



THE BRADLEY CENTER
FOR PHILANTHROPY AND CIVIC RENEWAL

VISION AND PHILANTHROPY
A Bradley Center Symposium

Wednesday, February 16, 2005
8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
The Ritz-Carlton, 1150 22nd Street, N.W.

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Let's face it: foundations have produced big-time cultural damage over the last four decades. Racial preferences, identity politics, gender studies, welfare and homeless rights—all were catapulted into nearly untouchable status by the biggest names in philanthropy: Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie. These charitable giants, despite their vaunted independence, all just happened to start promoting “social change” at exactly the same moment, decades after their fabled namesakes had passed away. The reason? The tyranny of the “philanthropy expert,” soaked in “progressive” values and wholly untouched by the supposedly corrupting influence of the market.

Now those experts are working overtime to preserve their reign. Philanthropy schools have sprung up to teach the wealthy how to give. Predictably, the curriculum embraces the big-government, victocrat status quo with a vengeance. Rockefeller's \$20,000 Course in Practical Philanthropy invites such left-wing advocacy groups as the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the Natural Resources Defense Council to teach would-be donors what society's problems are and how to fix them. Students learn to see the same “root causes” of poverty in New York and Rio de Janeiro—naturally, these would be unfair economic systems and inadequate government spending on the poor.

Fortunately, a few foundations, such as Bradley and Olin, have remained true to their founders' values. The results have been vastly disproportionate to their size, producing such seismic cultural corrections as welfare reform and the law-and-economics movement. We need many more such foundations, needless to say. But I would add some additional insurance against future charitable disasters. Though it seems presumptuous to do so, I would advise would-be philanthropists to do the following.

First, support what you love, not what you feel you ought to support. If donors were guided first by their passions—whether for unknown 18th century operas or Civil War history—there would be a flourishing of wonderful new institutions that would increase *real* cultural and social diversity. Donors would be more likely to stay with causes that they know best. And the “experts” would be left to rave about “post-colonial structures of discourse among excluded peoples” without an audience.

Second, ignore the experts. But if experts you must have, my recommendation is: test their advice against your own values. Anyone who makes a fortune knows a little something about how the world works. He will have developed habits of mind that created opportunities not just for himself but for many others. He

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understands how to motivate people to do their best work. So when a philanthropy expert tells you: “The best way to help the poor is to increase their welfare entitlement and give them an unconditional right to shelter,” ask yourself: “Would these ‘benefits’ have helped me to succeed?” Better yet, ask the expert: “How many jobs have you created? To how many people have you given the chance to move up in life?”

The stupidity of the wealthy in the face of philanthropic expertise remains a wonder to behold. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is Exhibit A. The foundation recently announced a new initiative to improve high-school graduation rates among poor minority students. Its breakthrough concept? Putting low-skill students in specially created “college” courses starting in the 9th grade. The foundation noted that two-thirds of high-school graduates were unprepared for college work. The Gates solution: Have them start accumulating “college” credit in high school, so that by the time they graduate from high school, they will be half-way through “college.” If you are not following the logic here, don’t feel bad: there is none. Suppose Bill Gates or his father (who runs the foundation) had asked themselves: “Would calling illiteracy and innumeracy ‘college skills’ have helped me succeed? Would I hire anyone whose ‘college’ credits consisted of pseudo ‘college courses’ designed for 10th graders who can’t read?” Had they consulted their own experience, this ed-establishment lunacy would still be poking around for the cool \$30 mill. it has now pocketed from the Microsoft legacy. A successful entrepreneur could sign on to such nonsense only by totally suspending what he knows.

Third: if, after pursuing your passions, you still have time and inclination to do more, I would suggest the following opportunity: Give voice to grass-roots black conservatives. The Bradley Foundation taught me to look for them, and what I have found astounds and heartens me. In city after city there are courageous black men fighting for conservative values. Cincinnati’s Tom Jones has nothing but contempt for that city’s tyrannical race-hustler Damon Lynch III. While Lynch is comparing Cincinnati to apartheid South Africa, Jones is putting his life at risk trying to clear his neighborhood of drug dealers and working with the police. Naturally, the media hangs on Lynch’s every word and can’t spend a minute with Jones. Jones has twice lost his bid for City Council; his presence on that body could begin to challenge the city’s virulent race politics.

Hartford’s Cornell Lewis, founder of the Men of Color Initiative, which escorts children safely to school, scoffs at blacks who call the police “the enemy” on Tuesday and Wednesday, and then on Thursday, when they get mugged, expect the cops to show up and provide assistance. Indianapolis’s Olgen Williams, director of Christamore House, a self-help center, is fed up with “diversity” blather and just wants the elderly to be able to go to the store safely. Milwaukee’s Sheriff David A. Clarke, Jr., wonders why his deputies get accused of “racial profiling” for merely going after criminals.

The press won’t go near these iconoclasts, because they contradict the cultural elite’s most cherished belief: that the U.S. remains an ineradicably racist society. These unsung radicals dare utter the heresy that self-discipline and hard work are the keys to success. Finding a way to make them heard will not be easy; the media’s power to silence non-conformists is daunting. But if the victimologists’ monopoly on what constitutes respectable “black thought” could be broken, efforts to eradicate minority poverty and underclass dysfunction may finally make some progress.

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