

# Stanford SOCIAL INNOVATION<sup>Review</sup>

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***20th Anniversary Essays***  
**A Vision for the Future of Philanthropy**  
By Crystal Hayling

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for example, taken up not just as a one-time initiative but as a way of holding employee evaluations or managing projects. Or imagine the deep listening associated with Theory U not simply as a feature of special sensing journeys, but as the regular dynamic of a board meeting or a budget process.

Third, organizations would learn together in cohorts. Imagine 10 social innovation organizations enrolling in a year-long course together, much the way that individual leaders do now. Through shared reflection and joint experimentations, the organizations would be more easily able to question and disrupt their own habits and cultures.

Fourth, Org School “teachers” would themselves be organizations. If social innovation wisdom and practice live not in us but in our relationships, then it is those relationships that should take the lead.

Many people and institutions are slowly beginning to experiment with social innovation learning approaches that hint at Org School. They might invite cross-sections of organizations into existing programs that were designed for individuals. They might offer coaching and accompaniment to organizations that are trying to structure a long-arc learning journey for themselves. These experiments can blend the strengths of Leadership School and Org School with the vitality of different change processes. But there remains vast scope for more ambitious and sustained experimentation.

The benefits of such experimentation could be extraordinary. In our own research, my colleagues and I have spent 20 years seeking out positive outliers in the social innovation landscape, organizations that are unusually gifted at reimagining the systems they are part of and that have managed to sustain that gift for many years. At first glance, the organizations that have been our greatest teachers don’t seem to have much in common. Some are small, some large. Some flat, some hierarchical. Some hip, some buttoned down. What does link them, though, is how much effort they put into developing the five social innovation capacities. And how reverent everyone is when they reflect on their experience.

People have told us over and over that in these organizations they are becoming the best versions of themselves. They are more courageous, more compassionate, more imaginative, more energized. Through profound daily practice, these organizations seem to bring their social innovation goals to immediate, tangible life in their hallways and meeting rooms. A longtime staffer at a Montreal food security organization told us “It creates a sense of possibility for a different way of being in the world together. It’s there right in front of you. You can’t argue that it can’t happen.” A member of an innovative youth development organization in Cape Town put it even more simply: “I think the magic of what we are trying to do is happening to us.”

In the organizations we have studied, that “magic” has been largely self-taught. They have not relied on Leadership School or frequent change interventions, and there was no Org School to help them. So they took the slow route, nurturing their collective capacities through trial and error and often a bit of luck. Some aspects of social innovation will always have to be self-taught, but there is no reason that Org Schools of all shapes and sizes can’t accelerate the learning, and ultimately the social innovation impact, of many more organizations.

The Org School journey is just beginning, and the invitation should be cast far and wide. ●

## A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF PHILANTHROPY

BY CRYSTAL HAYLING

**W**e are living through cataclysmic shifts: a global pandemic causing more than six million deaths; fires, famines, freezes, and floods; far-right gangs threatening poll workers and public-health officials; and threats to democracy everywhere. The world order appears to be unraveling.

Yet there are also monumental leaps forward that pundits and straight-line logic would not have predicted: The largest continuous civil rights protests in US history took place during the pandemic with all races and faiths proclaiming “Black Lives Matter”; the legalization of same-sex marriage in all 32 Mexican states; the rapid creation and distribution globally of effective vaccines against COVID-19; and the election and appointment of the first Black women as US vice president and US Supreme Court justice.

Given the scope of the challenges ahead and the possibility of creating real change, now is a powerful moment for us to discuss how philanthropy needs to change to meet the past and be an active force in bending history’s arc toward justice. There is no more room for business as usual. The people and planet are demanding that we build a vision for philanthropy, let go of practices that no longer serve us, and create new ones that move us forward.

**From extraction to regeneration.** Society’s obsession with metrics such as GDP (gross domestic product) reinforces the myth that eternal growth is possible, or even desirable. The seasons, by contrast, teach us the natural cycle of life and death. Reaping and sowing, and never taking more than can be replenished. We live on a planet that is capable of regrowth, so abundance is possible only if we limit our greed and invest in that which renews. Communities in the infamous

Cancer Alley in the US state of Louisiana are fighting back against the fossil-fuel companies that insist on the false choice of jobs or clean air. Shouldn’t philanthropy be in the business of providing David a megaphone and at least a slingshot in the fight against Goliath?

**From individualistic to interconnected.** Having a great deal of money can be isolating, and perhaps that’s why so many wealthy donors hold tight to the illusion of the importance of self-sufficiency. Ironically, the way that traditional philanthropy is



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This call for change is deeply informed by the wisdom of Libra Foundation grantees, especially the Just Transition framework from Movement Generation.

ticed further distances wealthy donors from the communities they seek to serve through their philanthropy. Trust-based philanthropy, practiced thoughtfully over time, helps donors lock arms with communities working toward shared goals of equity and fairness.

