes board members.

Defining Inclusive and Equitable Language

With the understanding that perpetuating the white savior narrative is damaging to the nonprofit sector, I will now offer a discussion on the best ways to talk about communities and programs, in part by using inclusive and equitable language. Racial Equity Tools is a web resource produced to offer tools, research, curricula and ideas for people and organizations committed to anti-racism (Racial Equity Tools, 2020). Ibram X. Kendi's definition of anti-racism is helpful in understanding the importance of language as he explains, "An anti-racist is someone who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing antiracist ideas. This includes the expression of ideas that racial groups are equals and do not need developing, and supporting policies that reduce racial inequity" (Racial Equity Tools, 2020). Thus, according to Kendi, anti-racism is active participation and not passive. It is essential in the fight for racial justice and central to eliminating white supremacy. In the context of the nonprofit sector, an anti-racist

approach to fundraising language would view our beneficiaries not as vulnerable communities that need our expertise in their development, but rather view our work with the idea that philanthropy exists to reduce racial inequity. This type of fundraising would require a shift in power dynamics, which I will address in more detail later.

Racial Equity Tools offers a glossary of terms that is helpful in defining agreed-upon definitions related to the pursuit of racial equity (Racial Equity Tools, 2020). The Racial Equity Tools Glossary notes that there is often little consensus on commonly used terms, which can create confusion, hostility and controversy. An agreed-upon list of definitions can help with productive dialogue and understanding on race, race relations, racial equity and other race issues. This glossary aims to provide some guidance on how to talk about racial equity. The Racial Equity Tools page affirms, “Language can be used deliberately to engage and support community anti-racism coalitions and initiatives, or to inflame and divide them. Discussing definitions can engage and support coalitions” (Racial Equity Tools, 2020). Language and word choice matter and can often harbor deep emotions and can have different meanings according to who the intended audience is. Finally, Racial Equity Tools offers a collection of resources on how to communicate racial justice work and how to tell stories without perpetuating inequities.

In a Rainier Valley Corps (RVC) blog post by Abesha Shiferaw, she discusses how to tell stories without exploitation (Shiferaw, 2018). RVC is a Seattle-based nonprofit organization that “promotes social justice by cultivating leaders of color, strengthening organizations led by communities of color, and fostering collaboration between diverse communities” (RVC, 2020). The use of storytelling is essential in our donor communications, but the ways in which we tell those stories are important. The blog post titled “How to Tell Compelling Stories While Avoiding Savior Complex and Exploitation”, offers a checklist of questions to ask when writing about or sharing stories of the people we represent in the nonprofit sector (Shiferaw, 2018). Shiferaw reflects on how the sector has a long history of exploiting the communities that they serve, particularly communities of color, in an effort to secure funding and appeal to donors’ emotions. She states that when telling stories we must highlight the “strengths, liberation, and self-determination of our communities” (Shiferaw, 2018). I have included Shiferaw’s full list of questions and considerations below in an adapted table format. I have kept her words and bolding fully intact in order to maintain the integrity of her thoughts and suggestions:

Table 1

“How to tell compelling stories while avoiding savior complex and exploitation”

Think about how your own story (identity) or parts of your story show up in the story you are trying to share. What are the stories and identities you embrace and own? What are the stories and identities that are placed on you? What are those shared stories and experiences?
Is this the story that you , as the facilitator of the story, should be telling or can someone else? Are you connected, part of, or a member of this individual’s community? This, especially, is a critical question for white folks telling stories of people and communities of color, able-body people telling the stories of people with disabilities, cis-gender people speaking for and telling stories about trans folks, etc.
Assess whether the person whose story you’re trying to share is prepared to share their story. If yes, ask for their consent to share. If no, are they open or want to share? If there is openness then how are you providing the technical and emotional support in allowing them to tell their own story?
Is their consent informed? Do they know how and where the story will be used? What content is included? Do they agree with the way you’re sharing how your services have impacted them? Are they able to approve changes and edits? If necessary, do you have written informed consent ?
Ask yourself if you’re sharing their story with dignity, nuance, and with their humanity intact. Are you oversimplifying or over-sensationalizing their story? Are you prioritizing the voice of the person whose story and experience is being shared over that of the audience or the funders?
How can you tell the impact of your organization without exploiting the stories of the individual participants and perpetuating existing narratives about vulnerable or marginalized people and communities?
Are you fighting stereotypes and myths or contributing to it? Are you pathologizing them or have you provided sufficient socio-historical and political context?
Have you considered who this story helps by telling it?
By telling this story are you showing your organization as a savior ?
Have a process for those that have told their story to have the agency to retract consent/permission . This means if you’ve used their story then they can take back their permission and consent to no longer share or highlight their story.
Lastly, considering putting your money behind your values and convictions and offer to compensate people for their stories. Even if they’re receiving services from your organization. The stories you’re telling are directly connected to financial benefits for organizations. It’s only right those same funds benefit them as well.

(Shiferaw, 2018)

Shiferaw's guide provides nonprofit professionals and fundraisers with the questions necessary to ensure that we are not exploiting our beneficiaries while talking about our work. This is an essential step in moving away from white savior fundraising and giving agency and power back to the communities that we represent. This type of storytelling will honor those individuals with dignity and will avoid diminishing or eliminating their voice.

The DC Fiscal Policy Institute (DCFPI) Style Guide for Inclusive Language is another helpful resource for individuals to learn how to implement a racial equity lens in writing. The guide offers eight key principles central to inclusive writing. The first principle is to use people-first language, which centers on personhood and places any social conditions as secondary. For example, using the term 'people facing homelessness' instead of 'homeless people' helps to humanize the individual and minimizes generalizations and stigmas. People-centered language can also help nonprofit professionals portray dignity when talking about our program beneficiaries. The DCFPI's second principle is to use empowering language, particularly when addressing poverty. The guide recommends using an agency lens instead of describing people as helpless, "We should always maintain affected people as the agents in their own story, and should not be positioning ourselves, as advocates and nonprofit employees, as saviors for people living in poverty" (DC Fiscal Policy Institute, 2017). Thus, in order to be truly inclusive and address racial inequities, we need to view our program beneficiaries as leaders in their pursuit of justice. DCFPI also emphasizes self-identification and suggests that as nonprofit professionals we avoid labeling others and give space for individuals to self-identify. The fourth principle is to use proper nouns whenever possible, which shows respect and honor. We should avoid using 'they' or 'them', which can show disrespect and be vague. DCFPI explains that using an active voice instead of a passive voice when writing about program beneficiaries can help communicate agency while also avoiding implicit biases. The sixth principle addresses poverty and social justice specifically and explains that nonprofit professionals should focus on how "barriers impede people's efforts to thrive" and not that individuals lack any will or power (DC Fiscal Policy Institute, 2017). Next, DCFPI explains that we should specifically name race and ethnicity in order to actually address root causes and systemic racism. DCFPI shares a helpful example in how naming race and ethnicity in our writing can show systemic issues, "For instance: instead of 'Incomes in the Fakeville fell by an average of 3 percent' try 'Black incomes fell by an average of 12 percent, Latinx incomes by 4 percent, while white incomes rose by 13 percent.' This reflects decades of racist hiring practices" (DC Fiscal Policy Institute, 2017). Finally, the last principle addresses how to use photos and explains that nonprofits should find a balance between

intentionally including communities of color and also being conscious about not reinforcing stereotypes or equating poverty with people of color. We should be thinking about showing people of color in leadership roles and positions of authority and not blindly reinforcing poverty imagery. The guide continues to offer several other helpful examples of how to write inclusively when talking about issues related to race, education, disability, gender, sex and more. Following these eight principles can help fundraisers facilitate conversations with donors that do not perpetuate saviorism and contribute to our effort to place power and agency with our program beneficiaries.

Centering the Community in Fundraising

The movement towards Community-Centric Fundraising was inspired by the need for fundraisers of color and white allies frustrated by traditional fundraising models to convene and strive for a new way to support the sector (Community-Centric Fundraising, 2020). This movement towards centering the community in fundraising strategy is a collective of organizations and individuals seeking to reduce harm to communities and pursue social justice. Community-Centric Fundraising identifies as “a fundraising model that is grounded in equity and social justice. We prioritize the entire community over individual organizations, foster a sense of belonging and interdependence, present our work not as individual transactions but holistically, and encourage mutual support between nonprofits” (Community-Centric Fundraising, 2020). Conversely, the traditional donor-centric approach gives power to donors and philanthropists and allows them to dictate how they wish to provide support. Vu Le, a writer, speaker and former Executive Director of RVC, has published numerous posts on his well-known blog, Nonprofit AF. Le is known for his blunt and honest perspectives on fundraising and philanthropy and in a recent post titled “White supremacy and the problem with centering donors’ interests and emotions” he explains “if we’re going to advance equity and justice, we need to care LESS about what donors care about and care MORE about what will actually advance equity and justice (Le, 2021). Vu believes that if we constantly appeal to what donors want, what appeals to their emotions and what pulls at their heartstrings, we will likely be missing the actual systemic change that needs to take place in order to advance our missions. By doing this, and telling our donors that they are ‘making a difference’ we allow them to avoid confronting the role that they play in advancing white supremacy despite their good intentions. Vu brilliantly illustrates this fundamental issue with a metaphor:

Imagine we’re in a boat that’s rapidly sinking. We need to work together to bail out the water, fix the leaks, and get everyone into life jackets. Now imagine there are passengers who want to help.

They mean well; they're just not used to handling buckets or duct tape or whatever. You go to one and he says, "Hi, I know you need someone on bucket duty, but that's not what I'm passionate about. My passion is to send flare signals!" (Nevermind that flares have already been sent). Another says, "I don't mind bailing out the water, but metal buckets make me feel warm and fuzzy because they remind me of my childhood growing up on a farm. You only have plastic ones; I'm going to sit this one out (Le, 2021).

Similar to Hanchey's observations in her research with volunteers in Tanzania, Vu agrees that many believe that having wealth automatically qualifies you to be an expert in any particular field (Le, 2021). Finally, Vu makes an important point about the role that fundraisers play, "We train donors to think they should unilaterally get to decide where, when, and how they should spend money, based on their interests and what's emotionally relevant to them, not what would be most just and beneficial to society as a whole" (Le, 2021). He explicitly references the fact that fundraisers continue to appease this narrative, play into it and ultimately use it to generate revenue. Fundraisers are not bystanders in the sinking boat as Vu describes. We are enablers and we are part of it.

In their research, Rachel Wells and Theresa Anasti explore the unique role of hybrid community-based organizations within the social sector, which they define as organizations focused on both services and advocacy initiatives (Wells & Anasti, 2020). These organizations are grassroots and are fully committed to the community, their relationships with community members and advocating for the specific needs of the community. According to Wells and Anasti, it may be more difficult to access funding or generate substantial revenue, but grassroots organizations have a unique identity as experts in the social justice field (Wells & Anasti, 2020). Their qualitative study was focused on understanding the distinct characteristics of hybrid community-based organizations and examined 23 interviews with primarily nonprofit executive directors or senior-level staff, two foundation staff and one staff member for a local government office (Wells & Anasti, 2020, p. 1137). All respondents were current employees of a single neighborhood in a large West Coast city that is predominantly Latinx and with a history of hosting immigrant communities. The grassroots organizations referenced in the study are focused on empowering local communities to be their own advocates and leaders in social justice work. Wells and Anasti explain "We found evidence that there is a specific group of nonprofits that are considered to be grassroots or community based by their peers, and this organizational category, which is parallel to being a hybrid service-organizing organization, carries with it a highly respected status" (Wells & Anasti, 2020, p. 1146). The researchers conclude that these grassroots organizations have very strong connections to the

community and are highly trusted resources for community members. This provides legitimacy to their work and because the community trusts them so deeply, they are able to accomplish goals in partnership with community leaders and effectively advocate for policy change. While funding might be more difficult to secure, a grassroots approach to social change involves the community at every level and promotes the needs of the community.

