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Upfront

Along the Generational Divide: Younger donors of color differ from their elders when making philanthropic choices.

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Along the Generational Divide

Younger donors of color differ from their elders when making philanthropic choices

Older donors of color in New York concentrate on giving back to their own ethnic communities, but their younger counterparts focus more on giving help to anyone who needs it, regardless of ethnicity. This generation gap in giving patterns was uncovered by Felinda Mottino and Eugene D. Miller of the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Their research team interviewed 166 African-American, Asian-American, and Latino donors in the New York metropolitan area. Half of the respondents in each ethnic group were over the age of 40.

“When we began this study,” says Miller, “everything written about donors of color had looked at differences between ethnic groups. But we found that the largest differences in our sample were between older and younger donors across ethnic groups.” To explain the generational differences, Miller suggests that “the older generation grew up in more isolated communities, while the younger generation grew up with MTV,” which perhaps gave them a broader sense of community.

Among the interviewees, one older Latino man lamented that philanthropists “continue ignoring [the Latino community] and are getting away with it.” A younger Latino man, on the other hand, said he wanted to help “underprivileged communities ... whether it is some poor white kid from Appalachia or some black kid from the inner city or some Mexican kid from the border like me.” —A.C.S.