**From objective to experienced.** Early in my career, when I was often the first or only Black person in a boardroom, foundation leaders often wondered if I could be objective when recommending grants serving the Black community. At that time, it was assumed that white people alone possessed that essential skill supposedly required to review proposals—emotionless scrutiny unclouded by familiarity, context, or experience. It is only in recent years that philanthropy has awakened to the wisdom of asking and engaging those most impacted by an issue what they believe should be the solutions. When we do that, brilliant ideas emerge, such as giving people who are poor cash rather than services, spending school funds on lunches rather than metal detectors, opening and staffing pools, parks, and libraries rather than opening and staffing jails and detention centers, or providing permanent housing to people who are unhoused rather than putting them in temporary shelters.

**From mechanistic to organic.** Factories revolutionized production by making each task mechanical and replicable. Orderly assembly lines codified processes that guaranteed production at scale. Too often, philanthropy mistakenly replicates that model, hoping that a streamlined and efficient process will work to address complex social problems in the same way it works to produce computers or cars. But it doesn't. Many wealthy folks cling to the dream that a single solution will solve a multitude of problems. They are surprised when new math software doesn't transform hungry or unhoused children into valedictorians. Effectiveness is not a factory of outputs, but a forest of roots and resiliency. Caring hands can weave multiple solutions into a community safety net. There are no silver bullets.

**From dominion to reciprocity.** Philanthropy is a two-way street. Donors give but they also receive. It is only habits of oppression that encourage donors to see themselves as givers and others as takers. Receiving a gift does not make the recipient less than the gift giver. Giving isn't a conquest, it is a relationship of mutuality and of equals. Traditional philanthropy is often a terrible partner. How do we gain the self-awareness that we are receiving at the same time we are giving?

**From hate to love.** On a recent Democracy Frontlines Fund trip to the Equal Justice Initiative's Peace and Justice Memorial Center, a comment from grantee partner Ash-Lee Woodard Henderson caught me up short. She said, "As I was driving into Montgomery [Alabama, United States] today, I wondered whether I should have brought security with me." Her organization's offices, Highlander Research and Education Center, were recently torched by white supremacists. Threats against Black, Brown, Asian, LGBTQ, and Indigenous activists are widespread and serious. Yet when I hear Woodard Henderson talk about her commitment to fighting for everyone's liberation in Appalachia and the American South, whites included, I can't help but be inspired by the love that fuels her organizing. Too often, the hatred and violence of far-right extremists is excused as "fear" yet the people who have experienced actual harm and threats are the ones spreading love. Let's invest in love.

**From lies to truth.** The myth that "education is your ticket out of poverty" denies the reality of crippling student debt for so many.

"Work hard and you'll climb the ladder of success" ignores 30 years of stagnant wage growth sapped by increased corporate power and wealth. "Be a law-abiding citizen and you'll have nothing to fear from the police" is a phrase that can no longer be uttered by Black people who have died at the hands of police, like Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. Because many of the people who work in the rarefied air of foundations come from privileged backgrounds, traditional philanthropy has acted as though their personal experiences are universal truths. And they simply are not. For many people they are simply lies. Organized philanthropy—if it aims to be truly effective and relevant—has a vital role to play in helping to dismantle these interlocking systems of oppression through truth-telling, reconciliation, and repair.

These are some of the sea changes we must make in our work as philanthropists in the coming years if we are to achieve the caring, multiracial, and inclusive future we want for ourselves and our communities. There are no shortcuts, no quick fixes in forging this future. The only way through it is through it. Together. ●

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TEMPORAL ISSUES IN PHILANTHROPY

BY BENJAMIN SOSKIS

**T**ime-based considerations—such as whether to give now or give later, the weighting of responsibilities to the past, present, and future, and questions surrounding foundation life span and the pacing of payouts—will be among the most consequential issues facing philanthropy in the coming years.

Of course, these considerations are not new. They have preoccupied funders since the birth of modern philanthropy more than a century ago. In fact, *Stanford Social Innovation Review* has provided an important platform for debating them since its founding.<sup>1</sup> But

for a number of reasons (which are discussed in more detail in a forthcoming book I coedited with Ray Madoff called *Giving in Time*), temporal considerations in philanthropy have increased in salience in recent decades and will continue to do so in the years to come.

What are some of the reasons why donors are paying more attention to questions of temporality? One reason is that over the last two decades, the engaged living major donor has come to dominate the philanthropic landscape, where once



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