In his book *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance*, Edgar Villanueva discusses the ways in which colonization impacts philanthropy and other financial institutions (Villanueva, 2018). Drawing upon his own experience as a philanthropist and inspired by his Native American traditions, he suggests several ways that philanthropy can move away from a colonized approach. Villanueva suggests “Seven Steps to Healing”, which he explains is necessary in order to move past the trauma of colonization (Villanueva, 2018, p. 9). The seven steps include grieve, apologize, listen, relate, represent, invest and repair and he explains that these steps are not necessarily linear or comprehensive (Villanueva, 2018, p. 9-10). Before anyone can move forward with a new approach to philanthropy, there needs to be some healing from the loss of lives, culture, land, etc. that colonization took. Next, there needs to be acknowledgment, “Apologizing requires that white people of wealth snap out of their paralyzing white fragility and guilt, and just step up. It requires that people of color and Indigenous people dismantle their internalized oppression and admit that they too were infected by the colonizer virus” (Villanueva, 2018, p. 121). He clarifies that apologizing does not excuse or entitle forgiveness, but it is a necessary step in moving forward. Echoing Schein’s theories, Villanueva explains that funders need to actively, openly, empathetically and holistically listen to the needs of communities (Villanueva, 2018, p. 132). Villanueva calls this process ‘listening in color’ and notes that listeners need to hold back any personal convulsions, opinions and judgments. The fourth step involves an emphasis on meaningful relationship building and the fifth step addresses the need for funders to have deep knowledge and proximity to the community, which means living in and experiencing that community. The sixth step is centered around making mission-related investments, “...there needs to be total transparency around where our assets are invested and those assets must be 100 percent mission-aligned, meaning not just do-no-harm but invested in decolonization, in order to heal divides and restore balance” (Villanueva, 2018, p. 157). This mirrors Wallestad’s recommendations for nonprofit boards to incorporate the overall social mission into every element of decision-making. Finally, Villanueva’s seventh step is reparations. Reparations, Villanueva argues, are the most powerful tool in decolonizing philanthropy and healing communities, “Reparations are the ultimate way to build power in communities... The institutions of

philanthropy and finance can take a giant leap forward and make a commitment, leading the way for government to finally follow suit” (Villanueva, 2018, p. 166). Not only should philanthropy properly address reparations, but the sector could also actually be an influential trailblazer for all other sectors to follow. Villanueva’s seven suggested steps to decolonization allow individuals and institutions to properly confront white supremacy and the white savior narrative and provide a roadmap for better philanthropy, which tilts the power scale and truly centers the needs of the community.

Armando Enrique Zumaya provides a compelling argument for the importance of nonprofit organizations investing in inclusive fundraising as part of their efforts to decolonize philanthropy. In his article “To Achieve Racial Justice in Philanthropy, We Must Invest in Fundraising and Make It Inclusive” in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, Zumaya explains that fundraisers play an important role in the process and most philanthropy is due to the hard work of fundraising and development professionals (Zumaya, 2021). Not only do we need to invest in this process, but we also need to prioritize appealing to a diverse donor audience and celebrate gifts of any size. Finally, Zumaya reflects on the importance of investing specifically in a diverse major gifts program. There is a lot of literature and resources available for nonprofit organizations to diversify their donor pipeline and build a culture of inclusive philanthropy. For the purpose of this research, I will not focus on the tactical ways in which to do that work but rather emphasize the importance of prioritizing this effort in order to eventually eliminate white saviorism in the sector. If our organizations are not solely run by the white and wealthy, it will be a lot easier for us to understand and listen to the multitude of needs in our beneficiary communities.

The NDN Collective

To conclude the literature review section of this research, I will now highlight an organization that exemplifies dignity-focused nonprofit work, places the power in the hands of community members and centers the needs, self-determination and ingenuity of the community. The NDN Collective is “an Indigenous-led organization dedicated to building Indigenous power. Through organizing, activism, philanthropy, grantmaking, capacity-building and narrative change, we are creating sustainable solutions on Indigenous terms” (The NDN Collective, 2021). In her piece “Building Indigenous Power in Philanthropy” in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, NDN Foundation Managing Director Gaby Strong (Sisseton-Wahpeton-Mdewakanton Dakota) recounts her previous experiences in philanthropy and her current role at NDN Collective (Strong, 2021). Strong’s discussion provides a helpful context in understanding what centering the community can look like for fundraising.

Strong discusses the problematic implications of outsider philanthropists setting the agenda for social change with the Indigenous communities (Strong, 2021). The lack of decision-making power and the glaring power imbalances that exist in the relationships between the Indigenous community and philanthropy is an example of institutional and structural racism. She explains that nonprofits may prioritize DEI and seek to diversify leadership and board of directors, but Strong argues that when it comes down to it, they refuse to actually give power to Indigenous communities to lead their own social change and Indigenous-led organizations remain extremely underfunded (Strong, 2021). The relationship between whites and Indigenous communities is particularly complex due to the historical context of which whites in America have become powerful on the backs of Indigenous communities. Strong states, “While allies and advisors are important in our work, it’s more important to support and develop our own Indigenous power, leadership, and decision-making. If we don’t do so, the danger is that the organizations and efforts we’ve worked hard to build over time will simply become mirrors or extensions of the very systems we want to change.” (Strong, 2021). Indigenous communities need the ability to realize their own change and the NDN Collective is committed to that mission. NDN Collective amplifies the voices of Indigenous individuals and communities through storytelling. NDN Collective explains that storytelling is a central component of the organizing and advocacy work and uses Indigenous voices to further social movements, disrupt false narratives and build Indigenous power (The NDN Collective, 2021).

The NDN Collective’s grantmaking effort is focused on three core principles: defend, develop and decolonize (Strong, 2021). Strong explains that the organization is committed to defending Indigenous communities from negative resource extraction and threats to natural resources, climate change and human rights. It is investing in developing Indigenous communities’ growth and potential and focused on regenerative community development, renewable energy investments, and social enterprise development. Finally, the NDN Collective is decolonizing and strengthening culture, language, ceremonies and overall Indigenous identities (Strong, 2021). Strong explains that the grantmaking approach is “based on reciprocity and mutual aid, which may include thought partnership and capacity-building resources. The relationship is at the core of this approach, encouraging systemic change in which the people most affected take responsibility for one another” (Strong, 2021). Like much of the literature on community-based philanthropy, what NDN Collective does is actively listen to the needs of the community and deploy resources to further those specific goals.

In addition to grantmaking, the NDN Collective also has a lending and impact investing arm, the NDN Fund, which is its own 501(c)3 organization. The NDN Fund is a Native Community Development

Financial Institution (CDFI) that provides debt financing and capacity building services. The primary clients of the fund are “Native Nations, tribal enterprises, Native non-profits and organizations, and Native-owned businesses” (The NDN Collective, 2021). The fund is also committed to Indigenous economic development and provides seed funding for emerging innovative social enterprises through a program called Social Enterprise & Economic Development for Indigenous Growth (The NDN Collective, 2021). NDN Fund supports projects and initiatives from start to finish and ensures that justice and equity are central to each partnership. What Strong describes as well as the organizations’ holistic approach to community development is inclusive, equitable, dignity-focused community-based philanthropy and economic development that truly honors Indigenous communities.

Section 3. Methods and Approaches

The purpose of this research is to better understand how using inclusive, equitable and dignity-focused fundraising language can ultimately contribute to dismantling philanthropy's white savior narrative and how frontline fundraisers can play a critical role in shifting philanthropy's power dynamics.

- **Research Question 1:** Can nonprofit fundraising teams thoughtfully abandon notions of white saviorism and fully embrace inclusive, equitable and dignity-focused language without compromising revenue or relationships, or even grow revenue and improve relationships?
- **Research Question 2:** How does fundraising language impact donors' affinity for programs and services and their understanding of their role in the giver/recipient relationship or partnership?

I used a qualitative approach to collect the data for this research. In addition to the above literature review, I conducted a content analysis as well as seven interviews in order to gain a deeper understanding on how fundraising language impacts donors' perceptions of nonprofit organization's programs and beneficiaries. As a frontline major gifts fundraiser with over ten years of experience in nonprofit development, I leaned on my own professional knowledge and fundraising expertise to guide my approach to data collection. I chose a collection of annual reports as the subject of my content analysis because they are an easily accessible, readily available and standard resource used by most nonprofit organizations across the sector. Annual reports are also used to demonstrate mission, vision and values. The interviewees I selected represent a variety of nonprofit organizations and positions and have different relationships with fundraising and philanthropy. Each offers a different set of experiences and opinions.

In order to further standardize the annual report content and narrow in on one element of a lengthy report, I chose to focus on the leadership letter. This is typically where the organization is able to make a statement about its identity and values and offers a reflection on its work over the past year. The below content analysis looks at 20 annual report leadership letters from 20 U.S.-based 501(c)3 nonprofit social sector organizations focused on issues related to equity, social justice or human rights. At least three organizations also have 501(c)4 partner entities that engage in lobbying and political action on behalf of its partner; however, my focus was on the foundation. While most organizations do include some type of statement from a leadership representative in the annual report, two organizations I originally selected did not have any statement or letter from leadership in their reports so I found replacement organizations. These two organizations are DonorsChoose.org and Charity : Water, which I

replaced with Habitat for Humanity International and The Trevor Project. See below for a full list of the 20 organizations analyzed.

I conducted seven semi-structured interviews with individuals connected to nonprofit organizations, fundraising or philanthropy in order to hear directly from experts in the field. Using my own network and the networks of colleagues, I used a purposive sampling method as I carefully selected the seven individuals. In order to get a balanced sample, I spoke with a variety of nonprofit professionals with expertise in fundraising, philanthropy and diversity, equity and inclusion as well as board members and donors. I planned to ask each interviewee subject a set of similar questions, but followed the conversation naturally and let each individual lead the conversation with what they felt comfortable sharing. Below are summaries from each interview, which include a synopsis of the conversation and my notes. Some identities are kept confidential in order to maintain anonymity for that particular individual or organization.

Section 4. Data Analysis: Content Analysis & Interviews

Content Analysis

The objective of this content analysis is to uncover common themes across 20 annual report leadership letters from 20 U.S.-based 501(c)3 nonprofit social sector organizations focused on issues related to equity, social justice or human rights. Each annual report selected is the most recent publicly available report on the organization's website. The analysis examines position in the report, leadership representative signing the letter, and details of the text, including overall tone, messages of either hope or despair, hints of people-centered, inclusive, equitable or dignity-focused language and mentions of philanthropic support, calls to action and advocacy. Below I will discuss key findings and notable results that stood out to me and that I deem most relevant to the above-stated purpose and research questions. For the full codebook, including all 22 questions and a detailed guide to answers for each content analysis question, see Appendix A. For the full results of the content analysis, including my notes and observations, see Appendix B. The following are the 20 annual reports used for analysis. Organizations are listed in no particular order of importance or significance:

1. [UNICEF USA](#)
2. [St. Anthony Foundation](#)
3. [ACLU Foundation](#)
4. [Sierra Club Foundation](#)
5. [American Jewish World Service](#)
6. [NAACP Legal Defense Fund](#)
7. [Larkin Street Youth Services](#)
8. [San Francisco-Marin Food Bank](#)
9. [Habitat for Humanity International](#)
10. [Care International](#)
11. [San Francisco CASA](#)
12. [Trevor Project](#)
13. [Planned Parenthood Federation of America](#)
14. [International Rescue Committee](#)
15. [Human Rights Watch](#)

16. [Human Rights Campaign Foundation](#)
17. [Girls Who Code](#)
18. [Back On My Feet](#)
19. [Hamilton Families San Francisco](#)
20. [Kiva](#)

Content Analysis Key Findings

Leadership Identity

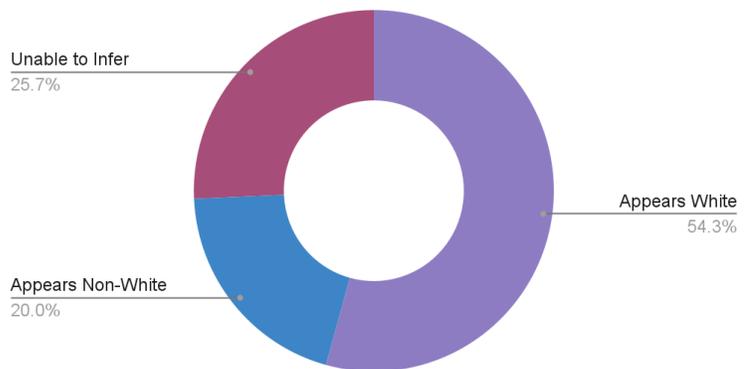
The leadership letters are signed by a representative of the organization, which may be the CEO or Executive Director or the President or Chair of the Board of Directors. Many of the letters are signed by multiple leadership individuals. The majority of letters include a headshot or image of the leadership signer or signers.

There are 35 total leadership signers

across the 20 letters examined. 19 of the 35 signers appear white, seven appear non-white and racial identity is unavailable or unclear for the remaining nine¹. Most notably, only seven, or 20% of the total leadership individuals represented, appear non-white and appear as either Asian, South Asian, Black and Latinx. Given the diversity of racial and ethnic identities of the program beneficiaries and communities that these organizations support, this stark lack of diversity stands out. In the 20 annual report leadership letters, predominantly white individuals in leadership positions are the ones speaking on behalf of the organization. See Table 2 below for a summarized list of leadership individuals that signed each letter, whether a headshot or image is included on the page and the racial or ethnic identity as available. For a

Figure 1

Leadership Racial/Ethnic Identity



¹ It is important to note that I made some assumptions about racial and/or ethnic identity based on the images included on the letters and my assumptions may or may not be one hundred percent accurate.

more detailed report of the leadership individuals included in the full results of the content analysis, see Appendix B.

Table 2

Organization Name and Identity of Letter Signer

Organization Name	Who is the signer of the leadership letter? Can racial/ethnic identity be identified from the letter?
UNICEF USA	-President & CEO -no headshot; no racial/ethnic identity shown
St. Anthony Foundation	-Executive Director -headshot included; may be Latinx
ACLU Foundation	-one letter from President -headshot included; appears white -one letter from Executive Director -headshot included; appears white
Sierra Club Foundation	-one letter signed by Board Chair and Executive Director -both headshots included; both appear Asian
AJWS	-one letter signed by President & CEO and Chair of the Board of Trustees -both headshots included; both appear white
NAACP Legal Defense Fund	-one letter signed by two chairs of the board -both headshots included; one appears Black and one appears white
Larkin Street Youth Services	-one letter signed by Board President and Executive Director -both headshots included; both appear white
San Francisco-Marín Food Bank	-one letter signed by Executive Director -headshot included; appears white
Habitat for Humanity International	-one letter signed by Chair of the Board of Directors and CEO -no headshot; no racial/ethnic identity shown
Care International	-one letter signed by Secretary General -headshot included; appears white
San Francisco CASA	-one letter signed by the Chair of the Board of Directors and Interim Executive Director -both headshots included; both appear white
The Trevor Project	-one letter signed by Chair of the Board of Directors and CEO &

	<p>Executive Director</p> <p>-both headshots included; one appears Latinx and one appears white</p>
Planned Parenthood Federation of America	<p>-one letter signed by President and Board Chair</p> <p>-both headshots included; one appears white, the other unclear</p> <p>-'Meet Alexis' - adjacent to the letter on the second page: an intro /brief bio for new President</p>
International Rescue Committee	<p>-one letter signed by 4 individuals, Co-Chair of the IRC Board of Directors, Co-Chair of the IRC Board of Directors, Chair of the IRC Board of Advisors and President & CEO</p> <p>-all four headshots are included; three appear white, one is unclear</p>
Human Rights Watch	<p>-one letter signed by 3 individuals, 2 Board Chairs, and Executive Director</p> <p>-3 headshots not included; no racial/ethnic identity shown</p> <p>-one letter signed by Executive Director of US Program</p> <p>- headshot included; appears Black</p>
The HRC Foundation	<p>-one letter signed by Chief Operating Officer & Chief of Staff -</p> <p>headshot included; appears white</p>
Girls Who Code	<p>-one letter signed by Founder & CEO</p> <p>-two pictures included; appears to be South Asian</p>
Back On My Feet	<p>-one letter signed by CEO</p> <p>-no headshot but another photo included; appears white</p> <p>-page also includes bio of CEO</p>
Hamilton Families San Francisco	<p>-one letter signed by CEO</p> <p>-headshot included; identity unclear</p>
Kiva	<p>-one letter signed by CEO</p> <p>-headshot included; appears white</p>

Figure 2
Overall Tone

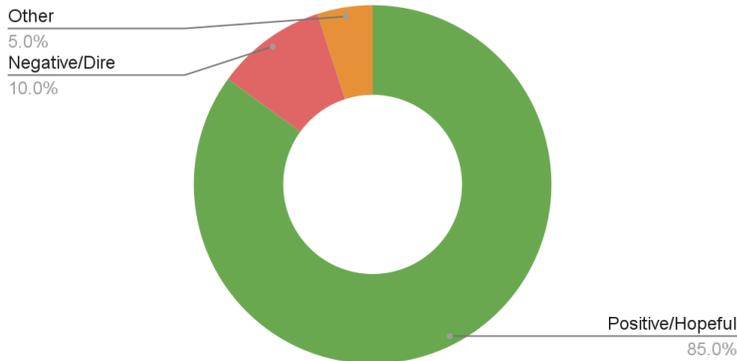


Figure 3
View of State of The World



Tone & General Picture of the State of the World

The overall tone of the leadership letters is mostly positive and includes messages of hope and pride for the work the organization is able to accomplish. Many letters reference a variety of global and local challenges, particularly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but discuss the ways in which the organization has been able to overcome and succeed. Some credit supporters or significant philanthropic gifts for their success, others reference leadership or staff and some speak to the strength and resilience of their community. Despite the overall positive tone, three-quarters of the letters paint an overwhelmingly negative picture of

the state of the world. They reference the widespread despair caused by the pandemic, racial injustices, policy initiatives and political figures that hurt the communities they serve, an increase in violence and humanitarian conflict, climate change and other global issues. The leadership representatives describe a bleak and desperate picture but offer their organization as a beacon of hope. See Table 3 below for a summary of the list of descriptions of tone and state of the world. In the table below, green indicates positive, red indicates negative and orange indicates a mix. For a more detailed report of the overall tone and view of the state of the world, including additional notes and explanations included in the full results of the content analysis see Appendix B.

Table 3*Organization Name and Tone and View of State of The World*

Organization Name	What is the overall tone of the letter?	Does the letter paint a generally positive or generally negative picture of the state of the world?
UNICEF USA	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally negative
St. Anthony Foundation	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally negative
ACLU Foundation	-first letter is positive/hopeful -second letter is negative/dire	-Generally negative
Sierra Club Foundation	-Overall positive/hopeful	-Generally negative
AJWS	-Negative/dire	-Generally negative
NAACP Legal Defense Fund	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally negative
Larkin Street Youth Services	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally negative
San Francisco-Marin Food Bank	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally negative
Habitat for Humanity International	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally positive
Care International	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally positive
San Francisco CASA	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally negative
The Trevor Project	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally negative
Planned Parenthood Federation of America	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally negative
International Rescue Committee	-Negative/dire	-Generally negative
Human Rights Watch	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally negative
The HRC Foundation	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally negative
Girls Who Code	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally positive
Back On My Feet	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally positive

Hamilton Families San Francisco	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally positive
Kiva	-Positive/hopeful	-Generally negative

Figure 4
Mention of Equity

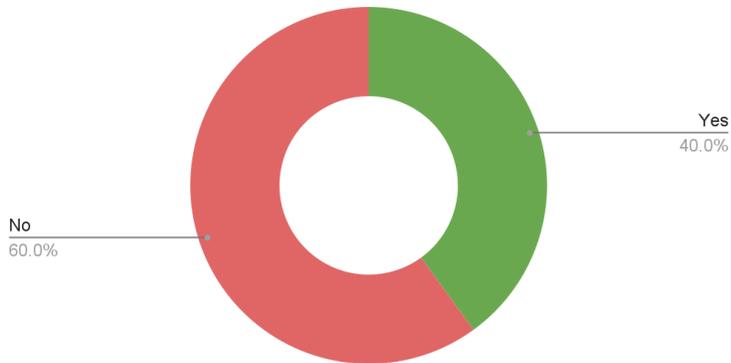


Figure 5
Reference to Dignity/Honor



Equity, Dignity & Description of Beneficiaries

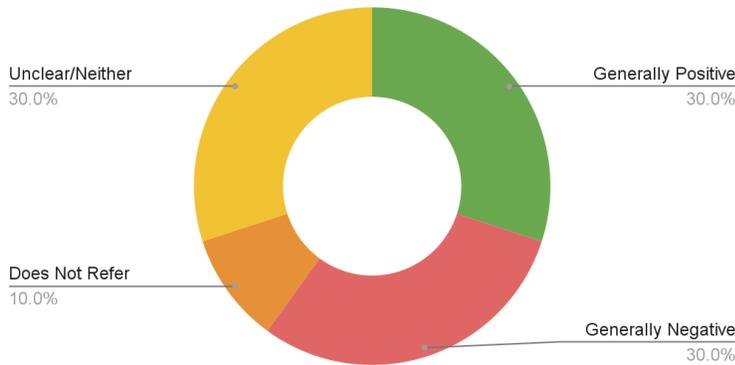
I searched each letter for an explicit mention of ‘equity’, ‘equitable’ or some variation of the word in order to examine how leadership representatives have chosen to prioritize this key concept either within the organization’s mandate or within the organization itself.

Notably, the majority of letters do not reference equity anywhere within the text despite being social sector organizations focused on issues related to equity, social justice or human rights. While the annual reports may discuss equity in other sections of the text, 12 of the 20 leadership letters examined in this content analysis fail to explicitly mention it at all.

In order to better understand how leadership representatives

choose to describe program beneficiaries, I searched for a mention of dignity or honor in relation to the communities the organization serves. The words ‘dignity’ or ‘honor’ did not need to be explicit, but I looked for some reference to those concepts. I also examined how program beneficiaries are described, either generally positive or generally negative. A generally positive description portrays beneficiaries as

Figure 6
Description of Beneficiaries



inspiring, honorable, resilient or strong or references their agency, leadership or survivorship. A generally negative description would portray a vulnerable, needy or reliant community and portrays the organization or organization’s staff as saviors. Most letters have no mention of dignity or honor in relation to program beneficiaries or the community.

Only six of the 20 letters describe program beneficiaries in a generally positive light, which I found quite significant. Seven letters describe program beneficiaries generally negative often referencing neediness, two did not have any description or reference whatsoever of program beneficiaries or the community, and five were either mixed, unclear or neither positive nor negative. See Table 4 below for a summary of the list of equity, dignity and descriptions of program beneficiaries. In the table below, green indicates a positive or yes answer, red indicates a negative or no answer and orange/yellow is missing information or unable to infer. For a detailed list of descriptions and notes included in the full results of the content analysis, see Appendix B.

Table 4
Organization Name and Mention of Equity, Dignity and Description of Beneficiaries

Organization Name	Does the letter mention 'equity' or 'equitable'?	Does the letter reference dignity or appear to honor beneficiaries?	How does the leadership letter describe the program recipients/beneficiaries?
UNICEF USA	-Yes mention of equity	-Yes dignity/honor	-Generally positive
St. Anthony Foundation	-No mention of equity	-Yes dignity/honor	-Generally positive
ACLU Foundation	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-no description of program beneficiaries

Sierra Club Foundation	-Yes mentions of equity	-Yes dignity/honor	-Generally positive
AJWS	-Yes mention of equity	-Yes dignity/honor	-Generally positive -Mentions courage of activists and power of social movements
NAACP Legal Defense Fund	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-no description of program beneficiaries
Larkin Street Youth Services	-Yes mention of inequity	-No dignity/honor	-Generally positive
San Francisco-Marin Food Bank	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Negative
Habitat for Humanity International	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Negative
Care International	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Negative
San Francisco CASA	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Negative
The Trevor Project	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Neither positive nor negative
Planned Parenthood Federation of America	-Yes mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Neither positive nor negative
International Rescue Committee	-Yes mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Negative
Human Rights Watch	-Yes mention of equity	-Yes dignity/honor	-Neither positive nor negative
The HRC Foundation	-No mention of equity	-Yes dignity/honor	-Neither positive nor negative
Girls Who Code	-Yes mention of equity	-Yes dignity/honor	-Generally positive
Back On My Feet	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Neither positive nor negative
Hamilton Families San Francisco	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Both positive and negative
Kiva	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Negative

Race or Ethnicity of Leadership & Equity, Dignity and Description of Beneficiaries

Figure 7
White Signers - Description of Beneficiaries

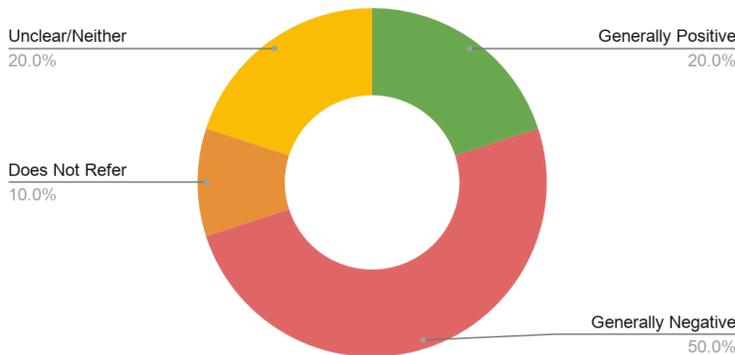


Figure 8
Non-White Signers - Description of Beneficiaries - 100% Generally Positive



I also examined how leadership signers of different race or identity groups talk about their work and program beneficiaries. I compared the race or ethnicity of the leadership signer with references to equity, references to dignity or honor and the way program beneficiaries are described. I excluded the signers for which I could not determine race or ethnicity from the following analysis. I also separated the letters with multiple signers and multiple identities into a separate category.

10 letters have a single white signer, multiple white signers or majority-white signers. Of those 10 letters, seven have no mention of

equity and eight have no mention of dignity or honor towards beneficiaries. Of the 10 letters with white signers, only two describe beneficiaries in a generally positive manner, five describe beneficiaries negatively, two are neither positive nor negative and one does not describe beneficiaries at all. The most notable finding from this part of my analysis is that there is only one letter signed by white or majority white leadership that mentions equity, dignity and describes beneficiaries positively. Only two letters signed by white or majority white leadership describe beneficiaries positively.

Three letters have a single non-white leadership signer or multiple non-white signers. Of these three letters, two mention equity and all of them mention dignity and describe beneficiaries generally positively. While this sample size may be small, it is difficult not to notice the fact that non-white

leadership individuals explicitly mention equity and appear to honor program beneficiaries with dignity and positivity.

Three letters have a mix of non-white and white signers and one letter has a white signer and another signer in which I could not infer any race or ethnic identity. Of these letters, only 1 mentions equity and none mention dignity or honor in relation to program beneficiaries. Two have neither positive nor negative descriptions of program beneficiaries and one does not reference beneficiaries at all. See Table 5 below for race or ethnic identity broken into categories and whether the letter references equity or dignity and how program beneficiaries are described. Red indicates no or negative, green indicates yes or positive, yellow indicates neither positive nor negative and orange indicates that the letter does not reference or describe program beneficiaries.

Table 5

Race/Ethnicity of Leadership Signer and Mention of Equity, Dignity and Description of Beneficiaries

# of Signers	Race/Ethnicity	Does the letter mention 'equity' or 'equitable'?	Does the letter reference dignity or appear to honor beneficiaries?	How does the leadership letter describe the program recipients/beneficiaries?
<u>Appears White</u>				
1	white	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Generally negative
1	white	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Generally negative
1	white	-No mention of equity	-Yes dignity/honor	-Neither positive nor negative
1	white	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Neither positive nor negative
1	white	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Generally negative
2	white white	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-does not describe
2	white white	-Yes mention of equity	-Yes dignity/honor	-Generally positive

2	white white	-Yes mention of inequity	-No dignity/honor	-Generally positive
2	white white	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Generally negative
4	white white white none/unclear	-Yes mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Generally negative
<u>Appears Non White</u>				
2	non-white non-white	-Yes mention of equity	-Yes dignity/honor	-Generally positive
1	non-white	-No mention of equity	-Yes dignity/honor	-Generally positive
1	non-white	-Yes mention of equity	-Yes dignity/honor	-Generally positive
<u>Multiple Signers/Mixed</u>				
2	non-white white	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Neither positive nor negative
2	white non-white	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-does not describe
2	white none/unclear	-Yes mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Neither positive nor negative
<u>Cannot Infer Race/Ethnicity</u>				
4	none/unclear none/unclear none/unclear non-white	-Yes mention of equity	-Yes dignity/honor	-Neither positive nor negative

2	none/unclear none/unclear	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Generally negative
1	none/unclear	-Yes mention of equity	-Yes dignity/honor	-Generally positive
1	none/unclear	-No mention of equity	-No dignity/honor	-Neither positive nor negative

Content Analysis Conclusions

Most leadership representatives chose to depict an overall positive tone and describe their organizations as a beacon of hope within a dark picture of the world full of insurmountable challenges. Some letters describe successful fundraising efforts, significant investments in their work, tremendous growth, expansion of services and many thank donors and supporters. At first glance, the letters seem like an uplifting and hopeful message to the community; however, upon further analysis, it becomes apparent that predominantly white leadership representatives fail to properly honor program beneficiaries. Many do not reference beneficiaries' incredible strength or resilience, do not credit their agency or leadership and do not discuss their inherent dignity. Specifically, only two of the 10 letters signed by white or majority white leadership representatives describe program beneficiaries positively. The annual report audience traditionally comprises donors or supporters of the organization, thus readers are not hearing the message that the community the organization serves is strong, resilient or honorable. Rather, many readers are seeing the organizations that they support as the hero, once again perpetuating the savior narrative. Leadership representatives are reinforcing the white savior narrative as they are depicting their organizations as saviors. While it is important to acknowledge that the leadership letter is simply one small piece of the organization's overall messaging and external communication strategy, it is still a significant representation of how an organization chooses to tell its story and how it chooses to talk about the community it works in.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Below is a summary of each of the conducted semi-structured interviews, which include a synopsis of the conversation and notes taken during the conversation. The below summaries are the reflections and opinions of the interviewees, not my own. I chose to include summaries for all seven interviewees because each individual has their own personal experiences with and understanding of fundraising and philanthropy, white saviorism and equity. Each person's life experiences, as well as racial, ethnic or other

identities, can shape their outlook. Following the seven summaries, is a section on common themes, areas of contention, conclusions and my reactions. For a list of prepared interview questions, see Appendix C.

Interview #1: Philanthropy Officer, UNICEF USA

(The identity of this individual will be kept confidential)

This interview was conducted with a frontline fundraiser with the position of Philanthropy Officer at UNICEF USA and is responsible for stewarding and soliciting a portfolio of major donors and major donor prospects. This individual believes that each frontline fundraiser has the power to set the narrative with their donors. As representatives of the organization, fundraisers need to do the work to ensure that they are using inclusive and equitable language. Fundraisers should not be responsible for representing the white savior narrative to donors and must make the necessary changes to avoid it. This fundraiser reflected that when people claim ‘white saviorism is what donors respond to most’, this is simply a lazy excuse and the sector needs to do better to hold ourselves accountable and produce better fundraising work. This individual hopes that organizational leadership would provide fundraisers with specific language and talking points that are inclusive and equitable; however even if they do not, fundraisers can still choose how they represent the work and must take ownership of that. A lack of leadership initiative cannot be a barrier or an excuse. This fundraiser shared that they received advice from a mentor explaining “you decide how you deliver messages” (Interview 1). Not only should we do the work to be more equitable, as fundraisers we have a responsibility to teach and guide our donors on how to honor the communities we work in and not cater to their white savior narrative. The interviewee concluded that fundraisers can be part of changing the narrative if they take the initiative and ultimately decide to make it a priority.

Interview #2: Sylvia Kim - Senior Philanthropy Officer, UNICEF USA

Sylvia Kim is a frontline fundraiser at UNICEF USA and is responsible for managing high-level and complex relationships with significant major donor partners. Kim shared that while each individual donor is inspired by different types of language and storytelling, in general, she finds that individuals are moved when there is a personal connection to the work or when the organization is able to demonstrate significant impact and solutions. Kim reflected that she finds donors view program beneficiaries as lacking something (opportunity, access, etc.) and that donors are able to use their power and privilege to

fill a gap. Kim also noted that she finds donors do approach the community being served as needy or lesser than their own.

Kim believes that as a fundraiser she has power in shaping how her donors view the organization and the community being served. Often donors approach the organization with ideas and opinions on how a successful program would look, it is the responsibility of the organization to guide the donor properly. Kim shared that in order for fundraisers to be successful in shifting any narrative, there needs to be reinforcement from the leadership of the organization and there needs to be a support system in place for how to walk away from bad relationships. The organization needs to trust the fundraiser's ability to evaluate the partnership and provide tools and resources for how to turn down a gift if necessary. Kim also noted that the ability to influence a donor is ultimately going to depend on the comfort level, style and personality of each individual fundraiser. Kim explained, "We have a responsibility to ourselves, to the organization and to the donor. There is a lot of pressure on fundraisers" (Interview 2). Kim believes that it is our job as fundraisers to represent the work and the community we serve. We need to move away from shocking our donors with imagery of starving children, appealing to empathy and capitalizing on an emotional response because this is not sustainable and it is not truly philanthropy. Finally, Kim noted that we can get away from this narrative by exploring root causes with our donors and we can thoughtfully connect them with better stories that do not play into their power and privilege.

Interview #3: Jeff Stauch - Director of Individual Giving, Innocence Project

Jeff Stauch is a frontline fundraiser at the Innocence Project and has extensive experience working with donors and partners to secure funding for several nonprofit organizations. Stauch shared that he believes donors have power because they are told that they have power. Fundraisers can choose to turn down a gift or partnership if there is no alignment with values. We can tolerate differences in political opinion or otherwise, but we should not sacrifice values or violate the humanity of the communities that we serve. Ultimately, fundraisers do not have to say yes to everyone. Good intentions can still perpetuate inequities. Stauch notes that often fundraisers and organizations make decisions based on fears of donor attrition, but we ignore opportunities for new donor acquisition. Equally important to our fundraising language, is the work to achieve equity and inclusion internally at our organizations and it must be fully integrated into how we work. Stauch believes that it will become easier to challenge power imbalances with donors and walk away from bad relationships if equity is at the center across internal and external organizational priorities.

When speaking about the impact on program beneficiaries, Stauch explains that individuals do not exist merely to inspire donors. Oftentimes the stories they tell should enrage donors and move them to want to take action. Injustices should make people angry and want to do something. Stauch noted that the most equitable language we can use comes directly from the client or community we serve as their experiences stand for themselves. Stauch believes that fundraising should focus more on unrestricted funding and donors need to trust our organizations and our communities more.

Stauch also reflected that we are in the midst of a massive intergenerational transfer of wealth and as a nonprofit sector, we need to be thinking about what is meaningful to the next generation of donors. As millennial donors inherit large amounts of wealth, how are we attracting their support? Are we appealing to a more diverse donor audience? Finally, Stauch reflected that all the philanthropy in the world will not replace better and more equitable public policy. Donors need to understand that systems need to change even if those changes will negatively impact them. No one can fix problems with philanthropy alone.

Interview #4: Managing Director of Diversity, Racial Equity and Belonging

(The identity and organization of this individual will be kept confidential)

This individual leads the internal equity and inclusion work at a large nonprofit organization based in the United States and has a long career of expertise in diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. The individual reflected that, in general, there needs to be more discussion on the importance of diversifying both the donor pipeline and the staff makeup of our frontline fundraisers at nonprofit organizations. We cannot solely rely on mostly white, cis, straight donors and mostly white, cis, straight fundraisers to lead all philanthropy. There are other resources out there and we need to make it a priority to find them. This individual reflected that white people's networks are mostly white, so we need to do extra work to get beyond our immediate networks.

This individual also shared that the language we use is incredibly important and the narrative we tell, what words we choose, what stories we tell, all has an impact on our work. Ultimately, we need the leadership at our nonprofit organizations to be a part in determining where we look for funds and who we want to partner with. The directive to prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion need to come from the top. If a donor does not align with our mission, leadership is the entity that has the ability to determine how to proceed and the leverage to back up a potential decision to end a partnership. This individual added that nonprofit leaders need to specifically name diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging as a priority in order

to ensure that the entire organization is on board. This individual concluded that part of this difficult work needs to be a sober interrogation and stock-taking of the sector's history and what mistakes have already been made. We can learn from organizations that have done it or are doing it right.

Interview #5: Chandra Alexandre - CEO, Community Action Marin

Chandra Alexandre has a long career in nonprofit leadership and development with extensive fundraising experience. Alexandre reflected that often fundraisers are not owning spaces as experts and we need to have more conversations about power and power dynamics. Alexandra explained that within nonprofit organizations, we need to ask questions such as, "What does the community need, what do they want and how can we partner?" and then bring those conversations to our donors. This will come with donor relationship building and with trust. Alexandre reflected that the types of topics that resonate best with donors are related to what is current, the current state of affairs, why people do what they do, values and values-based work. Individual donors need to be willing to talk about equity. Fundraisers also have to provide hope and lift people up. Finally, Alexandre believes that fundraising job titles need to better reflect what we do because we do not simply move money around. As fundraisers, we have power and influence in our donor relationships and we should be seen as experts.

Interview #6: Biff Clark - Board Chair, Marcus Foster Education Institute; Board Chair, The Hidden Genius Project; UNICEF USA Supporter and Committee Member

Biff Clark is an entrepreneur with expertise in business development, sales, and cybersecurity. Clark leads two boards of directors at two different organizations focused on racial equity and has a unique perspective on philanthropy's approach to racial equity. Clark believes that his relationship leader at whichever nonprofit organization he is supporting is a trusted resource. For the two organizations that he is board chair for, he is in constant communication with both executive directors. As board chair, Clark believes that he has some say in setting messaging and tone for the organization and he has the space to share his vision for the organization. In general, Clark is most interested in systemic change and is drawn to data, metrics and the ability to show positive impact as well as the potential for sustainability. He avoids organizations that are dependent on 'need' or are 'in search of salvation'. The most important aspects for a nonprofit organization to emphasize are narratives with an actual road map to change, anchored in good programs, reputation and brand. Clark believes that donors want to see an organization that they can continue to support year after year and they will be able to see their long-term impact of a

program over time. Clark also believes that it is important for board members at nonprofit organizations to be comfortable with fundraising language and understand their role in the fundraising process. Clark shared that he has little interest in supporting organizations that are looking for a savior and is turned off by insulting language towards a community. Clark concluded that no organization should ever be too tied to a single leader, organizations should avoid using too narrow of a lens or scope and organizations should avoid programs that are just ideas but have no proven results or lack sufficient data.

Interview #7: Nancy Rosenthal - Northwest Regional Board Member, UNICEF USA

Nancy Rosenthal is a member of the UNICEF USA Northwest Regional Board and a longtime supporter of UNICEF USA. Rosenthal contributes to a variety of nonprofit causes and organizations and can speak to what resonates with her directly as a philanthropic supporter. Rosenthal views her relationship leader at whichever nonprofit organization she supports to be a trusted resource and expert. She listens to language and often notices how her relationship leader talks about their programs. She noted that while she does not feel she is an expert on inclusive and equitable language, she is able to pick up on the uncomfortable language and notices savior-like language. Rosenthal shared that she is most drawn to stories from the field, personal impact stories and the experiences of beneficiaries. She noted that an impactful story does not need to be from an individual if not appropriate or if it may be exploitative, but a story from a program expert or for example, a teacher, is equally as powerful. She always remembers powerful stories. Rosenthal shared she is most impacted by messages of hope and believes that people want to get involved with an organization or cause that is successful and has uplifting messaging. Messages that are a turn-off are ones that are particularly dire and references to ‘these poor kids, they need our help’, for example (Interview 7). Finally, Rosenthal shared that she does not need people to be grateful for her support and the notion that the community should be grateful is a turn-off. She mostly wants to know that her support is making a difference and contributing to creating change.

Interview Themes, Areas of Contention & Conclusions

Of the fundraising professionals that I interviewed, all three agreed that fundraisers have a role to play in changing the narrative with donors. Each referenced having power in their donor relationships and the autonomy to use or not use specific language or types of storytelling. All three fundraisers also described feeling personally responsible to the community they represent and want to participate in honoring that community. Stauch believes that he has the authority to walk away from a donor relationship if that donor

does not align with the organization's mission and values, and the other two do not reference having this ability on their own without the organization behind them. In particular, Kim believes that she needs the leadership at her organization to provide tools and resources for how to leave a donor relationship and she does not feel empowered to do that on her own. Of the two DEI experts/nonprofit industry leaders that I interviewed, each had different perspectives on the topic and feedback to share. Alexandre spoke more about a fundraiser's role and power and what she believes inspired donors. The Managing Director of DEI was focused on diversifying donors and fundraising staff, appealing to new audiences and believes that fundraisers have limited power in the ability to shift narratives and leave relationships without backing from leadership. This individual believes that organizational leadership needs to set that tone before fundraisers can truly act on those goals. Finally, the two board members and donors I interviewed both explicitly shared that savior language does not inspire them to want to support an organization at all. Both individuals believe that more positive stories focused on impact are going to inspire them to get involved with an organization. In addition, both agreed that they are turned off by an organization that depicts its program beneficiaries in a negative light or as needy or vulnerable. Clark is particularly inspired by impact and the ability to demonstrate sustainability and systemic change.

Most notably, all seven interviewees reference the importance of honoring the communities that our sector supports with dignity and respect. All seven interviewees noted that savior-like language and storytelling is not how we should be fundraising and it does not do our work justice. I am particularly inspired by both donors sharing their strong dislike for the savior narrative. While two donors is not an adequate sample size for providing solid conclusions, I still find it noteworthy and hopeful for our sector. In addition, the fundraisers agree that in their experiences with donors it is not the savior narrative that moves the needle or produces revenue. After my seven conversations with seven different individuals connected to nonprofit fundraising and philanthropy, I feel more confident in my conclusion that we do not need to rely on the savior narrative in order to generate results.

Section 5. Implications and Recommendations: Honoring Communities With Dignity and Respect

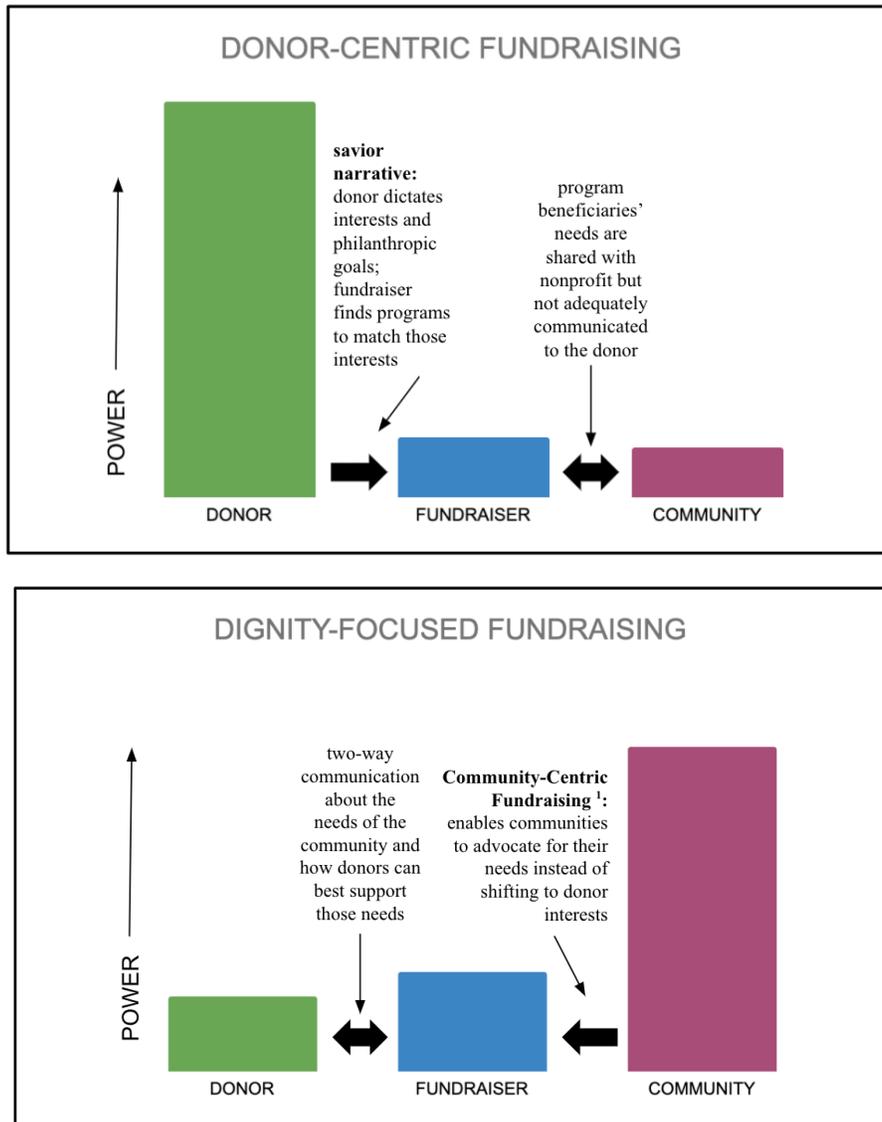
Throughout my research, I have demonstrated the damage that the white savior narrative has on our sector and our program beneficiaries. I have argued that abandoning the white savior narrative will not threaten our ability to generate revenue or develop quality donor relationships for our organizations. I will now offer several ways in which fundraisers can avoid falling into the savior narrative while engaging with donors. This list is not exhaustive and it will not apply to every relationship as each donor, each relationship, each fundraiser and each organization will have different needs. These recommendations alone will not solve the issue of the white savior narrative and will not eliminate it from our sector. Rather, this list is meant to be a helpful discussion for fundraising professionals as we seek to honor our communities with dignity and respect and thoughtfully guide our donors in relinquishing some of their power.

The below model depicts my view of the power dynamics within traditional donor-centric fundraising versus what I describe as dignity-based fundraising. In the donor-centric model, the donor has the vast majority of the power and indicates their interests and philanthropic goals to the fundraiser. The fundraiser then searches for a program that will fit the donor's priorities. The community has limited ability to communicate needs and advocate for its own change and often the community is told what programs and services will be delivered to them. In contrast, the dignity-focused model centers the community in the philanthropic process. The community holds most of the power and a "Community-Centric Fundraising" approach enables the community to advocate for its needs (Community-Centric Fundraising, 2020). The community does not need to adapt to donor interests and donors and fundraisers do not dictate programs and services. Two-way communication between fundraiser and donor about the needs of the community and organization allows for a strong partnership that is centered around the mission of the organization. Fundraisers avoid talking about donor interests and instead effectively communicate the need. The donor's power is significantly diminished in this model, but I believe it is the responsibility of the fundraiser to advocate on behalf of the needs of the community without making the donor feel utterly powerless. In actuality, the donor has relinquished their power because they no longer have the ability to dictate programs and services based on personal interest; however, that does not mean the philanthropic process will be any less rewarding for the donor. The donor can continue to feel good

that they are supporting the community in the best way possible while also honoring that community with dignity and respect. The fundraiser has more power in the dignity-focused approach in order to be able to guide the donor on behalf of the community.

Figure 9

Donor-Centric vs. Dignity-Focused Fundraising



¹ <http://communitycentricfundraising.org>

Source: Author's creation

Recommendations for Fundraisers: Inclusive, Equitable, Dignity-Focused Fundraising

1. **Be thoughtful with fundraising language:** Language has power and our words hold meaning. By referring to program beneficiaries as ‘needy’, ‘vulnerable’ or ‘desperate’, we are perpetuating the myth that they need to be saved. We are putting them down and demonstrating that they lack any sort of agency or authority over their own self-determination destiny. We are also showing our donors that they are more important than our program beneficiaries and have the authority to save them. My first recommendation is that fundraisers should be extremely thoughtful about the words that are used when communicating about the organization, mission, programs, beneficiaries or community. Fundraisers should use phrases that are people-centered and depict the strength, resilience and agency that our program beneficiaries elicit everyday. Fundraisers should also address equity and the inherent dignity of every human being. Finally, fundraising should be more thoughtful about storytelling - who is telling the story, who owns the story, has the subject given consent to have their story told, etc.
2. **Prioritize unrestricted funding:** Whenever possible, fundraisers should prioritize unrestricted funding for the organization. Not only does flexible funding allow for the sustainability of the organization, it also allows space for program beneficiaries to communicate needs and advocate for the right kind of support. If the organization is able to be nimble and flexible, it can respond to a changing environment and continue to actively listen and center the needs of the community. Restricted funding is very limited, and while it can be useful in addressing certain problems or programmatic objectives, it often does not allow for an open, evolving conversation about what is working and what is not. If organizations have primarily flexible funds to disperse, actively listening to program beneficiaries can be ongoing.
3. **Don’t be afraid to talk to donors about the programs that work, such as cash transfers:** Fundraisers should emphasize whatever programs are actually working, regardless of fears of how donors will feel about them. For example, cash transfer programs are proven to be extremely effective at getting people what they need, particularly during an emergency situation. Traditional philanthropy says that we should not just give money to people living in poverty; however, evidence shows that cash transfer programs are actually highly impactful. People know exactly what they need, so why not just provide them the resources directly? Research from over 300

studies provided by Give Directly, shows that cash transfer programs are cost effective, allow people the autonomy to decide and prioritize their own individual needs and despite stereotypes, people actually spend cash transfers on items that will improve their wellbeing (Give Directly, 2020). Fundraisers shy away from talking to donors about these types of programs because they feel their donors would not want to support them; however, I do not believe that we should avoid talking about anything that is effective and important to our program beneficiaries. If donors are not given the real opportunity to learn about cash transfer programs and how they work, how will we know if they do not want to support them? We should never avoid talking to our donors about the programs that the community benefits from the most, regardless of how our donors might feel about them.

- 4. Develop authentic donor partnerships that align with organizational values:** Not every donor is a good fit for every organization. As best as possible, fundraisers should evaluate the donor partnership and whether or not it is an authentic partnership for the mission, values and vision for the world. Ultimately, if a donor does not hold the same values as the organization, fundraisers should not spend time cultivating that relationship. Time is better spent finding new donors with stronger alignment. Organizational leadership must empower fundraisers to make this type of decision. Internally, open dialogue should be encouraged for fundraisers to evaluate donor alignment. Fundraisers should be encouraged to vocalize to superiors when a relationship is damaging without facing repercussions. Ultimately, not all donations should be accepted if the terms and conditions are damaging to the program recipients and community at large.

Section 6. Conclusion: A Better Approach to Fundraising

There is no disputing the prevalence of the white savior narrative in philanthropy and fundraising strategies. Another process rooted in white supremacy and colonization perpetuates inequities in our communities and reinforces the idea that philanthropists are experts and qualified to ‘save the needy’. Our donors too often embody it in their language and our program beneficiaries feel it wholeheartedly. However, as fundraising professionals, we do not have to be a cog in this damaging machine. We can contribute to changing this narrative and we can do it without giving up revenue or relationships for our organizations. We can approach fundraising by honoring our communities with dignity and still create meaningful, lasting partnerships with our donors. The above research demonstrates that donors do not need to hear white savior narrative language in order to support our work and fundraisers do not need to lean on it in order to connect with donors. Instead, we can center the community, amplify its needs and provide the space for it to advocate for itself. We can ask our donors to trust us that the community knows best, not them. It is ok to walk away from damaging donor relationships--use the resources to find better ones that align more closely with organizational values.

Of course, this is all easier said than done. In order to see real progress, we need a large cross-sector shift. Everyone from organizational leadership to frontline fundraisers needs to be committed to doing fundraising differently. Influential philanthropists need to be ok with letting go of their power, actively listening and allowing others to speak up. I believe it can be done because we see so many organizations already doing dignity-focused fundraising, but there are too many organizations rooted in old ways that will refuse to abandon their donor-centric attitudes. Frontline fundraisers have power in our donor relationships and we can use that power to guide our donors to understand what our communities actually need, whatever those needs might be.

A Note About Limitations & Further Research

My research is extremely limited in scope compared to the vastness of this subject. I decided to focus on a few small components of how the white savior narrative impacts primarily major gifts fundraising and philanthropy based on my own experiences as a frontline fundraiser; however, this analysis barely scratches the surface. I also acknowledge that so many individuals, community leaders and nonprofit professionals are doing excellent work in this space and I am just one person simply adding my

perspective. My recommendations are my own thoughts and impressions through a major gifts lens that I gathered after 10 years in nonprofit development work and in pursuing this qualitative research process. It is also important to acknowledge that I present these experiences as a white, cisgender, straight woman amidst all of the privileges those identities allow me. My identities provide me with a level of privilege in my conversations with donors that other fundraisers may not have. Ultimately, fundraisers of color may have different experiences and may find that they have different abilities to guide conversations with their donors.

With more time and resources, I would want to explore more literature about white saviorism and its impacts in philanthropy and gather more research on what inspires donors to give, how to talk about programs with equity and inclusion and find more examples of excellent organizations that are effectively centering the community. I would also do a much larger and more complex content analysis of fundraising materials, mission and vision statements, websites and collateral at a variety of nonprofit organizations. I would cross reference those findings with the actual confirmed racial or ethnic identities of organizational leadership in order to understand how white vs. non-white leaders describe their program beneficiaries. I would also want to analyze these results by type, size, location and other factors that may impact organizational identity. I would engage in many more interviews with industry professionals, donors, board members and DEI experts. I would ideally want to interview more fundraising experts who are successfully centering the community and learn best practices and helpful advice. I would also explore the possible differences in white saviorism between individual donors, foundations, corporate donors, major donors, etc. And finally, I would address how nonprofit organizations' internal DEI work impacts external communications and partnerships.

I believe my research is merely a small piece of a very large and complex puzzle, and I am honored and humbled to contribute even one small piece.

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Appendix A: Content Analysis Codebook

Content Analysis Codebook			
Purpose - The purpose of my research is to better understand how using inclusive, equitable and dignity-focused fundraising language can ultimately contribute to dismantling philanthropy's white savior narrative and how frontline fundraisers can play a critical role in shifting power dynamics.			
RQ1 - Can nonprofit fundraising teams thoughtfully abandon notions of white saviorism and fully embrace inclusive, equitable and dignity-focused language without compromising revenue or relationships, or even grow revenue and improve relationships?			
RQ2 - How does fundraising language impact donors' affinity for programs and services and their understanding of their role in the giver/recipient relationship or partnership?			
Unit of Analysis: annual report leadership letter			
Which Research Question Does this Content Analysis Question Answer?	Content Analysis Question to Analyze Unit of Analysis	Answers to the Content Analysis Question	Explanation and Definitions of Answers
content description	What is the page number/position in the annual report?	Within the first 5 pages Page 5 through 10 After page 10	look for placement within overall annual report
content description	What year is the annual report released?	Before 2019 2019 2020 2021	release date/year of the annual report; most recent available on organization website
content description	How long is the letter?	longer than one full page one full page half of a page less than half of a page other	examine based on text size and letter size and general assessment of length
content description	Who is the signer of the leadership letter?	Board President or Chair Executive Director of CEO Both Other	may be multiple signers or one signer, look for individual's title

content description	Is there an image accompanying the letter anywhere on the page and/or two-page spread?	Yes image No image	if yes, include a brief description of the image
content description	Is the organization's mission and/or vision statement included in the letter or somewhere on the page?	Yes mission/vision statement No mission/vision statement	
RQ2	What is the overall tone of the letter?	Positive/Hopeful Negative/Dire Other	read for tone, may be conveyed through strong language or statements
RQ2	Does the letter mention 'equity' or 'equitable'?	Yes mention of equity/equitable No mention of equity/equitable	look for specific mention of the word
RQ2	Does the letter reference dignity or appear to honor beneficiaries?	Yes dignity/honor No dignity/honor	look for the way beneficiaries are described, include any important quotes/examples
RQ2	Does the letter use any examples of people centered language?	Yes people centered No people centered	examples of people centered language: individuals facing homelessness (instead of homeless people), survivor (instead of victim)
RQ2	Does the letter mention hope?	Yes hope No hope	does not need to use "hope" as a word, but could include references to being hopeful or having hope for the future
RQ1	Does the letter mention any goals for the year ahead?	Yes goals No goals	
RQ1	Does the letter thank donors?	Yes thanks donors No thanks donors	

RQ1	Is there any call to action?	Yes call to action No call to action	call to action could include: donation, advocacy, event, volunteer, etc.
RQ2	Does the letter paint a generally positive or generally negative picture of the state of the world?	Generally positive Generally negative	generally positive could describe hopeful or positive environment generally negative could describe any external, widespread factors - climate change, pandemic, widespread challenges for community, etc.
RQ1	Does the letter mention advocacy initiatives?	Yes advocacy No advocacy	advocacy could include: letters to elected officials, signing a petition, attending a protest, etc.
content description	Does the letter include anything personal about the leadership individual signing the letter?	Yes personal mention of leadership No personal mention of leadership	look for personal connection to the work, any person story or mention of them self
RQ2	How does the leadership letter describe the program recipients/beneficiaries?	Generally positive Generally negative	Positive: inspiring, honorable, strong, survivor, agency, leadership Negative: vulnerable, in need, needs helps, needs us, reliant on support
RQ1	Does the letter have any mention of revenue, support, donations, etc.?	Yes revenue/support No revenue/support	could be a particular donor or donation, partnership, supporter, etc.
RQ1	Does the letter mention any increase in philanthropic support over time?	Yes increase in revenue/support No increase in revenue/support	any reference to a growth in revenue or success in exceeding revenue goals

RQ1	What are the last two years of listed revenue/support for the organization?		state total assets/revenue; find financial information, will not be listed on annual letter but will be in annual report
RQ1	What are the last two years of listed expenses from the organization?		state total expenses; find financial information, will not be listed on annual letter but will be in annual report

Appendix B: Full Results of Content Analysis

(Color-coded with notable themes and areas of focus)

Content Analysis Question to Analyze Unit of Analysis	<u>UNICEF USA</u>	<u>St. Anthony Foundation</u>	<u>ACLU Foundation</u>
What is the page number/position in the annual report?	page 5	page 1	page 1
What year is the annual report released?	2020	2019	2020
How long is the letter?	one full page	-half of a page	-one full page, two letters each taking half the page
Who is the signer of the leadership letter? Can racial/ethnic identity be identified from the letter? (# of signers)	-President and CEO, Michael Nyenhuis -no racial/ethnic identity shown, no headshot 1	-Executive Director, Jose Ramirez -headshot included, may be Latino 1	-one letter from President, Susan Herman -headshot included, appears white -one letter from Executive Director, Anthony Romero -headshot included, appears white 2
Is there an image accompanying the letter anywhere on the page and/or two-page spread?	image of a single 7 year old girl in Indonesia, wearing a face mask and getting her temperature taken. she appears to be in a school uniform and is wearing a headscarf.	-Yes image -Doctor in a white coat using a stethoscope on a young girl, both are looking at each other smiling	-No image
Is the organization's mission and/or vision statement included in the letter or somewhere	No mission/vision statement but references to it within the language of the letter	-Yes mission/vision statement	-no mission/vision statement

on the page?			
What is the overall tone of the letter?	-Positive/Hopeful -CEO specifically mentions that he has hope for the year ahead -includes references to UNICEF's ability to overcome obstacles and calls out successful partnerships, strong fundraising year	-Positive/hopeful -Mention of goals for the year ahead and supporting the community	-first letter is positive/hopeful -second letter is negative/dire
Does the letter mention 'equity' or 'equitable'?	-Yes mention of equity/equitable -uses the word 'equitable'	-No mention of equity	-No mention of equity
Does the letter reference dignity or appear to honor beneficiaries?	-Yes dignity/honor -mentions children's resilience ability to adapt to changing environment -mentions 'coping' with pandemic	-Yes dignity/honor -mentions respect for the dignity inherent in ever person	-No dignity/honor
Does the letter use any examples of people centered language?	-No people centered	-Yes people centered -"people experiencing homelessness"	-no people centered
Does the letter mention hope?	-Yes hope -CEO lists a few things that give him hope for the year ahead	-No hope	-No hope
Does the letter mention any goals for the year ahead?	-Yes goals -mentions of continuing the work and not giving up despite challenges	-Yes goals -70th anniversary -Board will be doing a new strategic plan and this will allow them to expand programs	-No goals

Does the letter thank donors?	-Yes thanks donors	-Yes thanks donors	-Yes thanks supporters in first letter
Is there any call to action?	-No call to action	-No call to action	-No call to action
Does the letter paint a generally positive or generally negative picture of the state of the world?	-Generally negative view of the world due to the pandemic, but notes despite all of the challenges UNICEF is addressing them	-Generally negative but organization is addressing challenges	-Generally negative
Does the letter mention advocacy initiatives?	-No advocacy	-No advocacy	-Yes advocacy initiatives including litigation, policy wins and Supreme Court appearances and reference to protest
Does the letter include anything personal about the leadership individual signing the letter?	-Yes personal mention of leadership -CEO says "several things give me great hope for 2021"	-No personal mention of leadership	-Yes personal mention of leadership in first letter
How does the leadership letter describe the program recipients/beneficiaries?	-Generally positive -children are resilient and able to adapt	-Generally positive	-NA -does not describe any beneficiaries but mentions litigation, landmark cases, court appearances with generally positive tone
Does the letter have any mention of revenue, support, donations, etc.?	-Yes revenue/support -Notes strong partnership and strongest year ever at UNICEF USA	-Yes revenue/support	-No revenue/support
Does the letter mention any increase in philanthropic support over time?	-Yes increase in revenue/support -Strongest year ever at UNICEF USA	-No increase in revenue/support	-No increase in revenue/support

What are the last two years of listed revenue/support for the organization?	FY2019 - \$568 million FY2020 - \$631 million	only one year available -FY2019 - \$24 million	-FY2019: \$309 million -FY2020: \$332 million (includes ACLU 501c4, ACLU Foundation 501c3 and other entities)
What are the last two years of listed expenses from the organization?	FY2019 - \$548 million FY2020 - \$644 million	only one year available -FY2019 - \$23 million	-FY2019: \$301 million -FY2020: \$300 million (includes ACLU 501c4, ACLU Foundation 501c3 and other entities)
Additional notes/ observations/ conclusions	overall tone is positive and provides hope; a lot of mention of difficult challenges but ability to overcome due to strength of the organization and resilience of beneficiaries	several mentions of 70th anniversary and looking ahead to new possibilities to achieve more	paints a generally negative/dire view of the world but offers sentiment that ACLU is involved in pursuing change

<u>Sierra Club Foundation</u>	<u>AJWS</u>	<u>NAACP Legal Defense Fund</u>	<u>Larkin Street Youth Services</u>
-only digital version available and not formatted for print -leadership letter comes following title and intro statement	page 3	page 2	page 3
2019	2020	Before 2019 (2017 - 2018)	2020
-one full page	one full page	one full page	one full page
-one letter signed by both Board Chair Allison Chin and Executive Director Dan Chu -both headshots included, both appear Asian	-one letter signed by President and CEO Robert Bank and Chair of the Board of Trustees Bradley Abelow -both include headshots -both appear white	-one letter signed by two chairs of the board Gerald S. Adolph and David W. Mills -both include headshots, one appears Black and one appears white	-one letter with two signers including Board President Suzi Alexander and Executive Director Sherilyn Adams -both include headshots, both appear white
2			

	2	2	2
-No image	-No image	-No image	-No image
-no mission/vision statement	-No mission/vision statement	-No mission/vision statement	-No mission/vision statement
-overall positive/hopeful -mentions strong leadership and collective action	-Negative/Dire	-Positive/hopeful -despite challenges, LDF is up to the task and pursuing justice	-Positive/hopeful
-Yes several mentions of equity/equitable -"Justice, equity and inclusion"	-Yes mention of equity -mention of building a more just and equitable world	-No mention of equity/equitable	-Yes mention of inequity
-Yes dignity/honor -references to creating strong movement it must be inclusive and leadership should come from communities on the front lines	-Yes dignity/honor	-No dignity/honor	-No dignity/honor
-No people centered	-No people centered	-No people centered	-Yes people centered -"young people experiencing homelessness"
-Yes hope	- No hope	-Yes hope -references being up to the difficult tasks	-Yes hope -Mention youth achieving goals despite obstacles and coming together as a community to achieve goals
-Yes goals -mention advocacy and	- No goals	-No goals	-Yes goals

taking action			
-Yes thanks donors	-Yes thanks donors	-Yes thanks donors -mentions specific donor names (foundations)	-Yes thanks donors
-Yes call to action	-No call to action	-No call to action	-No call to action
-Generally negative but provides specific actions items to achieve change and pursue justice and equity	-Generally negative -State of the world seems very dire	-Generally negative but has hope	-Generally negative but refers to the ability to overcome
-Yes advocacy	-Yes advocacy -Mentions building social movements and U.S. advocacy team working to pressure government to provide support	-Yes advocacy -lawsuits and stopping nominations of judges	-Yes advocacy
-No personal mention of leadership	-No personal mention of leadership	-No personal mention of leadership	-Yes personal mention of leadership -"As we reflect back.."
-Generally positive -Speaks to the power of collective action and giving community on the front lines leadership and a voice	-Generally positive -Mentions courage of activists and power of social movements	-does not really refer to beneficiaries or communities -talks more generally about justice and equality	-Generally positive -Youth were able to overcome
-Yes revenue/support	-Yes revenue/support	-Yes revenue/support	-Yes revenue/support
-No increase in revenue/support	-No increase in revenue/support	-Yes increase in revenue/support -Mentions expanding staff to address new challenges	-No increase in revenue/support
-2018: \$97 million -2019: \$138 million	-2019: \$40 million -2020: \$45 million	only one year available -2017-2018: \$24 million	only one year available -2020: \$31 million

-2018: \$85 million -2019: \$94 million	-2019: \$43 million -2020: \$44 million	only one year available -2017-2018: \$20 million	only one year available -2020: \$30 million
despite so many challenges, letter lists several specific action times and offers a sentiment of hope and references justice, equity and inclusion as central concepts	generally paints a negative view of the state of the world and references a lot of difficult challenges	thanks/names specific donors, which stands out from other letters, talks about challenges but being up for the talks	references the direct impacts of the pandemic on youth homelessness but lists ways Larkin can achieve goals despite challenges

<u>San Francisco-Marin Food Bank</u>	<u>Habitat for Humanity International</u>	<u>Care International</u>	<u>San Francisco CASA</u>
page 1-2	page 3	page 6	page 3
2019 - 2020	2020	Before 2019 (Fiscal Year 2017)	2020
one full page	one full page	one full page	half of a page
-Executive Director Paul Ash -headshot included, appears white 1	-one letter with two signers including Chair of the Board of Directors Bradford Hewitt and Chief Executive Officer Jonathan Reckford -no headshot or any indication of identity 2	-Secretary General Caroline Kende-Robb -includes large headshot, appears white 1	-one letter with two signers including the Chair of the Board of Directors Lisa Pearson and Interim Executive Director Paul Knudsen -both headshots included, both appear white 2
-impact graphics/charts side by side with leadership letter	-no image	-no image	-no image
-No mission/vision statement	-No mission/vision statement	-Yes mission/vision statement	-Yes mission/vision statement -both statements listed in full above the letter

-Positive/hopeful -leadership change after 33 years	-Positive/hopeful -thankful to supporters/donors	-Positive/hopeful	-Positive/hopeful -lists various ways CASA volunteers made impacts
-No mention of equity/equitable	-No mention of equity/equitable	-No mention of equity/equitable	-No mention of equity/equitable
-No dignity/honor	-No dignity/honor	-No dignity/honor	-No dignity/honor
-No people centered	-Yes people centered -mention people lacking access to home/foundation	-No people centered	-Yes people centered -"youth in foster care" , however, also includes "foster youth"
-Yes hope -Hopefully for new leadership	-Yes hope	-Yes hope -Points to CARE's ability to adapt and change	-Yes hope -continued impact by CASA volunteers
-Yes goals	-No goals	-Yes goals -mention new additions to governance structure	-No goals
-Yes thanks donors	-Yes thanks donors -overall tone of the letter is geared towards donors	-Yes thanks donors	-Yes thanks donors
-No call to action	-No call to action	-No call to action	-No call to action
-Generally negative but with hope for change	-Generally positive	-Generally positive	-Generally negative for youth in foster care
-No advocacy	-Yes advocacy -Mentions address policies	-No advocacy	-No advocacy
-Yes personal mention of leadership -Reflection on his time as Executive Director and the incoming Executive Director as well as his personal hope for the organization	-No personal mention of leadership	-Yes personal mention of leadership -mention of her beginning at CARE and a personal reflection	-No personal mention of leadership
-Negative, in need of help	-Negative -In need of help	-Negative -In need of help	-Negative -Youth in foster care need volunteers, all positive statements are about the volunteers

-Yes revenue/support	-Yes revenue/support	-Yes revenue/support	-Yes revenue/support
-Yes increase in revenue/support -Served almost double the number of households	-No increase in revenue/support	-No increase in revenue/support	-No increase in revenue/support
only one year available -2019-2020: \$154 million	-2019: \$300 million -2020: \$288 million	-2016: 726 EURO -2017: 841 EURO	-Fiscal Year 2018-2019: \$2.5 million -Fiscal Year 2019-2020: \$2.6 million
only one year available -2019-2020: \$114 million	-2019: \$288 million -2020: \$287 million	-2016: 720 EURO -2017: 811 EURO	-Fiscal Year 2018-2019: \$1.8 million -Fiscal Year 2019-2020: \$2.1 million
letter is a passing of the torch as the outgoing executive director reflects on his 33 years of leadership coming to an end during the pandemic and hopes for the incoming executive director	letter is written with donor audience in mind and definitely speaks to the support of donors, also addresses challenges and strength of the organization but not much reference to communities they serve	letter has hope and emphasis on CARE's ability to make change but little reference to the communities it works in or their agency, leadership, ability, etc.	letter has a lot of positive things to say about the impact of CASA volunteers and the success of the organization but very little reference to the actual youth they are serving

<u>The Trevor Project</u>	<u>Planned Parenthood Federation of America</u>	<u>International Rescue Committee</u>	<u>Human Rights Watch</u>
page 3	page 6-7	page 3	page 3-4
2020	2020	2019	2020
one full page	two pages	two pages	two pages

<p>-one letter with two signers including Chair of the Board of Directors Gina Munoz and CEO & Executive Director Amit Paley -both headshots included, one appears Latinx and one appears white</p> <p>2</p>	<p>-one letter with two signers including President Alexis McGill Johnson and Board Chair Aimee Cunningham -both headshots included, one appears to be white, the other unclear -'Meet Alexis' - adjacent to the letter on the second page is an intro /brief bio for Alexis McGill Johnson as new President</p> <p>2</p>	<p>-one letter with four signers including Co-Chair of the IRC Board of Directors Timothy Geithner, Co-Chair of the IRC Board of Directors Sally Susman, Chair of the IRC Board of Advisors Eduardo Mestre and President and CEO David Miliband -all four headshots are included and three appear white, one unsure</p> <p>4</p>	<p>-two letters. one letter with three signers including Board Chair Amy Rao, Board Chair Neil Rimer and Executive Director Kenneth Roth. a second letter signed by Executive Director of US Program Nicole Austin-Hillery. -3 headshots not included -only one headshot of Nicole Austin-Hillery is included, appears Black</p> <p>4</p>
-no image	-no image	-no image	-two images: one of people in lockdown applauding healthcare workers in Paris, one scene in New York of a Black Lives Matter protest following George Floyd murder
-No mission/vision statement -mentions mission statement within letter	-No mission/vision statement	-No mission/vision statement	-No mission/vision statement
-Positive/hopeful	-Positive/hopeful	-Negative/dire -Several mentions of emergencies and humanitarian disasters, paints a generally negative picture	-Positive/hopeful -Mention of pandemic and fight for racial justice but HRW offers hope
-No mention of equity/equitable	-Yes mention of equity in 'Meet Alexis' but not in the letter itself	-Yes mention of equity/equitable	-Yes mention of equity/equitable in letter by Nicole Austin-Hillery
-No dignity/honor	-No dignity/honor	-No dignity/honor	-Yes dignity/honor
-Yes people centered -"LGBTQ young people who seriously consider suicide"	-No people centered	-No people centered	-No people centered

-Yes hope -References big growth and significant impact	-Yes hope -Several mentions of hope for the future	-Yes hope	-Yes hope
-No goals	-No goals	-Yes goals -mention of specific programs	-Yes goals -mention of specific priorities
-Yes thanks donors	-No thanks donors	-Yes thanks donors	-Yes thanks donors in first letter
-No call to action	-No call to action	-No call to action	-No call to action
-Generally negative but with hope to overcome	-Generally negative	-Generally negative	-Generally negative
-No advocacy	-Yes advocacy	-No advocacy	-Yes advocacy
-No personal mention of leadership	-Yes personal mention of leadership -'Meet Alexis'	-No personal mention of leadership	-Yes mention of personal leadership in letter by Nicole Austin-Hillery
-Neither positive nor negative	-Neither positive nor negative	-Negative -References to vulnerable communities in need, needs IRC to help	-Neither positive nor negative -Some mention of listening to communities in the letter by Nicole Austin-Hillery
-Yes revenue/support	-No revenue/support	-No revenue/support	-Yes revenue/support
-Yes increase in revenue/support -biggest year ever of impact and growth	-No increase in revenue/support	-No increase in revenue/support	-No increase in revenue/support
only one year available -2019-2020: \$35 million	only one year available -2019-2020: \$1.64 billion	-2018: \$744 million -2019: \$796 million	only one year available -Fiscal Year 2020: \$76 million
only one year available -2019-2020: \$24 million	only one year available -2019-2020: \$1.58 billion	-2018: \$744 million -2019: \$785 million	only one year available -Fiscal Year 2020: \$89 million

letter has an emphasis on the huge growth of the organization over the last year and the increase in impact	letter has an overall tone of relentlessness and tenacity despite so many threats, little reference to beneficiaries but slight mention of a commitment to racial justice	letter paints a dire picture of the world and has no reference to the strength or the agency of communities around the world, mostly refers to IRC's impact on those communities/emergencies	the two letters have very different tones - the first addresses the pandemic but the strength of frontline healthcare words and some successful wins; the second is focused on achieving racial equity in the U.S. with an emphasis on how far we have to go; personal note from Nicole Austin-Hillery stood out
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<u>The HRC Foundation</u>	<u>Girls Who Code</u>	<u>Back On My Feet</u>	<u>Hamilton Families San Francisco</u>	<u>Kiva</u>
page 2-3	page 2	page 2	page 2	page 5-6
2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
two pages	one full page	one full page	half of a page	two pages
-Chief Operating Officer and Chief of Staff Joni Madison -headshot included, appears white 1	-Founder and CEO Reshma Saujani -two pictures of Remsha included on the page, appears to be of South Asian decent 1	-one letter signed by CEO Katy Sherratt -no headshot, but other photo included, appears white -page also includes bio of CEO 1	-one letter signed by CEO, no name printed only signature. found name on another page (Jason Mandell) -headshot included, identity unclear 1	-one letter signed by CEO Neville Crawley -headshot included, appears white 1
-yes images -6 images included of HRC supporters appearing to be organizing, at protests, etc. all holding signs endorsing HRC	-yes two images of CEO	-yes one image of CEO with 4 members of San Francisco chapter	-no image	-no image

-No mission/vision statement	-no mission/vision statement	-no mission/vision statement -mentions mission within the letter	-no mission/vision statement	-no mission/vision statement
-Positive/hopeful -A lot of references to successes from the past year	-Positive/hopeful	-Positive/hopeful	-Positive/hopeful	-Positive/hopeful
-No mention of equity/equitable	-Yes mention of equity -"we believe deeply that this work is as much about coding as it is about equity and diversity and opportunity"	-No mention of equity/equitable	-No mention of equity/equitable	-No mention of equity/equitable
-Yes dignity/honor -One mention of "brave transgender troops"	-Yes dignity/honor -reference to women in tech being the norm	-No dignity/honor	-No dignity/honor	-No dignity/honor
-No people centered	-No people centered	-No people centered	-Yes people centered -"homelessness for families"	-No people centered
-Yes hope	-Yes hope	-Yes hope -mentions of a lot of growth financially and appearances in the press	-Yes hope	-Yes hope -A lot of hope and mention of being uniquely positioned to make big impact in the year ahead
-No goals	-Yes goals -Achieve gender gap in new entry-level tech jobs in 7 years	-No goals	-No goals	-Yes goals -lists specific goals and areas of focus
-No thanks donors	-No thanks donors	-Yes thanks donors	-Yes thanks donors	-Yes thanks donors
-No call to action	-No call to action	-No call to action	-No call to action	-No call to action

-Generally negative but a lot of hope with HRC's ability to make change	-Generally positive	-Generally positive	-Generally positive	-Generally negative and mentions pandemic but Kiva is positioned to respond and help
-Yes advocacy / major theme	-No advocacy	-No advocacy	-No advocacy	-No advocacy
-No mention of personal leadership	-Yes mention of personal leadership -Personal story of founding Girls Who Code and references to past	-Yes mention of personal leadership and photo with beneficiaries	-No mention of personal leadership	-No mention of personal leadership
-Neither positive nor negative	-Generally positive	-Neither positive nor negative -in need of support, in need to change their lives	-Both positive and negative -references to change agents -references to families in need	-Generally negative -In need of help, several mentions of vulnerable populations
-No revenue/support	-Yes revenue/support	-Yes revenue support -names donor and amount of biggest ever gift - \$550K from Stand Together Foundation	-No revenue/support	-Yes revenue/support
-No increase in revenue/support	-No increase in revenue/support	-Yes increase in revenue/support -expanding chapters and secured largest single gift	-Yes increase in revenue/support -Expanding services significantly	-No increase in revenue/support
-Fiscal Year 2018: \$69 million -Fiscal Year 2019: \$73 million	-2018: \$20 million -2019: \$22 million	-2018: \$8.4 million -2019: \$7.9 million	-2018: \$33 million -2019: \$21 million	only one year available -2019: \$30 million

<p>-Fiscal Year 2018: \$64 million -Fiscal Year 2019: \$74 million</p>	<p>-2018: \$15 million -2019: \$21 million</p>	<p>-2018: \$8 million -2019: \$7.9 million</p>	<p>-2018: \$15 million -2019: \$18 million</p>	<p>only one year available -2019: \$37 million</p>
<p>the letter is mostly recounting advocacy wins from the last year and a response to the Trump-Pence administration, no mention of any individual beneficiaries or donor support</p>	<p>the letter is very uplifting, positive and hopeful and mentions goals and successes, CEO/Founder displays a lot of pride for the organization and its accomplishments, specifically calls out equity, diversity and opportunity as core to the work</p>	<p>the letter is very positive in tone and thankful to supporters but does not talk much about beneficiaries or members, does not humanize the members or reference any agency, empowerment, etc., mostly references the expansion of the organization</p>	<p>letter is brief and mentions the organizations growth and expansion of services, some reference to breaking the cycle of poverty and being agents of change, several mentions of families facing homelessness</p>	<p>letter reflects on specific challenges of the pandemic but lists several specific initiatives Kiva is focused on, several areas of growth and goals and calls out specific programs, the letter is hopeful to references the vulnerability of communities repeatedly</p>

Appendix C: Prepared Interview Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews

Below is a list of prepared interview questions; however, as explained in the text above, all interviews were structured as a conversation and this list was merely a guide. I let each interviewee lead the conversation and share what they wanted to share and I listened attentively and prompted the below questions when necessary. I asked the nonprofit professionals a different set of questions than the board member/donor interviewees because of their unique experiences with philanthropy.

Interview questions for fundraisers/nonprofit professionals:

1. In your experience, what types of language resonate most when you are talking to donors?
2. What language excites them?
3. How do you think your donors view the communities that we serve?
4. Do you believe that you have power in shaping how your donors view the communities we serve? Why or why not?
5. What are some tips you have or ways you incorporate inclusive and equitable language into your work?
6. In what ways do you think frontline fundraisers can help shift the narrative?
7. Is there anything else you think I should know or you would like to add?

Interview questions for board members/donors:

1. Do you typically see your relationship leader at a nonprofit organization as a representative that you trust? Why or why not?
2. Do you pay attention to the way your relationship leader at nonprofit organizations presents their work?
3. What kind of stories resonate best - do you prefer hearing individual stories from the field, or more general language?
4. What type of language do you find most inspiring to want to do something - messages of hope, or messages that paint a more dire picture?
5. When you see nonprofit organizations highlighted in the news, does that inspire you to want to learn more about that organization?

6. Has there ever been a time when you have not wanted to support an organization because of the way they talk about their work?
7. Is there anything else you think I should know or you would like to add?

Author's Bio

Stephanie Sheehan is a Philanthropy Officer at UNICEF USA, which advances the global mission of UNICEF by rallying the American public to pursue a more equitable world for every child. Stephanie is based in the Northwest regional office where she is responsible for soliciting, stewarding and cultivating relationships with a portfolio of 150 major donors (\$10,000+ annual giving) and major donor prospects across the San Francisco Bay Area. She builds and strengthens relationships and designs and implements short-term and long-term strategies for portfolio donors and prospects with the goal of securing five, six and seven-figure gifts. She partners with the Northwest Major Gifts team and Northwest Regional Board to secure critical funding to support UNICEF's global mission. In addition to her primary responsibilities of frontline fundraising, Stephanie oversees the Northwest Speakers Series events, manages the Speakers Series Committee and leads various regional fundraising activities.

Prior to joining UNICEF USA, Stephanie was a Senior Development Officer at American Jewish World Service (AJWS), a grassroots organization fighting to end poverty and realize human rights in the developing world. At AJWS, Stephanie stewarded and solicited a portfolio of major donors and prospects, managed the young professional's network, Global Circle, oversaw regional events and supported all regional development and fundraising efforts. Stephanie has previously worked for UNICEF USA in the Southern California region as the Officer supporting the major gifts team on fundraising and portfolio management and has extensive event experience producing large-scale galas and luncheons for a variety of nonprofit organizations.

Stephanie has a decade of expertise working in the nonprofit sector through frontline major gift fundraising, special event production and administration. She holds a B.A. in sociology from Wheaton College in Massachusetts and is currently pursuing her Masters in Nonprofit Administration at the University of San Francisco.